

# Looking Back to See How Far We've Come

*"Thunder is good. Thunder is impressive;  
but it is lightning that does the work."*

—Mark Twain



Barbara K. Mistick

When Wilson expanded coeducation to all of its programs in 2013, people around the country began to hear about the College. What they heard focused on a college's decision to address a troubling enrollment situation. Since that time, however, Wilson has evolved and become new again—not because of coeducation, but because of the passion, creativity and persistence of a community committed to the success of the College.

Even for those of us closely engaged with Wilson, it is hard to understand the scope of change without pausing to contemplate the breadth of the work completed in transforming the institution into a college on the rise. Our primary indicator is enrollment, which has increased 84 percent in the last four years and currently stands as the largest in school history. But to fully appreciate how Wilson's reputation continues to climb, we need to consider the entire range of what has been accomplished in a short time.

### Strengthening Undergraduate Academics

Not long ago, most people recognized Wilson for its veterinary medical technology (VMT) and equestrian programs. As recently as five years ago, these programs accounted for more than 50 percent of our annual undergraduate enrollment. Over the last four years, the College has made a concerted effort to diversify its academic offerings to meet the demands of its student population. We've consolidated a number of programs under the new global studies major; expanded our education offerings with new, middle-level options and a major in special education; and added new programs in nursing, health science, graphic design and animal studies.

In a tribute to the quality of the department, Wilson's nursing programs received accreditation in 2017 after just three years. Nursing now represents the College's fastest-growing area of enrollment and offers five degree programs: Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN), Master of Science in Nursing (MSN), RN-to-BSN, LPN-to-BSN and RN-to-MSN. We have also partnered with Widener University in Philadelphia to allow

Wilson's MSN graduates to enter an online nurse practitioner degree program to meet this growing professional need.

Clinical partners are critical to any nursing program, and Wilson has forged strong relationships with Summit Health, Keystone Health and the Carlisle Regional Medical Center, as well as Menno Haven Retirement Communities to help address the growing field of geriatric care. This fall we opened a newly expanded and renovated simulation lab, which includes five medium-fidelity simulation mannequins and—thanks to Summit Health's commitment and generosity to our program—a new, high-fidelity simulation mannequin that provides outstanding learning opportunities for our students.

The healthcare industry is a growing area of opportunity and Wilson's health science major provides a foundation for careers or continued study. From an institutional standpoint, it also serves as a precursor to exploring additional health science majors like nutrition sciences and speech pathology.

The College's top undergraduate academic majors today are business, nursing, education, biology and VMT. This shift

in top programs helps make the Wilson academic experience richer and more vibrant for students.

### Expanding Graduate Education

In 2013, we introduced our third graduate program—the Master of Accountancy—and have since grown to offer a total of 11 master’s degree programs. Over that time, graduate enrollment has grown 329 percent, providing the second-largest group of enrolled students at Wilson, after traditional undergraduates.

Our first graduate program, the Master of Education, is still our largest and most successful. Building on that strength, four of the nine graduate programs to come online between 2013 and 2017 are education-related. The Master of Educational Technology, Master of Special Education, Master of Mass Customized Learning and Master of Education in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) provide forward-looking programs that both meet the needs of school systems and provide needed career advancement opportunities for teachers.

In tune with the market’s need for business graduate programs, the Master of Healthcare Administration (initially named Master of Healthcare Management for Sustainability) and the Master of Science in Management began in 2015 and 2016, respectively. These programs—which continue to evolve to

Wilson students to study conservation biology for a semester at the Front Royal, Va., campus of the George Mason University, Smithsonian-Mason School of Conservation. Wilson faculty members have the chance to teach and conduct research at the school, as well.

Wilson has worked to develop a portfolio of opportunities for students to pursue advanced degrees in law and policy. The first of these dual-degree programs was developed with the Vermont Law School (VLS), one of the nation’s premier environmental law schools. The initial offering begun in early 2015 is a 3+1 program that allows students to earn a Wilson degree in environmental sustainability in just three years and then attend VLS for one year, attaining a Master of Environmental Law and Policy. In 2017, we expanded our relationship with VLS to include 3+2 and 3+3 programs that let qualified students earn their bachelor’s degree in three years from Wilson and then pursue their Juris Doctor (J.D.) from VLS in a two- or three-year program.

As the 2017 academic year was getting underway, we finalized a partnership with Widener University Commonwealth Law School on another 3+3 program. Widener offers an array of law programs, from government to business, providing further law degree options for Wilson students.

In addition to our nurse practitioner partnership with Widener University, we also established two programs in 2017 in the



meet student needs—along with the accountancy graduate program, strengthen Wilson’s business core at both the undergraduate and graduate levels.

Finally, the arts and humanities were expanded with the addition of the low-residency Master of Fine Arts, which was designed for professionally engaged artists. During the four-week summer residency, visual artists and choreographers work collaboratively to expand their perspectives. The program’s unique home mentor program allows artists to work with both Wilson faculty and locally identified mentors, providing critical feedback and helping each student’s artistic vision to continue to mature.

### Establishing National and International Academic Partners

Our focus on enhancing the academic opportunities at Wilson doesn’t end with new programs. We have worked to create educational partnerships that also benefit our students. One of the most impressive for current undergraduates is our partnership with the Smithsonian Conservation Biology Institute. This program provides internship and academic opportunities for

health sciences. The first is a 3+2 program with Thomas Jefferson University for exercise science or health science majors to earn a Master of Athletic Training. A newly announced partnership with New York Chiropractic College (NYCC) allows exercise science majors who qualify to gain admittance to the NYCC Doctor of Chiropractic degree program.

Wilson has also built on its international partnerships, establishing recent agreements with the Southwestern University of Finance and Economics in Chengdu, China, and Hannam University in Daejeon, South Korea. These programs expand the international offerings available to our students, which in turn, enrich the nature of campus and classroom discourse.

### Focus on the Student Experience

In its halcyon days, Wilson was an elite college playing on a national stage. As enrollment issues grew, the ability of the College to provide a consistent student experience waxed and waned. At the same time, the students that Wilson attracted—and their needs—changed. Our current strategic plan, *Setting the Balance: Prioritizing the Student Experience*, builds

on recent improvements in the student life program that have made the campus a more active and vibrant environment.

The transition to college can be difficult for first-year students. To help our students, we introduced a re-envisioned First-Year Seminar (FYS) program in 2015. A collaboration between the Office of Student Development and the Office of Academic Affairs, the new program covers a range of areas—from financial literacy to the demands of a Wilson education.

The FYS program was just the first step in helping our students reach their goals. The summer Rowland LEAP (Learning, Exploring, Achieving, Participating) Program gives incoming students a leg up on college by inviting them to campus for a compressed version of the First-Year Seminar that includes intensive study in an area of need. Attendance in the LEAP Program releases students from their fall FYS classes, leaving them more time to study and adjust to campus life. The first LEAP Program in 2017 was well-received by both students and their families.

This past summer also saw the introduction of our new, one-stop student services center, which was established in response to student feedback about the difficulty of working with multiple offices to manage various aspects of college life. Each student, including Adult Degree Program and graduate students, now has a personal counselor who will work with them throughout their Wilson career on services such as financial aid

hints to help them successfully manage their workload and take full advantage of the opportunities college has to offer.

Student life has also been bolstered in many of the ways you would expect.

Athletics, which has expanded to now include 10 NCAA Division III teams, will leave the North Eastern Athletic Conference to begin competition in the Colonial States Athletic Conference (CSAC) in fall 2018 (see page 26 for more on this). CSAC is comprised of small, private colleges like Wilson and will reduce student-athlete travel time, helping them focus on their studies. Our newest sport, baseball, will begin competition in spring 2019, playing on historic Henninger Field in Chambersburg, where Babe Ruth once hit a home run during an exhibition game.

Springing from the prestigious Orr Forum, which has brought prominent religion scholars to campus each spring for more than 50 years, the Common Hour speaker series has become an important fixture in bringing new perspectives to campus. Both Wilson faculty and visiting lecturers focus on a chosen theme, presenting an interdisciplinary view of the topic. The series has addressed climate change and is currently looking at aspects of anxiety.

We have worked to keep students busy in mind, body and spirit. Internationally renowned artist Patrick Dougherty and his community "Stickworks" project; Trees for Tomorrow, which



and course registration, as well as dealings with the business office. Having one person to help navigate the administrative side of the Wilson experience is already receiving good feedback from students.

Over the last three years, the College has received two substantial grants that are having an impact on student life. In 2015, Wilson received a five-year, \$2 million, Title III *Strengthening Institutions* grant from the U.S. Department of Education. The grant came as we were planning the new learning commons as part of the renovation of the John Stewart Memorial Library, and made possible many of the innovations students enjoy today. Now in its third year, the grant has resulted in improved campus technology—including smart classrooms—and academic support services like the writing center.

Another boost for our students came in 2016 when the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation awarded the College a \$100,000 grant to support writing instruction and student success. The grant is being used to create a series of micro-tutorial videos that not only provide insight for students on writing—from narrowing a topic to conducting research—but also give students

planted more than 300 trees in a riparian buffer on campus; Congressional candidate debates; and poverty simulations all beckon students, faculty and staff to come together. And the annual Student Research Day has become one of the most exciting times on campus, growing in just eight years from a handful of students presenting their research to now featuring work from more than 100 students representing disciplines across the curriculum.

### Changing the Face of Campus

My tenure as president of Wilson began in 2011 with a failure in the college library's boiler system that resulted in the need to close the building. Coming from my previous position as president of the Carnegie Library System in Pittsburgh, this was a particularly distressing moment for me. In many ways, the library was a microcosm of the College's physical plant—old and lacking in care. Today when I walk from Sharpe House, past the college green and across the academic quad to the field house, I see a new, different face of the campus—a physical representation of the change Wilson has undergone in the last four years.



The renovation and expansion of the John Stewart Memorial Library would become a \$12 million project funded entirely through the generosity of alumnae/i, faculty, staff and friends of the College. Renovations to the historic 1924 structure included the demolition of an outdated 1960s-era addition in favor of a new, modern learning commons with flexible group study spaces, smart classrooms, art gallery, college store and café, making the library the center of campus activity today.

But the impact of the library project didn't end there. A plaza created outside the Lenfest Learning Commons led to a new academic quad, which replaced a parking lot in poor shape. The academic quad, in turn, led to a partnership with the Borough of Chambersburg on a streetscape and pedestrian safety project that installed new sidewalks and lighting. As part of the project, Wilson constructed an inviting main entrance at Park Avenue, creating an entirely new arrival experience for visitors and the campus community.

Along with the library, which reopened in 2015, we found time to renovate our three largest residence halls—MacElwain, Davison and Rosenkrans—to great student reviews. We created new student center and fitness center spaces and updated Jensen Dining Hall. And because it would not be a college campus without parking issues, we expanded parking lots and added new campus signage.

### Commitment to Value

All of this work is driven in part by Wilson's commitment to provide students and their families with a college experience that offers real value and affordability. Over the past eight years, Wilson has not only held tuition without an increase, but we actually lowered it 17 percent in fall 2014. This past year, the first students to benefit from our innovative student loan buyback program graduated (see page 14). This first-in-the-nation program allows qualifying students who graduate in four years or less to earn up to \$10,000 toward their federal Stafford loans.

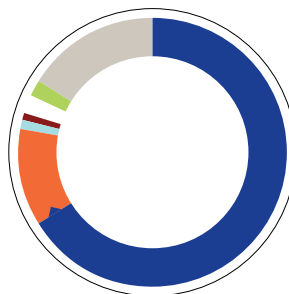
These efforts are also beginning to yield results and recognition from outside sources. Newly released data from the Student Loan Report shows that the average student debt for Wilson students is more than \$4,000 below the Pennsylvania average. We expect the downward debt trend for Wilson students to continue as the data fully incorporates our tuition decisions. The College jumped into the top five in *U.S. News & World Report's* "Best Value" ranking for colleges in the North, up from the 10th spot three years ago, and in the overall category, Wilson rose from a ranking of 17 to 11 for the same period. In addition, we received word at the start of the 2017-18 academic year that we were named a College of Distinction, an indicator of excellence in academics and student experience.

New academic offerings, academic partnerships, support for student success, improved campus life options and enhanced campus facilities provide Wilson students with more than a degree. Students benefit from the rigorous, well-rounded experience that is the foundation of a liberal arts education, which prepares students not only for their first jobs, but also for their careers and lives. I am proud to be president of an institution that generates such pride and commitment. **W**

## WILSON COLLEGE

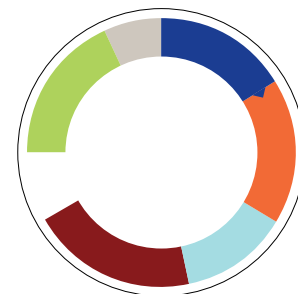
### 2016-17 FINANCIAL HIGHLIGHTS

#### REVENUE



■ STUDENT TUITION/FEES	71.6%
■ PRIVATE GIFTS	7.8%
■ GOVERNMENT GRANTS	0.9%
■ INTEREST & DIVIDENDS	5%
□ OTHER SOURCES	2.2%
■ INTEREST FROM TRUSTS HELD BY OTHERS	2.0%
■ AUXILIARY REVENUE	15.0%

#### EXPENSES



■ INSTRUCTIONAL	19.0%
■ ACADEMIC SUPPORT	14.4%
■ STUDENT SERVICES	13.5%
■ INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT	20.7%
□ AUXILIARY ENTERPRISES	7.9%
■ FINANCIAL AID	18.1%
■ INFRASTRUCTURE/DEFERRED MAINTENANCE	5.2%

#### Endowment Value in Millions



## BY THE NUMBERS

<b>1,216</b>	Fall 2017 Enrollment
<b>10.7%</b>	Increase in Total Enrollment from Fall 2016 to Fall 2017
<b>3.45</b>	Average G.P.A. for Incoming Students
<b>21</b>	Number of States Represented in the Student Body
<b>17</b>	Number of Countries Represented in the Student Body
<b>12:1</b>	Student to Faculty Ratio
<b>11</b>	<i>U.S. News</i> Best College: North Region Ranking
<b>4</b>	<i>U.S. News</i> Best Value: North Region Ranking
<b>35</b>	Undergraduate Majors
<b>11</b>	Graduate Degree Programs
<b>\$1.3M</b>	2016-17 Wilson Fund Giving Total
<b>1,107</b>	Total Number of 2016-17 Wilson Fund Donors