

OPINION

Issue In-Focus: Inactive Student Government

A year after the college discontinued the traditional yearbook, the Student Government Association has been suspended until spring 2008, due to a lack of students willing to run for office, among other issues. What do the recent developments in SGA suggest about the student body and the college? What improvements would you recommend in order to make SGA a viable and effective organization?

Sean Riccio

As we, The Decree staff, are sitting in the Writing Lab discussing this piece, Dr. Grattan makes the statement that the yearbook has been discontinued for a year. A wave of shock rolls over the students. "I didn't know that!" "Since when don't we have a yearbook?" The reasons cited by the good doctor suggest a lack of interest, both in purchasing and management. The students protest. "How can we not have a yearbook?"

This begs the question, though: If they care so much about the yearbook, how could they have not noticed its cancellation?

This is all in relation to the discussion on student government, which has been suspended. It seemed a waste to burn the school's small cash reserves on the organization when nobody wanted to run. Our bureaucracy for action in the management of our school has been taken away from us. Where are the angry protests? Where are the loud condemnations of those who would silence us? Why is it that nobody, apparently, gives a crap?

Perhaps the problem lies in the former Student Government Association. What, exactly, did it do? Did it voice issues on behalf of the student body to the administration? Yes, but in a limp-wristed and nebbish way. How many times was the issue of hat-wearing raised, only to be shot down by the administration with little discussion? Perhaps it acted as a way to try students who faced expulsion? Of course not, we have the Judiciary Board for that. Ok, so did it perhaps help students organize events and activities on campus? No, that's the job of the Campus Activities Board, which, by-the-by, has effectively taken over the job of SGA's funding duties. It would seem the SGA's only duty in life was to divvy out money to various clubs and other groups, a function handed over to CAB with little change in affairs.

So why does the disappearance of SGA matter if it was so ineffectual, you might ask? Well, the fact of the matter is it was ineffectual because of us. Why didn't we force through the issues we wanted discussed? Why didn't we demand more direct control over campus activities? Well, we just didn't seem to care. That's the crux of the whole situation, right there. We haven't just failed to keep our republic; we didn't even seem to want it in the first place.

And honestly, so what. Does anybody care now that it's gone? How has it really affected your life and affairs? We at Wesleyan

are a fairly insulated and apathetic lot. As long as we have our cars to get off campus and our sports teams to keep half the student body enrolled, we're going to be just fine. Or at least, we'll be the same as we have been. So don't fret, children of Wesleyan. Go back to sleep. Nothing's the worse for wear.

James Randolph

No yearbook. No SGA. There are a number of things NOT going on at Wesleyan this school year which is partly due to the lack of funding from the school and also a lack of participation from the students. The bottom line is... there is not enough interest in the activities of the school to inspire students or the funding chairmen to commit time and energy into the programs. Aside from the athletics, there is likely no organization on campus which can claim more than twenty active and consistently participative members. Sadly, the very inactive student body is becoming even more uninterested in the falling standards for extracurricular activity at Wesleyan. Without funding from the board to support the imagination of the students, the students lose interest. Without interest and commitment from the students, the board loses faith in the potential of funded programs, leading to a spiraling cycle of disinterest and discontent. As for the student government, the only way to really develop a viable new organization is to spark the interest of the students and give them a reason to be excited about participating in the school's activities. Someone just has to step up and break the chain!

Chris Ochoa

The absence of SGA is directly connected to the absence of student interest. I'm a senior, meaning that for the last three years I've witnessed the successes and failures of SGA. Mostly there have been failures. I have reason to believe that the majority of the student body has recognized these failures as well.

It's not that our student government was not able to perform their duties; it was because the administration did not take them seriously. I've been to several meetings and we've voted an array of changes, but almost all of them fell through the cracks. These failures have left me, and maybe the majority of the student body, feeling that it is useless to commit time and effort just to be ignored.

There is nothing wrong with the structure of SGA. I think their responsibilities should be narrowed down to just serving as a medium for the student body to voice their

concerns and suggestions to the administration. Over the last few years, SGA has been responsible for overseeing all the student organizations' programs. That is the responsibility of the Campus Activities Board (CAB).

If SGA is going to be a viable and effective organization, then the administration is going to have to provide more support. Tuition is really expensive; if the school wants to increase student retention, then it should welcome the students' voice to help make this a college that is more enjoyable and beneficial. Administration's support is the key to developing the SGA as a prominent mainstay on this campus.

Ken Kornegay

The student body has no voice at this school. The Student Government Association is not in existence for the 2007-2008 school year.

One reason for not having SGA is because of high student apathy. Only one person took the time last year to fill out the application and collect the signatures that are needed to run for office. It seems that students did not want the responsibilities that come with holding high-ranking positions.

Another reason why students may not have wanted to hold an SGA office is due to the lack of stability in the Director of Student Activities position. Wesleyan has had an incredible number of changes in that one position. Most heart-breaking was when Gabriel Raynor resigned last fall after completing one of the most successful terms at the position in recent years. Under Gabe's leadership, the number of organizational programs increased and student participation was riding high. That change puzzled the whole student body, especially the students who were active in organizations and programming.

Even when SGA was active, the student voice was never really heard. At one time we wanted to get the Hartness Student Center parking lot paved. That was a waste of time and the request was denied and never brought up again. Then came the collapse of student morale when the step show was cancelled in 2006. The students sent a mad cry out to the administration, but to no avail. The show was cancelled and students could not do anything about it. SGA did not even have a say when the hat policy was created in the middle of a recent school year. Students are still confused over that rule and why it's enforced. When Dr. Newbould was asked why students could not wear hats in the cafeteria, he simply replied, "Some people don't think it is appropriate for hats to be worn while eating." That's not really much of an answer when students are 95% of the people who are eating in the cafeteria.

I cannot say that I blame students for not wanting to put themselves in a position whose advisor was constantly changing.

Jade T. Johnson

With a lack of student government at the college, it suggests that students don't have a say in what is taking place. Considering that most all decisions made by the higher ups in the college affect students directly, I believe that we should have some say in what is going on. I personally did not know that SGA was suspended until spring '08; thus a lack of communication between students and administration is already taking place and, without a student government, it can only get worse. In order to create a more viable student government I think that it is the administration's job to make SGA more appealing to students by explaining that without an organization such as this the student voice will never be, and in turn never be effective.

Kelleigh Jackson

I had heard that the campus's Student Government Association was being suspended but I didn't think that it was true. Though I think that SGA is essential to college life, I don't think that Wesleyan's SGA was particularly effective. It was the main place to discuss problems among students, whether it was the cafeteria food, the recreational hours, or even lack of communication in organizations. But from my previous interactions with SGA regarding lack of communication between me, a former Miss Wesleyan, and the SGA administration, I found that even though I took the issue to the board, it was never solved.

The fact that the school decided to suspend SGA until spring 2008 just proves that those who occupied the board last really didn't set good examples for those who looked up to them. Otherwise, we would

have numerous candidates from the student body for each role. I think that a good way to increase participation in SGA is to encourage the students. If a teacher finds that a student stands out in a class academically and through leadership skills, why not extend a recommendation for SGA. If they show leadership in the classroom, I'm sure they can show leadership through the student government.

Jenna Davis

I don't really keep up with what the Student Government Association does, and I didn't know that it had been suspended. However, I think that the SGA is a major part of our student body. I'm surprised that, out of so many students at Wesleyan, that there weren't enough people to run for SGA positions. SGA makes a lot of things happen for our student body. It seems that there is something wrong with the way SGA was handled for so few people to want to be a part of it.

Like I said before, I don't really know all of what SGA does, and maybe that's a problem. Maybe the school should try to

advertise more when SGA meetings are held, so that the student body can see what is happening around campus. If the student body is more aware of the goings-on of the SGA, then maybe there will be more interest to fulfill positions for the next year.

Joyce Collins

I think suspending SGA is ridiculous! Just because students don't want to be in office does not mean they are not just as interested in the organization as someone who was. Suspending the organization is not going to solve anything, because when the spring semester comes around, the freshmen, and others students new to NCWC, are not going to have a clue as to the mission of SGA. If anything, we should be drawing more attention to the organization to attract students that may be willing to be on the executive board.

One thing that I think the college can do is to hold a meeting about SGA and discuss the issues at hand. Why is student involvement at an all-time low? What are some things we can do to draw more interested students?

Be a Rebel ... Wear a Hat

By Jessica Autumnne Smith
Decree Senior Staff Writer

I could not care less what other people wear. It is their business, not mine, and I am not offended by their particular fashion choices. And from what I can gather, no one is offended by mine. You see, I wear a hat, almost every day; I know – who cares? Apparently, the administration and only the administration. For one reason or another they have enacted a policy to banish headgear from the hallways and classrooms. But students are still allowed to show up in their pajamas. How much sense does that make?

It seems that the ones behind the policy are the only ones who waste time and energy enforcing it. Most professors and the vast majority of students are not bothered by 'violators' of the policy. "We don't care about what's on their heads, it's what's in their heads that really matters," as Dr. Kenneth Finney said in a recent interview. I found

only one objection, and that was to a very specific type of headgear: hooded sweatshirts. I can see the reasoning behind this. Pulling the hood down over the eyes, students might be tempted to sleep in class. That is a legitimate and logical reason to oppose hoods. But ball caps and other forms of headgear? There's no reason that students should not be allowed to wear them.

My hats are not disruptive or offensive. They are souvenirs; reminders of places that I've been, things I have seen and done. One came from the Halifax County Harvest Days Festival, held every year in October; another from the annual Nashville Blooming Festival, held every spring.

Two came from Cherokee, NC where my family has a reunion/vacation every summer. Cherokee is such a beautiful place. Mountains and sky that go on forever. Two more came from Oregon: one from the Lewis and Clark National Historic Park, the other from the Timberline Lodge on top of Mount Hood. That was the first time I have ever seen snow twenty feet deep; the amazing thing was that the roads were clear and passable. Not like home, in NC where a quarter-inch of snow shuts everything down for a week. Still another was a gift...

The point is my hats are special to me. I like to wear them and show them off. And I feel that I should be able to. Well, at least according to the First Amendment of the United States Constitution, the "Supreme Law of the Land" as they call it, I should be able to. Put, plain and simple with no disrespect intended, the right of free speech supersedes any policy made by college staff.

Dr. Finney has established an organized 'resistance' (for lack of a better word) to the hat policy, the Sombrero Liberation Association or the SLA. If you're tired, like I am, of being hassled on your way to class only because you like to keep your hair out of your face and the sun out of your eyes, stand up for your right of free speech as a United States citizen. Wear a hat, simply because you can. What you wear makes no difference to me; you want to wear pajamas to class, be my guest. It just doesn't bother me. But as for me, if my hat offends you (although I can't imagine why), well, then, just don't look at it. As they say, out of sight, out of mind



THE DECREE

since 1960 "of, by, and for the Wesleyan community."

STAFF

Senior Staff Writers

Jessica D. Jones
Jessica Smith
Christine Werfelman

Staff Writers

Kelvin Clark
Joyce Collins
Jenna Davis
Kimberly Garrett
Kelleigh Jackson
Brandon Jones
Ken Kornegay
Amanda Landi
Chris Ochoa
James Randolph
Sean Riccio

Special Contributors

Anthony DeGregorio
Grace Wallace

Sports Editor

Trevor Seibert

Sports Writers

Mikey Case
Brock Griffin
Jade Johnson

Staff Photographer

Kathleen Penrod

Associate Art Director

Kathleen Penrod

Faculty Advisor

Dr. William Grattan
171 Braswell
Phone: 985-5336
Email: WJGrattan@ncwc.edu

The Decree office is on the first floor of the Hartness Center.

Copyright Policy

The Decree holds the copyright of every article and graphic for one-time and future publication at the discretion of the editorial board. Submission implies agreement with this policy.

Editorial Statement

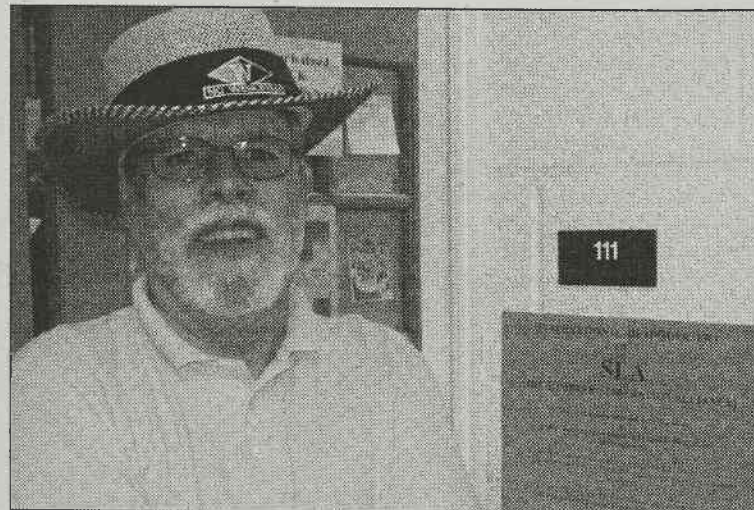
Commentary/opinion and letters to the editor represent the individual author's views, and not necessarily those of North Carolina Wesleyan College, the Decree staff or the Decree advisor.

Submissions

To suggest an article, or submit an opinion piece or letter to the editor, send an email attachment (Microsoft Word) to: WJGrattan@ncwc.edu. Note that the Decree staff checks all submissions for accuracy and edits in accordance with acceptable grammar and punctuation as well as AP Style.

Corrections

The Decree corrects mistakes of substance. If you would like to request a correction, send an email to WJGrattan@ncwc.edu, or call 985-5336



History Professor Ken Finney has organized the SLA, Sombrero Liberation Association. Decree Staff Photo