

THE DECREE

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NORTH CAROLINA WESLEYAN COLLEGE, ROCKY MOUNT, NORTH CAROLINA 27804

Student Government Back with New Leadership

By Joyce Collins
Decree News Editor

New Student Government Association President Jacob Strickland and his administration have outlined an ambitious agenda for 2008-09, bringing energy to an organization that was inactive last year.

Strickland's vice president is Juliana Richardson and the treasurer is Alexis Gallop. The secretary position is currently open.

In last spring's election, Strickland earned 56 percent of the votes in defeating his opponent, Kathleen Penrod, who got 44 percent, according to Coordinator of Student Activities Jennifer Evans. Richardson and Gallop were unopposed.

The SGA Administration plans to:

- Make campus more safe
- Improve food services
- Create an "Earth friendly" recycling program

• Revamp and maintain SGA
"One of my goals is to improve security so that students can feel safe, and feel that their personal property will be safe in their rooms," Strickland said. He has suggested a front gate and cameras around campus. "I'm not saying we need cameras all throughout the residence halls, but some in the front so that we can see who is coming in and out of the dorms," he said.

A sophomore male agreed with Strickland's stance. "I would like for us to have a front gate at the entrance of the school," said the student, who asked not to be identified. "It bugs me that people can just randomly drive on our campus. I would be more at ease if our campus was more secure."

Strickland has called for improving the quality of food served in the cafeteria as well as changing the cafeteria hours. "We're the ones who eat there," he said, "so why don't we have a hand in deciding when and what we eat?"

Strickland would also like to set up a recycling program around campus to help stop the school from wasting paper. "I once received three letters for an Honors Ceremony," he noted.

Not all students agreed with Strickland's priorities. Sophomore Jessica Jackson said she would focus on hav-

Advice Offered For Freshmen

By Decree Staff

Upperclassmen, faculty and staff offered plenty of advice for first-year students. Most stressed the need for solid study habits, while others shared tips for enjoying their time at North Carolina Wesleyan.

"Remember why you're here—it's all about your education," said junior Milani Wilson. "I've been here long enough to be a senior but am still only a junior; so take it from a student who has been off the path: Try to have tunnel vision."

Wilson's comments were echoed by senior Reggie Wells. "Stay focused in the books," he said. "Freshmen year is the most important year because it can make or break you. If you dig too much of a hole for yourself, then you won't be able to climb out. Start strong, so it's easier to finish strong."

Jehovah Santiago reminded students about one fact that is easy to forget: that college is different from high school. "You're now on your own and you came here because YOU care about your education," he said. "College is a lot more responsibility. It's the real world."

Said senior Latoya Pilgreen-Little: "Stay focused. Be persistent."

Krystal Mitchell, a student accounts representative in the business office, urged students to "go to class, study (and pay your bill)."

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SGA will be led this year by, from left, Jacob Strickland, president, Juliana Richardson, vice president, and Alexis Gallop, treasurer.
Photo by Decree staff.

ing better programs and activities for students. "One of the SGA President's goals should be improving the quality of events on campus," Jackson said.

Strickland, a junior, noted the important role that students must play in bringing about change. "I want students on this campus to treat themselves and others, and this campus, with respect," he said. "If they expect me to work hard to try to improve conditions on this campus for them, I expect them to work to maintain those changes so that the changes will stay in place."

Music Director Gene Heavner has

been impressed with Strickland, a member of the Wesleyan Singers. "He has a desire to do whatever he can to improve student life on campus," said Heavner. "He's always quick to volunteer his help for projects and is very easy to work with."

Carl Lewis, instructor of justice studies, agreed that Strickland will flourish in his new role. "Jacob is a dependable, courteous, and hardworking student," Lewis said. Students and administration can always count on him "to perform in an exemplary manner."

NCWC to Launch Emergency Notification System

NC Wesleyan is initiating an emergency notification system to alert members of the college community of a crisis or imminent danger.

"The system is essentially operational," said Dean of Students Robert Perkins, "but we want to test it and are waiting until we have a significant number of faculty and staff cell phone numbers. We are ready to upload the student numbers into the system, and will probably do this soon."

As of September 20, Dean Perkins reports, about a third of faculty and staff has given their cell phone numbers to the Office of Student Affairs.

Dean Perkins has provided the following overview of the system:

If an emergency occurs, the campus-wide alarm will be sounded, followed by broadcast messages on the campus computer system and voicemail messages to those individuals who have provided a cell phone number to the Office of Student Affairs.

When the alarm is heard, individuals should expect to receive a message within minutes of the onset of the emergency on their cell phones as well as the college's computer system and website, providing information on the nature of the emergency and how to respond.

At the time that a decision is made to sound the alarm, the Rocky Mount police and fire department will also be contacted.

An emergency response team consisting of key administrators, security, and medical staff will assist with the implementation of the emergency response plan both during and after the event.

Additionally, there will be a first alert group—comprised of individuals whose positions on campus or location in specific buildings have been identified—that will be trained to take specific action and provide additional information in the event of a campus-wide emergency.

Decree News Editor James Randolph conducted a recent email interview with Dean Perkins on the origins of the system:

Q. What prompted you to initiate the new emergency alert system? Incidents at Virginia Tech and Northern Illinois were big media stories; did these stories affect

the decision to institute a new emergency alert system?

A. First of all, let me say that as the Dean of Students I am always thinking about the welfare of the campus community. This goes way back to the concept of in loco parentis, where colleges and universities were expected to act in place of the parents when students were on campus. I take this role very seriously. But there is a great deal of federal legislation that I have to pay close attention to as well, including the Federal Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA), and the Campus Security Policy and Campus Crime Statistics Act (otherwise known as the Cleary Act), among others. The Cleary Act mandates that colleges and universities publish an annual report of crime that occurs on the campus and in the adjacent vicinity. Clearly, however, the tragic incident at Virginia Tech, followed by Northern Illinois, as well as the incident last fall at Ferrum College had an effect on my decision to speed up the process of preparing an emergency response plan for Wesleyan.

Q. Did last year's incident where an individual was charged with brandishing a firearm on campus affect the decision?

A. I was already researching and working on a draft of a policy when this incident occurred. While the incident brought the college a great deal of undesired publicity, it also created a great deal of support for the need for an early warning notification system and emergency response plan.

Q. Recently, you showed me an email sent to the faculty and staff (you also pointed out that there is a condensed version of the information within the 2008-2009 handbook). Will students receive an email or some form of direct contact that further explains the new system to them?

A. I am planning on providing more information to the students once we are ready to do a test of the new campus emergency notification system. We talked about this a great deal with new

A Rocky Mount native, Strickland is an honors student who is majoring in justice studies. Besides Wesleyan Singers, he has been involved in campus life as an ambassador for the college's admissions office, a member of the Psychology Club and a member of the Refuge Campus Ministry.

Richardson, a Roanoke Rapids native, is double majoring in psychology and justice studies. Among her many campus activities are tennis, cross country, and the Campus Activities Board. One of her primary goals is to

"to rebuild and restore SGA to what it once was and to allow the students to once again have a voice on this campus."

Cross-country Coach Dominic Modise praised Richardson as one of the top student-athletes that he's coached in his career. "She will be a good VP because of her work ethic," he said. "She cares about the student body. She's really in touch. She wants to see improvements and I think she'll make great impact on campus."

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NC Wesleyan Sees Jump In New International Students

By Jessica Autumnne Smith
Decree Senior Editor

The gender imbalance remains high on campus while NC Wesleyan has seen a sharp rise in the number of international students and a slight improvement in overall grade point average among this fall's new students.

This year's freshman class consists of 260 students, along with 42 new transfer students. There are 16 new honors students, 5 valedictorians, and 31 new first-year international students, up from only 9 last year.

There was a record application pool this year, according to Gary Sherman, vice president of enrollment. Of the 1631 applicants, 72 percent were accepted. Also, the residence halls are currently at 98 percent capacity, which allows for a more lively campus life,

stated Sherman in a recent interview.

The gender imbalance remains unchanged from last year; the freshman class consists of 64 percent males and 36 percent females, as compared to the overall college population of 57 percent males and 43 percent females. Native North Carolinians make up 60 percent of this new class, as compared to 64 percent of the overall college population. This supports a recent trend toward the acceptance of out-of-state and international students, Sherman said.

The racial makeup of the freshmen was listed as follows: 42 percent African American, 37 percent Caucasian, 3.5 percent Hispanic, 12 percent non-identifying, and 5.5 percent "Other." Wesleyan's campus is

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students during the Summer Start Days and orientation. Returning students who went through the administrative check-in process were asked to provide a current cell phone number for use in case of a campus emergency. And in a sense, we have tested smaller parts of the plan with the tornado concern earlier this month and tropical storm Hanna.

Q. To your credit, none of your predecessors attempted to start anything remotely close to the new emergency alert system. Are there any other new measures of security that you are trying to implement?

A. Many do not know that I spent a great deal of time last year preparing the college's new "Gender Discrimination and Sexual Harassment Policy" for the Office of Civil Rights. Katie Akers (former director of residence life) and I also revised the Code of Student Conduct and Standards, and published an updated student handbook, which was last done in 2006. We have also improved the security in the residence halls and have been reviewing external lighting on campus.

I am currently in the process of establishing a Campus Safety Committee comprised of faculty, staff, and students to assist me in finalizing the formal Emergency Response Plan. Please understand that this is a large, very complicated plan that endeavors to cover all types of emergencies, from acts of violence and storms to health-related emergencies and computer viruses. This takes time, but we are moving as quickly as possible. In the meantime, our current campus security procedures, Student Affairs on-call procedures, hurricane procedures, and the soon-to-be-tested campus emergency notification system help to make our campus a very safe place to be.

Q. Currently, as outlined in the "Emergency Response Plan Brief Description," community members who feel that the system should be activated for whatever reason are instructed to contact campus security. Will campus security be solely responsible for activation of the system? Will anyone else have the authority to activate the system?

A. The current plan is for the campus emergency notification system to be

activated by the dean of students or his/her designee, in consultation with the president of the college.

Q. What challenges, if any, have you faced while instituting the new system?

A. Finding the funds to pay for the alarm system, developing the protocol for activating the campus emergency response system, getting the campus community to provide cell phone numbers, and finding the time to get all of this done while successfully handling everything else.

Q. Some staff members have stated that tests were run of the emergency alert system during the summer? What were the results?

A. We did not actually test the campus emergency notification system during the summer, but merely the alarm (siren) component of the system. This did not occur until August, and we are still working some things out with it.

Q. Lastly, is there anything additional that you would want faculty, staff, and/or students to know about the new system?

A. I do not believe that there is anything more that I can share about the new system at this time, but I would like to request the assistance of the campus community:

If you have not already done so, please provide my office with a current cell phone number to be put into the new system.

If you have ideas as to how the college can improve campus security, please do not hesitate to send them to me.

Should you be in possession of information about the conduct of others which may endanger the welfare of others or the campus community, please do not hesitate to share that information with me, a member of the Student Affairs staff, or campus security.

The most important thing that we can do to ensure the welfare of our campus community is to function as a community, what Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. referred to as the "Beloved Community," by talking with each other, sharing ideas, and confronting the thoughts and actions of our friends and colleagues when such thoughts and actions might be potentially harmful to others as well as the community.