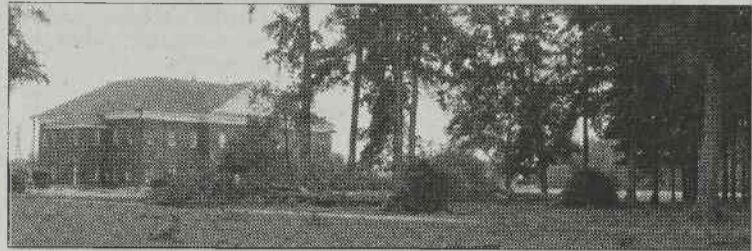


THE DECREE

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NORTH CAROLINA WESLEYAN COLLEGE, ROCKY MOUNT, NORTH CAROLINA 27804



Twelve large trees were felled on NCWC's campus during Hurricane Irene, which caused power outages and led to a one-day cancellation of classes. *Grattan Photo*

Enrollment Declines For First-Year Students

By Joshua Meeks
Senior Staff Writer

North Carolina Wesleyan's freshman class dropped to 229 students in 2011, but the college hopes to increase the number next fall with new leadership in Enrollment Management.

Last year's freshman class numbered 278, according to college officials.

While the college announced tougher admissions standards last year, there was minimal change in the average test scores of new incoming students. After a final audit, the college reported that average SAT scores decreased from 890 to 885, while the average ACT scores remained at 18.

Among the new students, the average grade point average did rise by .07 from last year's average of 2.91 to 2.98.

The gender differential saw little change from 2010. The freshmen class is comprised of 129 males, or 56.3 percent, and 100 females, officials said. Wesleyan continued its dedication to diversity, adding 18 from countries that include Nepal (six students), Sweden (five), Australia, Canada, England, France, Gambia, Germany, and Iceland.

Bill Allen, the new vice president of Enrollment Management, attributes the smaller number of new students to the higher standards established at the school. "The numbers are down a little bit because of the decrease in applications and the increase of denials," Allen explained.

Allen reported that the number of applications decreased from 1,847 last year to 1,651 in 2011. At the same time, the college's rejection rate climbed from 8.3 (or, 154 students) to 14 percent (230 students). In 2006, prior to the national recession, Wesleyan received 1,316 applications and denied admission to 7.75 percent (102 students), Allen said.

As part of the admissions process, Allen said, the college is requiring more personal interviews and considering the addition of an essay. "We're taking a lot of time to judge motivation levels, which is tricky," he said.

Many Wesleyan community members have noticed a difference on campus as a result of the smaller freshman class. "There seems to be less people in some of the organizations around campus," said Terrance Hooks, junior class president, "but I feel like there are some new freshmen here with a different attitude. They seem to be excited to be here while in the past it seemed as if the students were tired of school and forced to be here."

Steve Myszak, director of Residence Life, agrees with Hooks about the change of atmosphere on campus. "They [freshmen] seem very excited and engaged this year versus past years," Myszak said.

Myszak also noted that administrators were surprised by a higher than expected retention rate from last year. With a higher number of returning students, the college has altered plans to close Petteway Hall for the year. "Due to lower numbers we were initially going to shut down Petteway to take advantage of low enrollment and do renovations to the dorm," he said. "With an increased number of returns, we were forced to not only use the entire first floor of Petteway but also use about half of the second floor."

North Carolina Wesleyan won four conference championships last year and it could not have been done without the contributions of freshmen. Of the 229

incoming freshmen, about 45 percent are athletes. The number is an estimate, Allen said, because Enrollment Management bases its numbers on information contained in student applications.

A smaller freshmen class means smaller teams, at least in football. In the past, the football team has brought in 80 to 100 freshmen, but saw that number dwindle to 56 in 2011. Head Coach Mark Henninger sees the change as both a positive and negative for his team. "From a football perspective," Henninger explained, "with fewer guys, we can give each of those guys more instruction on technique and there's a higher chance they'll have a positive experience. And it allows the upper-classmen to lead and helps the team grow tighter. On the other hand, we don't have as many guys as we need for depth purposes. We're about 10 guys short to have what we need for practice."

Allen assumed his position late in the process—last March—and although numbers are down and the outlook of the school appears somewhat bleak, the new VP spoke with enthusiasm and determination about the challenge that lies in front of him.

"There is a challenge," Allen said, "because there is a competitive marketplace with a lot of good colleges in North Carolina. But we have already changed some of the old ways things were done and implemented some new."

When asked to name specific initiatives, Allen already had a long list in front of him.

"We're developing a more professional admissions process," he said. "There is a lot to do in a little amount of time, so we already have counselors traveling, and we are trying to do more follow-up than in the past."

Allen identified several regions as possible growth areas. "We're trying to focus more energy on the Virginia, Maryland, DC area," he said, "and we're looking at South Carolina and New Jersey as places where we could grow."

Allen's staff has increased phone activity to try to reach students on a more personal level. "We have ambassadors on the phone encouraging students as we try to rank prospects' interests," Allen said. "We want personal conversations with applicants to try to find who they are and what motivates them. We need to find their hopes and dreams and see how Wesleyan fits that."

Allen expressed confidence that his department will help Wesleyan grow as "America's next great college." He thinks an improved web page will be an essential component in that process. "We need to work on our identity as a school to build a better brand," he said. "We need more images of what Wesleyan is and show it on a revamped webpage, which is a key marketing tool."

Along with an enhanced web presence, the college needs more promotional material to support the college's marketing effort. "Last year, our counselors would go to college fairs and wouldn't have anything to give the students," Allen said. "We have a beautiful campus and we need to let people see that."

Allen has high goals for the school but he does not have a specific number he wants to reach next year. "We just need to improve our current numbers," he said. "We need to work on what we do best and build on that."

Housing Update: NCWC Continues Renovations

The Decree staff conducted a recent email interview with Director of Residence Life Steven Myszak. Now in his second year at NC Wesleyan, the Indiana native holds a BS from Saint Joseph's College (Rensselaer, Indiana) and master's degrees in student personnel and higher education.

He's worked in higher education since 1996, beginning as a residence hall coordinator at East Carolina University. Among his many positions, he has served as the Director of Residence Life at Barton College for three years and Assistant Director of Residence Life at ECU for five years. From 1999 to 2002, Myszak was employed at NC Wesleyan as a pre-major advisor and coordinator of tutoring as well as director of WesBridge (the precursor to Freshman Advantage).

Q. First let's discuss the improvements that were made to the residence halls over the summer. Could you please detail the changes?

A. Petteway, Edgcombe, Nash and Collins lobbies had sheet rock installed over the concrete, ceilings were lowered so that the new lighting could be mounted flush with the ceiling, and new flooring was laid in a combination of faux wood tile and carpet tiles. Also the lobbies were painted, flat screen LCD TVs were installed, and new furniture will be placed in the lobbies come mid-September. The goal is to move the buildings from dorm to Residence Hall, where students can watch television, play video games, and be comfortable in a "living room."

In Nash Hall a kitchen was added so students can cook if they choose, especially when the dining hall is not open over breaks. Additionally, in Nash Hall each room on the first floor was renovated to include: faux wood tile on the floor and sheet rock covering the concrete blocks. Ceilings were dropped in order to have new flush-mounted lighting as well as canister lighting, and the old built-in closets were removed. Corian sinks/countertops and cabinets with sensor faucets replaced the old sinks. New windows/blinds, new room doors with dead bolt-style locks, and new furniture (adjustable-height beds, dressers, desks, chairs, and wardrobes) were purchased. In the hallways on the first floor, the ceilings were lowered for flush-mounted lighting, sheet rock was installed to cover the concrete blocks, and new carpet tiles were laid.

Q. What process was used to determine which improvements to make?

A. In late April Attila Szekes, director of Facilities, Dean Randy Williams and I met to look over the flooring choices and discuss the need to have the halls feel more like home. We came up with ideas on how to make this occur. At this time we were only looking at renovating Nash 1st. The Board of Trustees approved the renovations in May (after our students left) and asked us to consider renovating all the lobbies. A designer who has worked with several college campuses was hired. The designer then provided schematics which were approved by the college. Then a construction company was hired to commence work.

Q. How much did this summer's renovations cost?

A. The estimated budget for the Nash first-floor changes was around \$265,000. With the addition of the three other lobbies, I'm sure this changed; however, I do not know for certain.

Q. How did Wesleyan fund the work?

A. The Board of Trustees agreed to allow the college to take out a loan for the improvements until the Capital Campaign can help pay for the rest.

Q. Remind us of the specific renovations undertaken last summer (2010) and during last school year.

A. A couple of the halls received new front doors, and Petteway and Edgcombe adopted card-button electronic access to the halls. Petteway's first-floor bathrooms were renovated, and so was one bathroom in Edgcombe.

Q. What's your reaction to all the work done so far?

A. I'm happy with the renovations that have occurred. And Attila and I have learned what we would do slightly different in the future. My hope is that as an institution we will continue to address the residence halls in order to provide students with a comfortable, safe, and enjoyable experience. While students are here to receive an education, the outside-of-class experience should aid, and not detract, from the academic experience. Today's college students are smart shoppers. They realize they can earn a degree at a wide variety of educational institutions and it's the outside-of-class experience that can assist them in their decision-making. I'm confident that the College started right on track as we continue our own journey.

Q. What have you heard from students and other staff about the improvements?

A. The staff informed me that they're

amazed at the beauty and comfort of the renovations. From the students, especially our returning students, I've heard that they are proud of the lobbies and want to make sure that the residents take care of them. The students are encouraged and recognize we're trying to improve their experiences, but they also understand that they have a responsibility to maintain the nice environments in order for us to continue renovating the halls. Nash residents are proud that they have the nicest rooms in the Residence Halls!

Q. What renovations plans (if any) are envisioned for the upcoming year?

A. At this time I have not been involved in any conversations regarding renovations. My hope is the college will be able to continue with the renovations in Nash.

Q. Update us on the Wesleyan Villas.

A. This summer the college purchased three of the villas, with plans to lease a fourth, as we have had many students show interest in living there. Currently we have 17 students living in the three we own (12 women and 5 men). When we lease the fourth townhome, we will have 6 more men living there for a total of 23 students. A significant change is that a student resident, Melanie Rhodes, is serving as a community advisor (CA). The CA's main responsibility is to communicate with me, be a resource for the student residents, and encourage responsibility in regards to what it means to live in a neighborhood. Melanie went through a week of training with the residence life staff and is prepared to help the townhome community.

Villa residents were selected in the following manner:

—During the "Return to Residential Living" process in March, there was a sign-up sheet for interested students, who also completed an application for our residence halls.

—In April I reviewed the hours earned and the current cumulative GPA of student applicants.

—The students with the most hours and the highest GPA's were allowed to move into the townhomes.

Also, student who were previously in the townhomes were allowed to return to them if they wished.

Q. Are there any plans for more such housing?

A. I have not been involved in any conversation related to purchasing the two we do not own or in building more. I believe the developers would work with us if we desired to build something like the townhomes out there.

Q. Last year, in an effort to help freshmen make the transition to college, Wesleyan integrated first-year students into the same dorms with upper classmen. We know that move was made before your arrival, but assess whether the initiative has been a success.

A. I have only heard what it was like prior to my arrival. From my understanding, last year was a noticeable improvement. I cannot say it was because we integrated the upper-class and freshmen, as I have not done the necessary assessments that could yield this data. My instinct tells me that life in the residence halls improved for a variety of reasons that include staffing as well as integration of freshman with upper class. But research concerning living environments has shown that freshman learn how to behave and navigate college life from the upper class students who live near them. Last year I heard minimal concerns regarding the integration that occurred. This year I haven't heard any concerns. This doesn't mean the concerns aren't there.

Q. What's the current status at Petteway? We got an initial report that it would be shut down. Now we understand that certain floors have been closed and just for one semester.

A. Based on the number of enrolled students and the fact that Petteway needed some minor renovations, we were trying not to place students in this hall. But due to our gender breakdown and the available spaces in the halls, this was not possible. Currently, we have the first floor of Petteway filled and I have several men on the second floor. Hopefully by the time our community reads this, the men on second will be moved off this floor and into their permanent assignments. Petteway first floor will remain open as we do not have bed space in the other halls to accommodate the male students.

Q. How will this save the college money?

A. If we had shut down Petteway, we would have saved money in the form of payments for AC, electricity and water. Unfortunately, I don't know exactly how much this would have saved, even though last year I had requested information from our Facilities department.

Q. Is the plan to return the Petteway to full use in the spring? How will that be determined?

A. At this time there is no plan to have

Petteway go to full capacity unless we do an awesome job at recruiting 80 new male students, who would then fill the second and third floors.

Q. Describe the damage to the residence halls during Hurricane Irene.

A. The halls did not sustain damage during Irene other than loss of electricity, hot water, A/C.

Q. When did we lose power and when was it restored?

A. Power was lost on Saturday and restored on Monday morning. Due to the electricity being out, the hot water also went out. For the most part, our students understood what was occurring and why. Additionally, when we lost power the issue of meals became priority. Sodexo did an amazing job at working with one of their sister schools to bring sandwiches and hot food to our students.

I would like to see the college invest in some generators that could be hooked up to our residence halls to ensure power stays on. While this is an item that would only occasionally be needed, I believe it would add to the safety and emotional well-being of our students during crisis.

Q. Over all, how did residents conduct themselves during that weekend?

A. For the most part our students acted responsibly. The Residence Life staff was on hand to answer questions and to aid in calming down anyone who needed help. The students rallied together and I've heard that several stayed up all night in the lobbies playing games and talking. Of course we had issues regarding students misbehaving, but these students were talked with during the storm and immediately after the storm.

Q. What other changes might we see, in the upcoming year, in the area Residence Life?

A. Residence Life is growing and in my opinion becoming a stronger department on campus. I have been fortunate to hire Courtney Quinn as an area director responsible for Edgcombe, Nash and Petteway halls. She has great experience in residence life and has a master's degree from Eastern Illinois University. In addition, Humza Ismail is working as an area director for Collins, Boddie and Centura halls while also being responsible for the Taylor Recreation Center. He earned a masters degree from Austin Peay State University.

The RAs went through a strenuous week of training which I don't believe has been seen here in recent years. The RAs are motivated and understand the importance of maintaining order while developing the relationships on their floors. I'm excited about the Residence Life staff as they have already gone above my expectations this year and I look forward to the RAs continuing in their successes in programming and relationship building, and serving as referral agents so our students receive assistance.

Q. There have been reports of bed bug in the dorms. What can you tell us?

A. I have one confirmed room of bed bugs in Edgcombe (as of September 20). This past summer we had a company come out with a bed-bug sniffing dog on two occasions, once at the beginning and once at the end of summer. The dog is 93 percent accurate at sniffing out bed bugs and their eggs. The second time, no bugs were found in any of our halls. The first time two rooms were found with bugs.

Q. If your department were given \$5 million tomorrow, how would you spend it?

A. I would first hire another area director. While our current set-up is adequate, it is definitely not ideal. I would then renovate our halls in some fashion but I would also include the "guts" (the systems such as electrical, plumbing, HV/AC. No one sees these improvements but they impact student satisfaction. In conjunction with the renovations, I would like to build a new residence hall that specifically serves our freshmen to develop a specialized first-year living learning community. About eight years ago, I had the opportunity to be part of a campus that built a new hall and this cost just under \$3 million for 100 beds.

Q. We imagine your position keeps you pretty busy. When you get free time, what do you like to do to unwind?

A. I have a four-year-old son whose name is Sonny. So when I leave work, I go into a daily routine of fixing dinner for my family and spending quality time with my son. After Sonny goes to bed, I enjoy reading to unwind. On weekends I like playing cards with friends, and of course my partner and I are still renovating a 1917 home. That work was put on hold when Sonny came into our lives.