

NEWS & OPINION

Issue In-Focus: Student Retention at NC Wesleyan College

Under financial stress, Wesleyan is striving to improve student retention. For this issue, Decree staff members were asked for their views on the issue.

What can the college do to improve retention?

Jarad Brown

To return or not to return, that is the question. Unfortunately, for too many students, the answer to that question is not to return. This retention issue has caused several problems, most notably the finances of the college being a complete joke. To address this problem, the college needs to look no farther than itself. The biggest thing the college could and should do is make Wesleyan an environment students want to be in. Addressing problems with the dorms such as consistently bad plumbing, defaced walls, and sub-par furniture could go a long way. Also keeping in mind that whether they like it or not, the entire college's staff, from professors, to cafeteria workers, all the way to housekeeping, is here for the students. The students pay to be here, they pay for a service and receiving it would go a long way toward keeping bodies on campus.

Joyce Collins

One thing that the college can do to improve retention is simply listen to the students. If the students say they would like something that is reasonable and within the college's means, I don't see why it would be an issue. This can be as simple as adding an hour or two to the café/grill hours, or as complex as having a music artist perform at homecoming. Another feature that may help with retention is to consider special housing for students with children. Wesleyan could open a daycare so that while students are in class, their children are being watched in an on-campus facility. As part of this initiative, Wesleyan could add child care as another major, which could have the child care majors running and maintaining the daycare facility.

Julianne Cyr

First I think the caliber of students should be raised. I believe in giving plenty of people the opportunity to attend college, but accepting students who have extremely low SAT scores, combined with extremely low GPAs, may not be the best route for the school. Some of these students may be admitted to the college if they show promise. However, the standard for the overall GPA and

SAT should be raised. Allowing in students who desire to learn and have the background to show this can quickly change the retention rate.

The college may also consider investing more money in the facilities. This year there appears to be a lot of improvements being made to the grounds, and I commend the college for these accomplishments. Changes are being made to the library, the writing lab, and even to the student support center. The buildings and the facilities need to be made accessible to all students. This means more technology and greater access for students with disabilities. Too often do I see a sad student with a broken foot climbing the stairs to one building or another. Accessibility is always an important issue. And there needs to be more quiet places on campus for students to rest or to write a paper.

Jade T. Johnson

I feel that the college can make a better effort in keeping young minds interested. Most of the incoming freshman are football players, so, granted, they spend most of their time outside of the classroom on the football field. But for the females and males that don't participate in the sport it is difficult for them to maintain interest. In other words, Give Us Something To Do! It is understandable that the college is having financial difficulties at this time, but I believe that if we spent a little more money and effort on student activities, there may be a few more student sticking around for more than one or two semesters. The lack of clubs and programs at Wesleyan make many students search for a more well-rounded college experience in schools such as ECU or NC State.

There are plenty of things that I think the college could improve upon to increase student retention that may not even cost that much money. I think that very few professors actually show interest in their students outside the classroom, and I think that in the case of freshmen, they need a more hands-on approach. These are the main reasons why students leave.

Amanda Landi

Student Activities has had its ups and downs since I've been here, but Jennifer Evans has done a very good job of getting the word out to students, and creating different events for students. I think the college can offer more majors, such as art and music, to bring in more of the kids from artistic families that live

in cities. This will bring in more money as well as bring in and keep more kids. Another issue would be to give financial aid to students who keep up their GPAs. They will be more likely to stay with the school, as compared to students who get scholarships with low GPAs just because of playing on a team. This way it will equal out.

James Randolph

Well, I think that one of the biggest problems as far as retention is the ongoing false promises during initial recruitment. Many students are lured to Wesleyan with the promise of athletic stardom, low tuition, and, in general, a glorious college experience that almost never lives up to expectations. As noted, a great deal of students come to play sports, and then some, within a week or two, realize that they will likely ride the bench. Thus they are out the door before they finish a semester, let alone a full year.

Another big issue is financial aid; it's a pretty good idea when you're trying to attract freshmen to take care of their financial aid first. But for the upper-classman, it's a big turnoff when your financial aid is decreased, dropped, or as one student was told when calling over the summer "not our biggest priority." If you cater to freshmen, it's hard to get your sophomores, juniors, and seniors to return when they're looked at as second class citizens. Recruiting should be more focused on finding students dedicated to career fields that Wesleyan is ready to prepare and push them into. Athletic recruitment should be limited and higher standards should be set in place for bringing students aboard.

Jessica Smith

To improve retention and reduce the number of students transferring, the college might consider adding majors or developing some kind of masters program. Also, the school might consider broadening the types of classes offered, and offering more than one section of classes that are essential to acquiring a major or minor. Scheduling classes has always presented a unique challenge for me, and I only have one major and minor. I don't know how the people with more than one major are able to complete their programs. The school might also consider lowering tuition, if at all possible. If it were not for scholarships and loans, I would not be going to this school. It is very costly to go to college at all, let alone a small private institution.

What can students do?

Jarad Brown

As students, we should expect the staff to be here for us and to do things that cater to student's needs and overall wants; however we also need to exercise patience. For the college to do just about anything for students, it takes money and with students leaving left and right, it's more difficult. It's not always the college's fault when a student decides his or her time at Wesleyan is up. Some things are simply out of the college's control, so as a student body we need to be patient and encourage freshmen and all students to stick around. In doing this more money will become available, and it will be easier for the college to do things for students.

Joyce Collins

Because some students may struggle financially with funding their education at Wesleyan, one thing I think students can do to improve retention is to keep their grades up. Students sometimes don't realize what impact their grades may have on their future. The higher your GPA is, the more grants and scholarships you may qualify for. If your GPA falls below a 2.0, you may be at risk of losing your federal aid. This means that you will have to pay to attend Wesleyan out-of-pocket. At the same time, I do not blame the government, because why should they use tax payers' dollars on students who cannot keep a 2.0?

Julianne Cyr

One method for improving retention is to create a wider variety of on-campus activities to get the students involved. Part of this problem, I do have to admit, is that campus clubs and organizations seem to be limited in what activities they

are willing to sponsor. However, a good combined push could be used from faculty, staff, and students to come up with wonderful ideas for programs that would interest students. Too often I hear, "There's nothing to do on campus." And too often I want to respond, "College is what you make of it. If you find something lacking, create something new."

Jade Johnson

Even though the college may have its downfalls, there are many students that just don't care about their education enough to stay in school! That is a big issue with retention. I know many students who only stayed a semester or two because they didn't even want to take the time to get out of a bed in morning. Students have to realize that this is not high school anymore; more than likely if you live on campus, your mom or dad is not going to wake you up for school. Students need to learn how to manage their time, learn to take time out to study for classes and get enough rest.

Amanda Landi

The reason I stayed at Wesleyan is because of the small campus. I came from a school of over 3,000 students and a graduating class of 600. The small

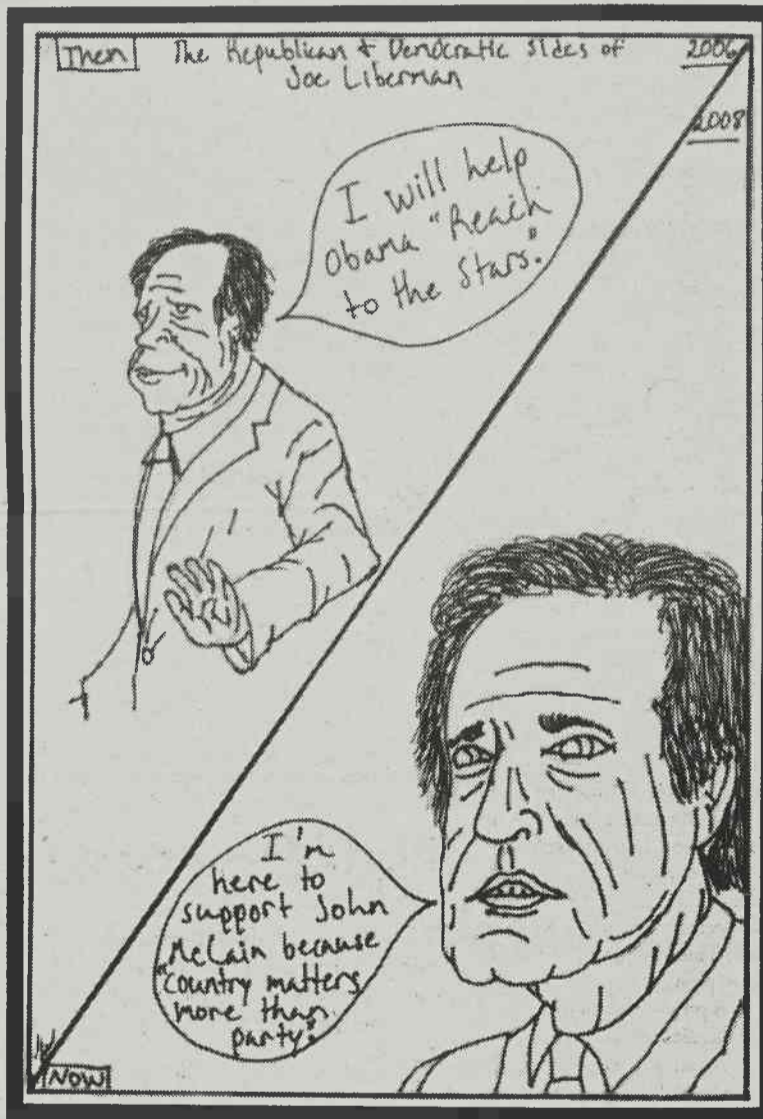
campus provided me with an intimacy with other students and professors that I had never experienced before, and I enjoyed it very much. With the small campus, I learned, came the apathy of most students. Many Wesleyan students will go to class and return to their rooms and hang out, and then go home for the weekends. This can be said of Wesleyan campus: it's whatever YOU make it out to be.

James Randolph

As far as the students, on-campus activity levels are severely low and an increase in involvement in current activities may help to boost the morale of those attempting to flee Wesleyan as a result of sheer boredom. Other than that, there is not much else the students can do other than refrain from being a nuisance.

Jessica Smith

It is not the responsibility of the students to attract, enroll, and retain students. That is the responsibility of the college. Students have enough to keep up with: classes, papers, exams, presentations. I, personally, do not have time to worry about how many people will transfer this year, and really do not know how I could influence their decision to stay or leave.



Summer Accident Claims Lives of Two Former Students

**By Joyce Collins
Decree News Editor**

Classmates recalled memories of two former Wesleyan students who drowned near Raleigh over the summer. One of the former students died as he tried to save his friend.

According to WRAL.com, Michael Patrick McDowell, 20, John Brian Taylor, 21, and an unidentified man went swimming in the Neuse River in Raleigh on Wednesday, July 9, at around 2 a.m. After swimming across the river, the men walked to the Milburn Dam.

Then at about 3, WRAL reported, the men began to swim back, but Taylor apparently began to struggle. Family members later said that McDowell and the other man tried to help Taylor. Only the unidentified man emerged from the river.

One Wesleyan student expressed her initial reaction to learning about the two former Bishops, who attended Wesleyan in 2006-07.

Gloria Moore said she was devastated by the news of their deaths. "Everyone has their scheduled appointment that God has given them," said Moore. "God needed two angels and so he chose Mikey and John."

Kearston Kenner, a friend of both victims, described her fondest memory of the two. "I am going to miss Mikey saying, 'no homo' to everything," said Kenner. "And I'll miss John for playfully beating me up for the smallest things."

Jaleesa Murray said that the two friends made her and others feel safe. "They actually protected and looked out for us," said Murray. "I'm going to miss John for trying to rap and Mikey for his New York accent," she said.

Crystal Marable focused on what she remembered the most about them. "They were always there for us when we needed them," said Marable.

Anyone who is interested in planning a memorial service for McDowell and Taylor is encouraged to contact Wesleyan Chaplain Barry Drum. "I'd be honored to hold a memorial service for the two young men," said Rev. Drum. "We could plant a tree in their honor."

According to Registrar Cliff Sullivan, McDowell was a freshman who attended Wesleyan during the fall of 2006 and the spring of 2007. Taylor was a transfer from Louisburg College and stayed at Wesleyan from fall of 2006 to fall of 2007 as a business major. Both men were football players: McDowell was a

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