

Harlan and Debby Beckley



A professor at Washington and Lee University since 1974, Dr. Harlan Beckley helped to create and became the first director of the Shepherd Program for the Interdisciplinary Study of Poverty and Human Capability in 1997. The program offers undergraduate and law students an opportunity to combine course and service internships focused on poverty. This educational program supplements many different majors and helps students understand how their future civic and political activity and professional work can positively impact disadvantaged persons and communities. Beckley is leading the Shepherd Higher Education Poverty Consortium, a collaborative effort with other colleges and universities to initiate and advance sustained curricular and co-curricular education focused on poverty and human capability.

Beckley's wife, Debby, has been a staunch supporter of her husband's work to educate students about poverty and has committed her career as a speech pathologist to enhancing the lives of others. She has served as director of special education and a speech pathologist for Rockbridge County Schools. Since 1982, she has been a speech pathologist for Lexington City Schools, and she also serves the Rockbridge Area Community Services' RAISE Infant Program, which provides comprehensive early intervention services to families with infants and toddlers who have developmental delays or disabilities.

Beckley holds a bachelor's degree in economics from the University of Illinois and a doctoral degree in Christian theological ethics from Vanderbilt University. In 1999, he was named the Fletcher Otey Thomas Professor of Religion and in 2002 he received the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia's Outstanding Faculty Award, the state's highest award for excellence in education. Beckley served as vice president and president of the Society of Christian Ethics from 1999 to 2001 and as acting president of Washington and Lee University in 2005-06.

Debby Beckley holds a bachelor's degree in elementary and special education from the George Peabody College for Teachers and a master's degree in speech pathology from Vanderbilt University.

To honor the couple's service to Washington and Lee, the University's Board of Trustees established the Harlan and Debby Beckley Internship Endowment Fund for the Shepherd Program in 2006. This endowment's purpose is to provide funds for student internships associated with the Shepherd Poverty Program.