

NEWS & OPINION

Issue In-Focus: Classroom Attendance Policies at Wesleyan

What do you think of classroom attendance policies? What do you think would happen if Wesleyan abolished attendance policies campus-wide?

Jarad Brown

Mandated class attendance is a good policy for the college. One of the biggest complaints of faculty, staff, and some students is that Wesleyan's academic standards are too low. An attendance policy in some ways helps this problem, by assuring students are in class. Some students may think that they should be allowed to come and go to class as they please, as long as they do well in terms of grades, but not every student can handle that. The majority of students couldn't miss several classes and still do well, and it is in the college's best interest to encourage all students to strive academically, and attendance policies do that.

Nastasia Burnette

Wesleyan professors enforcing an attendance policy is not a good idea. I feel that it is the student's decision to determine if he or she wants to be a good student and attend class daily, acquiring the proper knowledge and skills that they are paying over \$28,000 a year to receive. The teachers are going to receive pay whether or not the students attend classes. If I did have power over this issue, credit would not be given or taken due to attendance. We are supposed to attend class. Why should students be rewarded for attending and why should we be harmed for not attending class, if quizzes, tests, home work, papers, and other assignments are receiving good scores. I say our assignments should be what earn students their grades.

Joyce Collins

If the college abolished the attendance policy, then students more than likely would not be as "present" in class as before. At the same time, students who really are not interested in going class will not go, whether there is an attendance policy being

exercised or not. But in the long run, if students did not attend class regularly, then their grades and education, more than likely, would suffer. On the other hand, doing away with the attendance policy would save trees by alleviating the paperwork needed to drop students and to take roll daily.

Jade Johnson

If the college abolished the attendance policy, I think it would have an equally positive and negative effect on students. The negative, I think, is that students would take full advantage of not having an attendance policy by missing more classes. It would be good because it would give students a chance to be independent and make their own decisions as young adults. I think the attendance policy benefits the teachers more than the students because in some classes there seems to be a lot of "busy work." So in some cases, it wouldn't be that hard for a student to pass a class even if he or she missed a bunch of days.

Ashley Meadows

Every professor that I've had at Wesleyan has enforced an attendance policy. If attendance policies were abolished, I feel students would quit attending classes. Usually, professors allow the attendance to count as a fraction of a student's grade point average; therefore, even though students at Wesleyan are adults, attendance policies act as a type of incentive to hopefully make the student come to class. Over all, Wesleyan should continue to factor in attendance as part of the class requirements because without this minor detail it would hurt the school as well as the students.

James Randolph

If the attendance policies were abolished, then college would be a better place for students and professors. There would be no more struggling to get to class when you have other

priorities, no more teachers dropping students with good grades for no other reason than an outdated policy. Online universities are becoming so popular because of this very reason... convenience to both parties. If a professor feels like taking a day off, he or she still gets paid. If a student does, he or she must still pay. As long as the course material is given and the student demonstrates an understanding and eventually mastery of that subject material, the days that he or she shows up for lecture should not affect their ability to perform in class. There are some arguments to the contrary. One is that if the students don't show up, then they won't learn the material and it will be a waste of the professor's time. But contrary to popular belief, college students are adults and have to be responsible for their own well-being. If they don't show and don't complete their coursework, the professors should not feel guilty or unappreciated; it was simply a choice the student made.

Jessica A. Smith

Taking attendance seems, to me, like a waste of time. It takes up a good ten minutes or so of every class period to figure out who isn't there, while those who did show up have to wait for class to get started. Professors have enough to keep track of without keeping track of students' whereabouts. This isn't elementary school. We're in college now. I (and most of you) am paying good money to be here; why skip and miss out on something you've already paid for? Students need to take responsibility for themselves. They should not need a policy or bonus points for incentive to attend classes they have chosen and paid for.

Anthony Tyus

Of course, if a student has too many unexcused days of class, he or she deserves to be dropped with an "F" in the course. Students need to have a standard or code to guide their decisions sensibly so they will not be in jeopardy of facing negative consequences. An attendance policy that is enforced and goes according to standards set by the college administration will keep students in the classroom more often and give them less of a reason to miss; they will be more engaged in learning the course material. If the college were to abolish the policy, its image would look bad because administration or parents would think professors do not care about the learning of the students who miss so many class days. I predict that the number of failed courses would rise every semester when an attendance policy is not present.

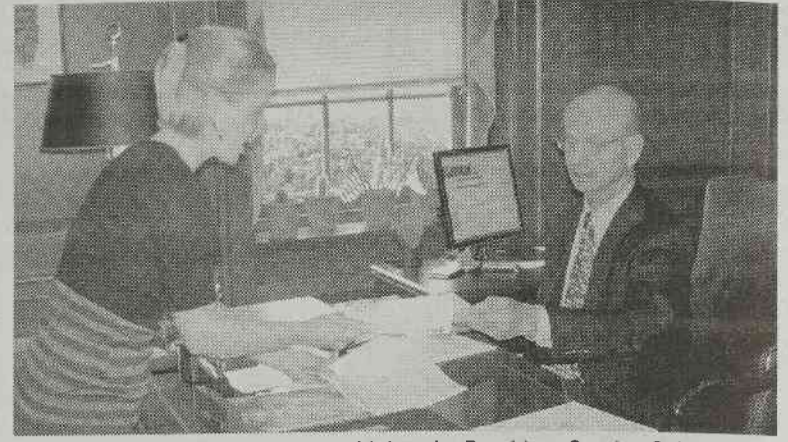
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of the inaugural balls. "What made it so exhilarating," she said, "was it was under very strict supervision by police and Secret Service."

A business major and a member of the Wesleyan basketball team, Williams first became involved with the Young Leaders program as a student at Northern Durham High School, where she was chosen to attend a summer conference sponsored by the NYLC. She continued to be successful academically, and after enrolling at NC Wesleyan she was invited by NYLC to attend the Presidential Inauguration. To fund her trip, she recruited sponsors in the Durham area last summer.

Williams said she was "honored" and "excited to have a chance to live to see the dream [Senator Obama] of the dreamer [Martin Luther King Jr.] being fulfilled."

(Public Relations contributed to this report.)



Samantha McAuliffe, seen here with interim President Stanley Caine, is one of many Wesleyan alumni now employed at the college. Decree Photo by C. Thomas.

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that they won't enjoy the event so they don't go. Granted, we as a college do have some things to work on, but I do believe that students need to take ownership and pride in their campus and work with administrators to make the improvements that are wanted."

These alumni can be found actively working in their designated departments like any other worker at Wesleyan, putting their degrees to use.

Mitchell said she puts her psychology education to use in the business office where she has to maintain a working relationship with the students and their parents. "Sometimes I have to 'counsel' them on how to handle the payments on their accounts," she said, "or tell them what would be the next step to take as far as referring them to financial aid for additional assistance."

Cain works as a liaison between the college and over ten thousand of its alumni and manages the unrestricted annual fundraising of the college. He said that he actively puts his minor to use in the position he has now. "My current job is completely unrelated to my major, but I would say that my minor in history has been exercised," said Cain. "I take every opportunity I can to sit down with our alumni and learn about NCWC and its history from their perspective. I have spoken to alumni who remember there being one dorm and one classroom building on campus when they were attending. I learn the history of NCWC every time I take a moment and listen to our alumni."

When asked what he liked most about his job, Cain said that he appreciates the opportunity to interact with NCWC graduates. "The perspective that I have gained by listening to alumni has enabled me to see Wesleyan in a more complete light," he said. "It is always important to strive to understand the history of any situation or relationship. It is through our ability to learn from the past that we can build a brighter future."

Mitchell said she found assisting students with their accounts to be most gratifying. "Helping students resolve their financial problems is what I like best about my job," she said.

Johnson discussed the essential role financial aid plays in determining whether or not someone attends Wesleyan. "I enjoy assisting students financing their educational dream," she said. "I'm aware that without financial aid, many students would not have the opportunity to pursue their educational goals. If I did not attend Wesleyan for my undergraduate degree, or worked as a work-study student in the Financial Aid Office, I'm not sure if I would be working in the ever-changing and challenging world of financial aid. Working in financial aid, you either love what you're doing or hate it. I took this job and I love it."

Of course having background information and experience at a company prior to working there can be an advantage. With that said, what are the advantages and disadvantages, if any, of working for the place where you were educated?

According to Cain, the benefits of being an alumni working at Wesleyan are many. "A few of the benefits were that I already knew my way around campus; I already had relationships with many of the staff, faculty and students that I would need to work

with," said Cain. "Once again being an alumnus of Wesleyan and working here as well gives me the opportunity to give back and invest into a community that gave so much and invested so much into my life. If there are any disadvantages to working at your alma mater, I would say that the challenge of building new relationships is not as great. Sometimes as professionals, you need different types of challenges to help you learn and prepare for the challenges of the future."

Cain said he would recommend that other alumni pursue the employment opportunities at Wesleyan, because of the valuable experience and intra-personal skills that professionals can gain from working in academia and in the non-profit sector. Like Cain, Mitchell supports the idea as well. "It's a great opportunity to help improve on some of the things that we may have complained about when we were students," she said.

When asked "If you did not attend Wesleyan for your undergraduate degree, do you think you would still be employed here?" some of the alumni pondered.

Davis does not think he would be working at Wesleyan if he had not attended the school. "I was originally going to West Virginia University to study secondary education," he said. "It's a good thing I decided against it. Aside from the obvious, that I wouldn't have met a lot of my good friends, I probably wouldn't have been introduced to student affairs as a career. My initial career goal was to become a history teacher so although I can't be too sure how things would have turned out otherwise, I don't think, given my career path, I would have considered working at Wesleyan."

Cain probably would not be employed by Wesleyan if he had chosen another institution for his undergraduate degree. "Personally, I moved from Washington D.C. to Rocky Mount to attend Wesleyan," he said. "If I had to guess, I would say that I probably would not be employed at NCWC because I would not have had the opportunities to network and build the relationships with NCWC and Rocky Mount. I must add that any employment opportunity that can offer a tight-knit community and a mission oriented around helping others succeed, like Wesleyan offers, would be very attractive to most young professionals."

McAuliffe agrees that she would not be where she is today if she did not go to NCWC. "This career is something I never would have imagined for myself," she said. "Attending Wesleyan allowed me to become very involved on campus and build relationships with many administrators and faculty members. I doubt seriously that my other college choices (all large institutions) would have allowed such interaction."

Cain is pleased with the idea of alumni working for the college, noting that it speaks well of the college as well as its graduates. "If a college feels so confident in the graduates it produces to hire them, it must mean that the college as a whole is making strides in the right direction," he said. "It also communicates a desire on behalf of the alumni to give back to their alma mater. Giving back is always a sign of a healthy relationship."

THE DECREE

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Editors, News & Features

Joyce Collins
James Randolph

Editors, Sports & Activities

Jarad Brown
Jade Johnson

Senior Editor

Jessica Smith

Cartoonist

Lorenzo Whitley

Faculty Advisor

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

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