

YEAR OF AWARD: 2011

Carol S. Wood

**Associate Vice President
of Public Affairs
& University Spokesperson**

**Years of service at UVA:
1995-2013**



Carol Wood dedicated her career to the communications field, working in the newspaper business for 25 years before coming to the University of Virginia in 1995. Prior to moving to Charlottesville and joining UVA, she held a series of editorial positions at *The Virginian-Pilot* in Norfolk, including as

vice president of *The Virginian-Pilot*, and the *Ledger-Star*. When her late husband, Bill, the former editorial page editor of *The Pilot*, was recruited by the University to become the founding director of the Sorenson Institute for Political Leadership, she telecommuted for two years. But when a position in Public Affairs opened, she jumped in to apply.

She began her UVA career as Director of News Services. In this role, she was responsible for disseminating the University's good news and working with the media. She was eventually promoted to Associate Vice President for Public Affairs, overseeing the communications apparatus

of UVA, the role she held when she retired in January 2013. As the University spokesperson, she also served as the face of the University, a responsibility – and a challenge – she embraced.

At the time of her selection as the 2011 Elizabeth Zintl Leadership Award winner, Thomas W. Madrecki, *The Cavalier Daily's* 2009-10 managing editor, described her impact on the community: "Carol is much more than the University's spokesperson. She is a mentor to young reporters; an honest, creative, and compassionate leader; and a genuine friend – everything the Elizabeth Zintl Leadership Award represents."

HOW HAS UVA CHANGED IN THE YEARS SINCE YOU BEGAN WORKING HERE?

When I joined UVA in 1995, it seemed like a less complex institution. The administration was leaner, and everyone – at all levels – knew each other well. We routinely crossed lines to help each other get things done. Somehow, we never stepped on toes or said, “It’s not my job.” We were family, pulling together. Every day was challenging, but also exhilarating.

I’ve been retired for nine years, and a lot has changed quickly. There are more eyes on higher ed – and more demands. We could see the changes coming: the new funding model with the state was huge, and we began to shift from reliance on the state to more reliance on philanthropy. We launched what was then the largest fund-raising campaign in the history of public higher education. Issues became more complex, reflecting the world around us. Students and their families were looking for a different experience. Helicopter parents became a thing!

Student financial need also became a growing concern nationally, and the University, again leading the way in higher education, created AccessUVA in 2004 to cover the cost of attending the University for students who qualified, but lacked the family resources to afford it. It was a transformative moment in University history, and one that still makes me proud.

HOW DO YOU THINK DIFFERENT ASPECTS OF YOUR IDENTITY, INCLUDING BEING A WOMAN, IMPACTED HOW PEOPLE RESPONDED TO YOU IN YOUR POSITION?

I started work in 1969. My parents wanted me to have a backup plan. My sister was set on teaching; I was set on journalism. My first job was as a copy editor at *Ladies’ Home Journal*. Women, backup plan or not/teaching or journalism, had to lead in a different way. We learned to use certain skills: we listened more, we built bridges, we crossed lines, and we were accommodating. We lead through compassion and integrity – and by working hard. Turns out those qualities make good leaders!

I tell my grandkids that I used to work circles around people because that’s what women of my age were taught to do. My mother, my great aunts, the many women in my life who worked, were all early mentors, and they created a blueprint for what it would take to succeed. One of the things I loved about coming to UVA was you didn’t ever feel you were alone. No matter the issue – or the crisis – you knew that you had a community of people you could rely on. Many of them women. And many of those women became Zintl award winners. We built our own network.

WHAT KEPT YOU GOING DURING TIMES OF ADVERSITY?

Those networks. I could not have made it through some days without my good friends and colleagues, Pat Lampkin chief among them. But also, every presidential Chief of Staff, everyone in Leonard Sandridge’s office, everyone in Financial Aid, in Admissions, in General Counsel, and on and on.

Of course, one of the greatest things about being at UVA was getting to know students. They made every day a joy – and sometimes a challenge. I made sure that I knew students through *The Cavalier Daily* and other student leader groups. They were often the most rewarding parts of the day.

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But it was the relationships with colleagues that sustained me, because there was never any doubt that we had each other's backs. We dealt with many crises head on – sadness and loss. Maybe it sounds odd to some today, but we had respect for each other that grew into deep and lasting friendships. I loved my women colleagues, and they sustained me later when my husband was diagnosed with a rare form of dementia. They were right there with me, making me laugh through difficult times.

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE A WOMAN IN YOUR POSITION TODAY?

I think the core values of the University – including honor and integrity and being a member of the community of trust – also apply to administrators. Women aspire to create a compassionate workplace, one that's open to discussion, in which you are able to talk freely and disagree amicably. You want to be able to trust your colleagues, and have them return that trust. These qualities transcend any generation. A sense of humor also is very, very, very important. There is no joy in life without laughter. And it begins with being able to laugh at yourself.

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HOW WOULD YOU LIKE TO BE REMEMBERED? WHAT LEGACY DO YOU THINK YOU LEFT?

First, I don't think much about legacies. My life has shifted to grandchildren and what they learn from me, what I learn from them – and what they will remember! But one of the things I learned very early on at UVA from Bob Canevari, who was then the Dean of Students, was the importance of community. He used to refer to it as the community of trust. That was not only among students; his notion extended across Grounds to include faculty and staff. I try to carry that sense of community with me today, whether it be with my family or my friends or my neighbors. Being part of a community of trust is important to me – with deep gratitude to Bob.

I hope people saw me as somebody who could balance the good times and the difficult. Someone who could laugh, but also have empathy and integrity, and who was willing to share the work. I relied on many people across the University to tell our story – students, staff, and faculty. Their support, friendship, quick wit, and love sustained me every day. I was always honored to be part of teams that helped to lead the University during times of crises. I hope that I was someone who was able to communicate clearly and honestly – and with compassion – to the external world about what was happening at the University. I loved the University and what it stood for,

and I always wanted to present it as an institution that stood for honesty and transparency – lessons reinforced by Leonard Sandridge and John Casteen.

When I would speak to a student leadership group, I used to always say: I may be the University spokesperson, but I need students, staff, and faculty to be part of that. There were many voices needed – often topic experts – to frame a narrative.

WHAT IS THE LEGACY OF THE ZINTL AWARD? HOW DO YOU DEFINE WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP?

Women of my age laid the groundwork, hopefully to make it easier, for the next generation of women. But serving on the selection committee for the Zintl awards for several years has been a real-time lesson in change. There are several of us on the committee who knew Elizabeth and who still feel it's important to keep her vision alive – and to support all women, not just those selected for the award.

Each year the committee works hard to select the very best candidate, but increasingly we are struck by the impressive nature of every nominee and the growing legions of extraordinary women leading at UVA. The women who are nominated from across the University bring with them incredible experience, expertise, and management skills in their chosen fields. But more than that, they possess leadership qualities that set them apart as women leaders. We see these qualities time and again as we read the nomination letters full of stories of how they lead. Women continue to lead differently. They are empathetic, compassionate, supportive, collaborative, and inclusive. They listen and are strong communicators. And they possess an abundance of emotional intelligence.

What we're also seeing is that many of these women are still young in their careers, but they have already begun to incorporate these important qualities into how they live, work, and treat their colleagues. And they make it look natural, even easy. I don't want to overuse the word extraordinary, but that's what they are. Extraordinary leaders and extraordinary role models.



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