



Chancellor Ernie Ern and U.Va. President John T. Casteen pose for a photo with members of the Class of 2008.

Another record-breaking freshman class at UVa-Wise

For the third consecutive year, the incoming freshman class at The University of Virginia's College at Wise is the largest in the College's history.

Freshman enrollment is up 9 percent from last year's total of 360 and up 37 percent since the fall of 2000. UVa-Wise received a record 1,024 freshman applications for enrollment.

The 382-member freshman class currently registered also boasts the highest average SAT scores and grade point averages in the College's history. Twenty-four percent of the students rank in the top 10 percent of their high school class, 53 percent in the top quarter, and 84 percent in the top half. The Class of 2008 has an average high school GPA of 3.45. The incoming class includes 18 valedictorians.

"I am extraordinarily proud of both the quality and quantity of

this year's freshman class," said Russell Necessary '87, the College's vice chancellor for Enrollment Management. "Once again we are positioned as the college of choice for students from far Southwest Virginia." Fifty-five percent of freshman hail from Southwest Virginia.

The College continues to attract more students from outside the immediate area, especially in Washington, Smyth, Wythe, and Grayson counties.

"Students in the Southwest Virginia region and beyond are attracted by the total program we offer - our quality academic programs, our dynamic student life experience, and our beautiful campus," Necessary said. Ninety-three percent of the freshman class are Virginia residents. Seven percent of the freshman class come to UVa-Wise from seven other states and three foreign countries.

UVa-Wise students complete degrees with the least amount of debt, according to U.S. News ranking

The Class of 2003 at The University of Virginia's College at Wise completed their degrees with less debt than students at any of the nation's other liberal arts colleges, according to the latest issue of *U.S. News and World Report's* annual college guide UVa-Wise ranked first among more than 200 national liberal arts colleges whose graduates complete their degrees while incurring the least amount of student debt. About 67 percent of UVa-Wise graduates leave with debt. Of those UVa-Wise graduates who do have student loans to repay, the average amount of debt is \$7,414. That compares to an average debt load of \$24,876 for students at Albright College in Pennsylvania, the liberal arts college with the largest average student debt.

"The College's ranking is truly remarkable when you consider that nearly 80 percent of our students demonstrate financial need, the largest percentage at any college or university in Virginia," said Chancellor Ernest H. Ern. "Through our endowment and foundation support, we've been able to supplement the federal and state monies available to assist students with need. Our students are able to gain a quality education without taking on sizeable student loans." The *U.S. News* data includes loans taken out by students from financial institutions, federal, state and local governments, and from the colleges

themselves. The average amount of debt is the average cumulative amount borrowed by those students who incurred debt, not the average for all students. "Our institutional philosophy is to package financial aid in such a way that our students incur as little debt as possible," said Rusty Necessary '87, vice chancellor for Enrollment Management. "The ranking is an affirmation of the dedication of our donors and the hard work of our Financial Aid staff, but most importantly our students are graduating with a University of Virginia diploma and with a debt load they can manage."

UVa-Wise continues to be listed among the nation's top public liberal arts colleges. The nation's 215 liberal arts colleges - most of which are private - emphasize undergraduate education and award at least half of their degrees in the liberal arts disciplines. Twenty of the nation's liberal arts colleges, including UVa-Wise, are publicly funded. Each school's rank, within its group of peer institutions, is based on the same set of quality measures. Seventy-five percent of the ranking is based on a formula that includes objective measures of academic quality, such as graduation rates, freshman retention, class size, student selectivity, student/faculty ratios, faculty salaries, SAT scores, acceptance rates, financial resources, and alumni giving rates. The remaining 25 percent is based on a reputational survey of peer institutions conducted in the early spring. The magazine surveys the president, provost and dean of admissions at each school to rate the perceived quality of the academic programs for schools in the same category.