

Opinion

Issue In-Focus: Why Do Some NCWC Students Lack School Pride?

In a recent meeting with Decree staff writers, President Jacob Strickland said that SGA is taking much-needed steps to strengthen school pride among the student body. During a separate interview session, a new Wesleyan staff member commented that many students have low expectations for their college. What's the main reason for such negative feelings?

Georgettae Fields-Turrentine

NCWC students have a lack of school pride because we pay all this money for tuition and half the time we don't know where the money is going. Why should students want to participate in various events if they feel out of the loop? Signs for different events (excluding parties) are often overlooked because signs don't talk. A mere piece of paper with writing on it isn't going to get anyone's attention. Our advertising techniques are in desperate need of improvement. Publicizing events in the cafeteria, sending out emails, using colorful paper, having people wear signs and just generally showing more enthusiasm are some ways to increase school spirit. Just because something sounds nice and appealing doesn't mean a big turnout is going to be the result. It's all about promotion. Also, if the students see teachers participating, that too will make a big difference.

Leila Heinonen

I think students have low expectations mostly because they compare NCWC to other big schools where their friends are. Most students are aware that the school doesn't have that much money to improve the campus life—build big football stadiums, have concerts and big parties. I also think that they have low expectations because the spirit of the school is low and nothing really happens. Like SGA President Jacob Strickland said, it is up to us students to make the change, affect the school, be part of the community and try to change something and not just give up and not care.

Rodney Holley

I think that students lack pride and have low morale because students come to Wesleyan with low expectations. I've talked to a lot of students that initially came to Wesleyan in hopes of transferring to a bigger school. However, when the plan to transfer doesn't work out, they're forced to stay at a place that they didn't like in the first place. Thus, they have a "don't care" attitude about a lot of things on campus. Furthermore, the little things that can easily be fixed aren't. Many students get mad when there aren't any paper towels in the bathroom over the weekend or that the cafeteria is only opened an hour on weekends, when the quality of food seems to dip.

John Kostet

I believe low morale and lack of school pride probably have to do with the lack of involvement. It seems like the proudest students are the ones who are the most involved as well. For example, athletes take great pride in their programs and teams. And I bet that both the Wesleyan Singers and the Quiz Bowl team feel somewhat good about our school. But if you're not an athlete and not involved in any other programs or clubs, if you're only going back and forth from the class room, I think it would be hard to feel pride or develop a relationship to the school. I have the sense that there are not that many non-athletic programs that involve people, and the ones we have are not very well established. I guess fraternities and sororities might lift up the pride. But it is going to take a while to establish them, just as it has taken time to establish and form a culture among the athletic programs.

Emelie Lundgren

The main reasons for the lack of school pride in Wesleyan are lack of communication and internal promotion from the administration and Student Life. Since the students are not entitled to view the budget of the school, we have no clue what our money is being used to improve. And since Wesleyan needs improvement in every way—from employing more faculty to renovating the dorms to providing more means to the sports teams—we are likely to miss out on the improvements that might be done since they are most likely to be internal. As far as we are concerned at the moment, our tuition has been raised and we are giving more and more money to the school without anything happening to benefit us. As mentioned, this might not be the case but without communicating with the students about where the money goes to, this is all we see. This results in the students feeling used, and we are unwilling to give anything back, such as commitment to the school. Therefore, letting the students be a part of the budget and the plans for the school would increase the insight and raise interest among students to be a part of the changes. I know that the Administration says how they are trying to host meetings

about different topics and how students fail to show up, but that is not an excuse to give in and blame low morale on the students. Housing meetings just don't feel as relevant to attend when the money of the school is being used without any insight from the students.

Alyson Matarazzo

In my mind the low morale and lack of pride in NC Wesleyan is sad. I think this is due to the fact that people don't know what's going on around campus. We get this e-mail Monday afternoon about what's going on the rest of the week but I doubt many people read it. I've only read it about ten times since they started doing this. The newspaper is supposed to get news out but I don't hear about anything coming up, only about things that have happened, and it's usually things that have happened weeks and months before it's printed. That all goes towards morale. But pride? Pride is all about feeling that your school is great. This school isn't great. First, the dorms are not somewhere that students feel they can live. They sleep there and shower there, but no one wants to live in these dorms. I understand that the dorms are old and that's fine. But why is the cafeteria getting new televisions and a paint job while the students can't even turn their AC on because it blows out hot air? Shouldn't the students be a priority? I think people don't care what's going on around here and have no pride because it's not being shown that administration even knows we exist.

Joshua Meeks

I think that the biggest reason there is no pride on the campus and there is a low morale is because the problems are cyclical and neither the students nor administrators care to be the first to break the cycle. Students don't trust the administration because there are different occurrences that go unreasoned. Student cries for better food and better living environments in the dorms go unanswered while the small amounts of money the school does have go to things like pine straw and paint for a cafeteria that no one wants to eat in. The students don't see their pleas being answered so there is a lack of trust with the administration. The administration sees that students are not doing simple things like going to the concerts held on campus or going to SGA meetings so they find it unnecessary to put forth the effort to comply with the student wants. One of the two sides has to step up and show interest in the school for the other to budge. If not, the school will stay the way it is now.

Bristy Parker

There is a lack of school pride here at Wesleyan. The main reason could be that we have low expectations of our school. We

feel like we don't have anything to actually take pride in. Building a family atmosphere in the dorms is a goal, but to us the dorm is just somewhere we just sleep at night. We don't really feel like it's our home. That's just one example, but what can be done to improve this situation is to start taking care of what the students feel is important. That way, we will feel more involved and want to participate.

Kevin Quicker

I believe the main reason for the lack in pride at Wesleyan is because no one really appreciates the school. They feel that the school doesn't go out of its way to make the students life better so why should they try? Instead of trying to put forth effort into having more pride for Wesleyan, students spend their weekends at ECU or NC State. At these local, large institutions, they feel like they are getting a much better college experience.

Melanie Rhodes

The low morale and school pride is attributed to many things such as the feeling that students are the least important on campus. For example, the landscaping is beautiful but the dorms are atrocious. Although I am commuter student, I was given a tour and many things need to be done before I would even consider living in the dorm. My biggest pet peeve is the lack of bathrooms. The lack of pride is attributed to the lack of how the school is perceived by the students. I take a lot of pride in this school because I believe NCWC is a school with good academic programs, faculty, etc. However, there is still more work to be done for the students to feel pride in this school.

Kandyse Shaw

As a junior here, I have very little pride in the school. When I arrived here at Wesleyan my freshman year, I had very high expectations with it being a small private college. But half of my expectations were just hopeless dreams. I don't think that many changes here are taking place fast enough. Many students don't have pride in the school because we aren't known for anything good because once something good happens, something bad happens right afterwards and that is all that is remembered. I don't take pride in my school because besides my education I don't feel like anything else is offered my way. College life is supposed to be fun as well as taken seriously. When I become a senior, I will try to make my senior year one to remember but my three years so far aren't great memories about my experiences.

Swedish Student Bashes American Egoism

By John Kostet
Senior Staff Writer

As an international student I'm often asked by other students and faculty members about my home country, Sweden, and if or how it is any different from the United States. It is not only a polite and friendly way of starting a conversation but also a reasonable question since there is a true interest in my answer. Most of the Americans I have met have never been outside the United States, and some have not even made it north of Virginia. So the curiosity to learn is sincere. I usually choose to talk about the climate, how the sun never sets in the summer and how ridiculously cold it can get in the winter. That exotic difference seems to satisfy most people and I stay out of trouble, because we all tend to be on the same page when discussing the weather.

There are of course a lot of things that truly fascinate me about the United States. I would not be here to experience it all if it wasn't for my appreciation for parts of American culture, which basically is a mix of hundreds and thousands of other different cultures. To experience it all or a little bit of everything in one place is amazing and also a great proof of how acceptance and respect for other cultures can lead to prosperity in a nation. America is certainly not perfect, and I have sensed a degree of racism and fear bubbling under the surface, especially in the South. But in general there seems to be an established norm of equality. This is something that unfortunately has started to decline in Sweden. For hundreds of years we have been living as a single, close-to-isolated cultural group. But, as we have started to accept more and more refugees from wars in the Middle East, Africa and the Balkans, our immigration has led to a more diverse society. Instead of the American way of blending, appreciating and respecting the advantages of a multi-cultured nation, many of us have instead become scared, intolerant and narrow minded towards the new influences, which led to a nationalist party receiving seats in our parliament for the first time in Swedish history. This is an obvious disgrace and an embarrassment to a whole country whose trademark internationally has been its protection of human rights, respect and solidarity. This is a difference that I always try to point out and compliment Americans on. Hopefully the American dream of anti-racism and openness continues to extend not only in America, but is established all over Europe.

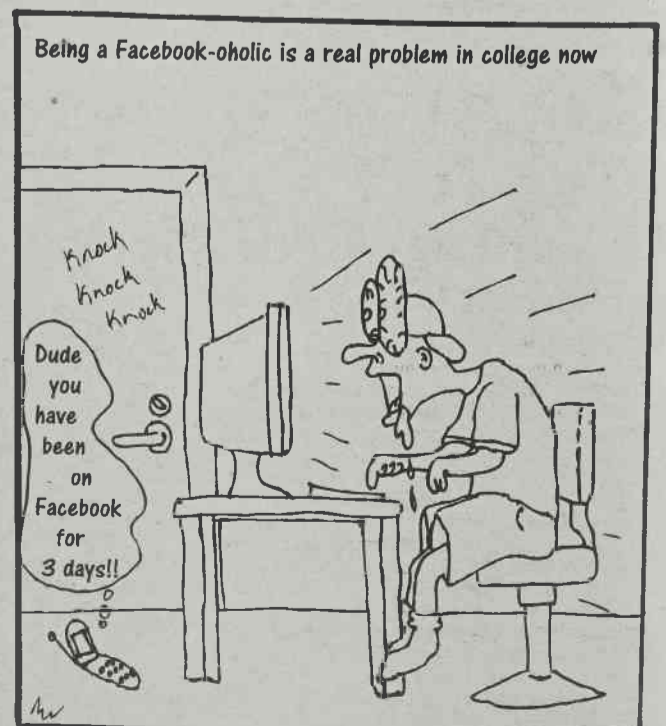
There are several questions that unconsciously make me pick my words more carefully when asked to compare and explain the differences between our countries. It can be very tricky to fit in and to not upset people when it comes to politics and the ideas behind policy. It is a touchy subject because the political culture in America is so very different from that in Sweden, so when I try to explain and convince someone about the benefits of free education, free healthcare, generous pensions and insurances based upon high taxes, my attempt is most often doomed to fail. This is particularly difficult with someone who actually trusts Fox News. Bill O'Reilly fans seem to confuse the type of solidarity and democratic socialism that we have in Sweden, with totalitarian communism and limits on freedom. So the discussion is basically over before it even starts. Among right-wing Americans, there is the will to simplify and view politics in only two separate fields, capitalism and communism. This is obviously not just naive but also very common. But their set and undisputable perception of ideology does not explain how large global corporations such as IKEA, Volvo, H&M and SonyEricsson, among others, can originate in a small country based upon collective socialism. What narrow-minded, so-called libertarians do not understand and refuse to understand is that free enterprise and social democracy certainly do not exclude each other, especially when the reforms are made in a system with the best rated democracy index in the world. Sweden is a successful example of finding the unique balance of social justice and a stable, competitive economy, and I am of course very proud to mention it.

Another question I am afraid to answer is whether or not I would like to stay and live permanently in the United States. Depending on who's asking I usually lie and say maybe, while the truth is that I would never raise a family here, and I would never let my children grow up in the United States unless I was rich. Unfortunately, wealth seems to be the only true criteria for happiness and prosperity here. If you are unskilled, poor or sick, then there is no place or need for you. You are

useless and get left behind. The gap between the rich and the poor in America is terrifying for being such a "superpower". The differences in conditions and opportunities are all severe, as the best education and healthcare in the world are available only if you are fortunate enough to have the money to afford them. The pressure on the individual to make it by himself is simply beyond reasonable measures. I like the American clichés of "go hard, or go home" in sports. But when "get rich or die trying" has an awful truth behind it in real life, it is not fun anymore and it scares me. But what scares me even more is the resistance to do something about it, to change the condition for the people who are worse off. A common line is to blame the poverty on the poor people themselves, and that type of survival of the fittest is not appealing to me, no matter how fit I might be or become.

Some people have recognized the need for change in America. But change is hard; just ask President Obama, who is clearly struggling right now. Unfortunately for him and the people in need, there seems to be a huge difference in how people perceive their government here in the United States, compared to other more direct democracies throughout Europe. Somehow most Americans view their government as something very distant, almost abstract. People do not view their representatives as an extension of themselves, nor do they trust these representatives, and some are even afraid of the government's actions. Federal involvement is considered the same as taking your money and limiting your freedom. The government is generally not viewed as a tool for possible social improvement. So bringing change to people who don't want and don't understand the need for change is not easy and is going to take time.

There are obviously both positive and negative similarities and differences between our countries. And I should and would be more than willing to share my take on all kinds of issues as long as my response is comprehended with an open mind, and not received with an automatic defensive mode that refuses criticism, which exaggerated patriots more often than not tend to have. If not, the weather can always be agreeable.



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