

THE DECREE

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NORTH CAROLINA WESLEYAN COLLEGE, ROCKY MOUNT, NORTH CAROLINA 27804

General Shelton Delivers Inspiring Address at Fall Commencement

By Decree Staff

Retired General Hugh Shelton, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff from 1997-2001, delivered a brief but inspiring commencement address to the 120 NC Wesleyan graduates and their families and friends December 10 at the Dunn Center.

Referring to the hometowns and countries of the graduates, the general said: "The six countries, four states, and 44 North Carolina cities and villages will be better because of your accomplishments."

The Tarboro native quoted thinkers as varied as Albert Einstein and Larry the Cable Guy, in a crowd-pleasing address that outlined his four keys to a successful life.

Acknowledging that most attendees of graduation ceremonies appreciate a succinct commencement address, he opened by saying, "Let's get her done."

Here's an overview of the general's message to graduates:

1—"You're never defeated unless you personally accept defeat." To illustrate his point, General Shelton recalled several incidents from his youth. He mentioned that as a high school senior he was, at first, rejected from North Carolina State, his

top choice, because of a low math score. At the time he was given the option of taking a correspondence course and then retaking his entrance exam. After working diligently that summer with his high school math teacher, Shelton retook the exam at the end of the summer and earned high enough marks to gain admittance to NC State, where he earned a degree in textile engineering.

Later while in training at Fort Benning,

Georgia, Shelton was determined to enter the Army Rangers, one of the military's most elite forces. But there was one problem. According to the Army, Shelton was color blind, which disqualified him from joining the Rangers. Not satisfied with the Army's ruling, he insisted on retaking the exam. This time he passed. If he had not been persistent in asking for a re-test, the general told the graduates, "I'm convinced I would not have become the

14th Chair of the Joint Chiefs."

2—"The harder you work, the more opportunities you'll find." Shelton noted that opportunity does not "come knocking like the Publisher's Clearing House." He urged the graduates to be courageous. "I'm not talking about the courage to be the first man to drive an electric car through a car wash, or even the courage that's needed in battle," he said. "I'm talking about the courage to achieve your goals."

3—"You can't be great without being good." General Shelton stressed the importance of possessing "a strong ethical character," adding: "Try to make the world a better place to live. Be an example for others to emulate." Then, quoting Albert Einstein, he said, "Become a person of value."

4—According to General Shelton, the three most important aspects of one's life should be "faith, family and friends. They should be your highest priority."

General Shelton received a standing ovation on receiving an honorary degree from the college.

Of the 120 new graduates, 39 came from the traditional day program while 81 were from the three ASPIRE programs: 32 from the Triangle campus, 27 from Goldsboro, and 22 from Rocky Mount.

Business was the most common major among the graduates with 48 degrees awarded. Other majors break down as follows: criminal justice/justice studies (30), psychology (19), accounting (13), computer information systems (9), elementary education (7), religious studies (7), exercise science (5), sociology (3), biology (2), history (2), political science (2), entertainment (1), chemistry (1), and special education (1). There were 26 students with double majors, and one with a triple major (in justice studies, psychol-

ogy and religious studies).

In the days before the ceremony, some graduates reflected on their time at NC Wesleyan.

Criminal justice major Antonio "Squirrel" Harris said that success on the football field made it all worthwhile. "I loved my time here, you know," the former standout linebacker said. "I played football and enjoyed that."

One highlight, he said, was "making history on the football field" and participating in the division III playoffs in 2009. Harris intends to pursue professional football next year in Finland.

Asked about his time at Wesleyan overall, he replied, "It's like they say: It's what you make of it. I had a good time while I was here."

Teammate and criminal justice major James Carter said that he hopes an internship will help him find a full-time position. He thanked new Career Services Director Tiffany Alexander for helping him get ready for the job market. "With her help I feel very prepared for what lies ahead," Carter said.

Not all the graduates were happy with their experience at Wesleyan. New York native Tene Griszell-McAllister, a psychology major, said that she feels somewhat unprepared for life after college. Medicine is one field she's considering.

"I don't know if I'm ready because I don't know what the next step is," she said. "I also don't know how to get my foot in the door with my career path."

When she was asked if she would change anything about her college experience, Griszell-McAllister responded: "I would go to a completely different college with more money so there can be more things to offer to the students, like a study-abroad program."

(Staff writer Kristina Hill contributed reporting.)



Two New Grads: Jessica Poindexter (left) of the day program and Alicia Nance-Leigh of the Triangle ASPIRE program. Photo courtesy of NCWC Advancement.

Why Do Many NCWC Students Lack Spirit?

By Joshua Meeks
Decree Sports Editor

North Carolina Wesleyan College is fighting an up-hill battle. Departmental budgets have been cut. Retention rates are low and admittance numbers continue to fall from previous years. Around campus, the vibe is gloomy.

On most college campuses school spirit thickens the air to a point where it is difficult to breathe. Students pack into gymnasiums and stadiums and take an active role in Greek life, student government, and intramural sports. But at Wesleyan students are disinterested in what is going on around them.

"Everyone seems miserable here," said Mackenzie Tingle, a senior. "It's like people are ashamed of the school. Whereas when you look at ECU or (North Carolina) State people are proud to be a part of that school, whether they're a student, parent or fan."

Tingle's assessment is one that is shared by many. A lot of students feel that nobody wants to go to Wesleyan and would rather be somewhere else.

Tingle was one of 100 students who completed a brief survey for this article, and several students participated in follow-up interviews.

When asked whether he is proud to say he goes to Wesleyan, junior Tyler Clark responded with a chuckle of uncertainty.

"For baseball and trying to get other new recruits, I say I'm proud to go here," said Clark. But if I was talking to somebody who goes to UNC or State, I wouldn't. I wouldn't say I'm ashamed or not proud. I just wouldn't say I go to Wesleyan and 'we're better.'"

But not all students feel the same way as these two upper-classmen. Chelsea Colucci, a freshman cheerleader, says she is trying to move school pride in a positive direction.

"Being a cheerleader, I'm always trying to enhance our school spirit," Colucci said. "On campus here, students are very close-knit and supportive of each other and their teams, and this is one of my favorite things about this college. From what I've witnessed as a student and a cheerleader, I'm very pleased by our school spirit."

Junior Class President Terrance Hooks has observed that the atmosphere this year seems different than in the past two years. "I think that the clubs are trying to do more this year to get students involved in the school," he said. "I think the freshmen are buying into some of the things the school is doing and I think that there's a big change. I won't be here much longer but I think that in a few years we'll see a change because freshmen here now care."

Sporting events are the biggest social events on campus and often correlate with school spirit. But at home games the men's basketball team has averaged just 242 fans, which includes players' parents as well as the parents of the opposition, who hiked to Rocky Mount to watch their sons play.

On occasion, students show some spirit at the game when they collectively stand to

cheer after a dunk or when cheerleaders lead the "Bishop Rumble." But it is rare that an opposing rival, such as Christopher Newport or Methodist, is daunted when it walks into our gym because of a deafening crowd of students who have covered themselves in blue and gold.

Some students believe game attendance is low because athletes make up about half the student population and they are preoccupied with their own sport. Their free time is used to complete homework assignments, watch television, or hang out at the grille.

"Athletes are only focused on their own sport," Tingle said. "They want everyone to come to their games and support them but there are no reverse actions. Somehow we need to find a way for the school to build some pride."

Robert Bass, a defensive back for the men's soccer team, sided with Tingle and believes that there are not many athletes who care to put time into the other sports.

"We barely have many fans at our games and the women's teams get the least amount of support," Bass said. "Everyone cares about their own individual sport and not much for the others. It may sound corny, but I think the best way for the school to raise its spirit is for the sports teams to come together and show their support for each other."

A tradition is one way for students to demonstrate school pride, but by most accounts, Wesleyan is lacking in this area. Students will make bubbles in the water fountain on occasion, and every Friday the cafeteria serves fried chicken but there is no single tradition that stands out to most students. If you are on the football team, you may touch the triangle before practice or slam the sledgehammer before a game, but those types of traditions are limited to the athletes in particular sports.

Dean of Students Randy Williams feels that it is the responsibility of the students to build pride and tradition at the school. Williams, a graduate of tradition-rich Hampden Sydney and William and Mary, said that when he took his job in 2009, one of his main goals was to get students to take ownership in their college experience.

"There's plenty of room for growth here at Wesleyan," he said. "Traditions come from the students, not the faculty or staff. I want to empower the students so that they can be proud of Wesleyan."

Students often fail to realize that they are the ones who make Wesleyan tick, many interviewees commented.

Every Monday morning, the Student Activities department sends out an e-mail that describes "What's happening at Wesleyan" for that week. But the Decree survey showed that only 48 percent of students read the e-mail. Clark explained that he rarely reads the e-mails because he does not see anything that interests him.

"I don't really hear about anything that is going on around school," Clark said. "All I hear about really is intramurals from the signs around school and the e-mails that I never

read. I only look at my e-mail hoping to see if a professor has canceled class."

Clark offered a solution for clubs and groups trying to get word out about an event they are hosting.

"Even if it sounds bad, if they put invites of Facebook, I'd probably pay more attention to it," he said.

Another reason students believe that school spirit is down is the lack of participation in the clubs and other organizations on campus. President Megan Simpson said that

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New Tennis Complex Nears Completion

By Gummi Palsson
Decree Staff Writer

The North Carolina Wesleyan tennis program has gone through successful changes in recent history, such as the introduction of the current tennis head coach, Tebogo Dominic Modise. Before the South African took control, the tennis program had not been doing well, but with some quality recruits and strict training regimens, the program has seen new heights.

"I really got lucky somehow with my recruiting even though at the same time I worked very hard," the coach said. "We've done the unthinkable as a team in a short period of time. It has been a great experience and I have to give credit to the ladies and gentlemen that have been part of our program since I started coaching here. Their work ethic has paid off and it has put North Carolina Wesleyan on a national map."

To take the next step in making NC Wesleyan one of the finest DIII tennis programs, the college is expanding its existing facilities and building new ones. According to Loren Loomis Hubbell, vice president of finance, the project cost is \$815,000, with funding coming from private donors and the City of Rocky Mount. The city has

partnered with the college with an eye toward establishing youth tennis and other community programs.

The project involves the resurfacing of the six existing courts, plus the construction of six new ones. A tennis field house will house offices, locker rooms and an equipment storage area. A grandstand will accommodate 270 spectators—all in all, a fantastic move by the college, Coach Modise said.

"We're already one of the top programs in the country without a state-of-the-art facility, but for sure it will make some additional impact with recruiting, exposure, and tennis in the community," said Modise, who has led the men's team to the national playoffs three years in a row.

Marcelo Prata is among many team members who believe the new complex will have a profound effect on the success of Wesleyan's program. It will improve training and increase competition among the squad, he said, while raising Wesleyan's profile, both within the community and nationally. It will now be possible for the college to host NCAA tournaments, Prata and Modise noted.

"With more courts, we can play more matches, and enjoy longer prac-

tices and more individual practices," said Prata, a native of Brazil. "The level of tennis will definitely improve. And the new facility will bring more spectators to watch our matches. In the past we didn't even have benches for fans to sit and watch us."

Modise and his players expressed excitement about the installation of new playing surfaces, pointing out that the old courts caused excessive wear and tear on tennis balls, which cost the coach 60 percent of his equipment budget. "We had a lot of problems in the past with the old courts," Prata explained. "Our tennis balls were finished really fast because of the old surface."

Prata added that he and his teammates welcome other new features of the complex. "Most of the nets were broke and we didn't have windscreens, which makes it harder to play with some weather conditions."

Loomis Hubbell expects the contractors to finish new construction by March 1, ten days before the men's and women's teams open conference action at home against Averett.

Said Prata: "Our tennis team is really thankful for the new complex."



The new tennis complex should be completed in time for the spring season.

Photo courtesy of L. Loomis Hubbell