

# THE DECREE

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NORTH CAROLINA WESLEYAN COLLEGE, ROCKY MOUNT, NORTH CAROLINA 27804



New ASPIRE grads Diane Strickland (left) and Grace Wallace. Decree photo.

## For ASPIRE Grads the Road Can Be Long

By Decree Staff

For many ASPIRE students, persistence is just as important as intelligence and strong study skills. Here The Decree profiles two women who graduated May 2. Grace Wallace and Diane Strickland. Interviews were

conducted over email in the two weeks before the ceremony.

### Grace Wallace

Wallace, 53, graduated summa cum laude with a business degree, more than 30 years after she first attempted college. She is an NCWC employee who was honored in 2000 as the outstanding staff person. In 2013, she was recognized as a North Carolina Outstanding Library Paraprofessional.

She and her husband, Wayne, live in Rocky Mount. Wayne Wallace's voice would be familiar to many Bishops sports fan, as he served as public address announcer for football, basketball and other sports over a 17-year career. The Wallaces are the parents of a 15-year-old daughter, Dawn, who attends Faith Christian School and "only gets to celebrate her birthday every four years," since she was born on February 29.

**Q. Tell us about your original attempt at earning a four-year degree.** I attended Atlantic Christian College (now Barton College) in my first year after high school. Lots of things worked against me that year including sickness and I decided it was best to attend a community college rather than go back to ACC the second year.

**Q. What prompted you to pursue a four-year college degree at NCWC?** I always wanted to continue my education and working at Wesleyan offered the opportunity to attend school for free.

**Q. When you were taking classes, what was a typical day for you?** Taking ASPIRE classes made my days very long especially the days I opened the library. I would be at work by 7:15 a.m. and not get home until 10:30 at night or later. I missed a lot of special moments with family and friends. Lunch hours were spent reading, researching and writing papers. But in the end it was all worth it!

**Q. Did you ever consider abandoning your pursuit of a degree?** There were times I wanted to quit, but instead of quitting I would take a session off. One semester was especially hard. My mama got sick and it was difficult to attend classes knowing I should be with her. I fell behind in assignments a couple of times and I thought about dropping classes. When I talked to the instructors, they refused to let me give up! They were the best, allowing me extra time to turn in my assignments. I'll always be grateful for their understanding as it allowed the time I needed, knowing my mama would not be with me much longer.

**Q. What did you like most about the ASPIRE program?** It offered the opportunity to attend college at night while continuing to work a full-time job. Plus, I was able to attend class with other adults and I made lots of new friends that will last a lifetime.

**Q. What one thing would you change?** Personally I don't know of anything that I

would change. But the one complaint I hear most from ASPIRE classmates is about the lack of a place to go for snacks during breaks. Most students run over to McDonald's or Sheetz. So, it would be nice to have somewhere to grab a quick snack while on break.

**Q. Describe your occupation.** I'm technical services associate at Pearsall Library. I'm responsible for ordering and cataloging all books and other resources. I order inter-library loan items for students, faculty and staff. I provide reference assistance and other duties along with other members of the library staff. July 1st will mark my 18th anniversary with NC Wesleyan.

**Q. What other degrees have you earned?** I have an associate's degree in business administration from Nash Community College and an associate's degree in library and information technology from Central Carolina Community College, where I graduated with honors. I have certificates in library cataloging, library public services, and library technical services from Central Carolina Community College.

**Q. What do you plan to do with your degree?** I don't have any specific plans after graduating. I hope my degree will help me to obtain a promotion and a pay increase in the near future. I love my position here at Wesleyan and will continue to support the college in every possible way.

**Q. What will you be thinking as you cross the stage at graduation?** First, I will be thanking My Lord and Savior for all HE has allowed me to accomplish. Second, I will be thinking about my Mama and how proud she would be of me and wishing she were here with me to see me get my diploma.

**Q. What does getting your degree mean to you?** It's an honor to graduate summa cum laude. It proves no matter how old someone is, you can strive to do your best and succeed. I hope my achievements will inspire my daughter to strive to do her best and to follow in my footsteps by attending college, maybe even here at Wesleyan.

### Diane Strickland

Strickland had not tried college right out of high school, but she was encouraged to pursue a four-year degree later in life by an employer.

A business administration major, Strickland, 52, was born in Spring Hope and lives in Rocky Mount with her family. She's married and the mother four adult children, ranging in age from 32 to 26.

She's a team leader at UTC Aerospace, having just reached 10 years of service. Her team builds fire detection sensors for airplanes. Prior to enrolling at Wesleyan, Strickland earned an associate's degree from Edgecombe Community College.

**Q. Why did you enroll at NC Wesleyan?** I decided to pursue a college degree

## Graduating Seniors Look Back on Time at NCWC

By Kristofer Paul Harris  
Decree Staff Writer

Here are brief profiles of students who graduated on May 2. In them, the grads discuss their career plans, their memories of Wesleyan and their regrets.

**Tyler Biehl**, a native of Jacksonville, North Carolina, is graduating with two degrees, one in computer information systems and the other in business administration. "I really liked computers and I've always wanted to work on them," he said. Biehl said that his degree in business administration would help him enter his career. After graduation, he plans to move to Cary, where he will work at SAS Institute as a software technical support agent.

When asked what he would miss about Wesleyan, Biehl replied, "I really like some of the people I met here, especially some of the professors." When asked what he would change about Wesleyan, he said that he would look at the college's admissions process. "They want to keep increasing security here," he said, "but the college continues to let in ignorant kids who do nothing but play sports and mess around."

While at Wesleyan, **Tikeyah Shaw** became fascinated with the American legal system, graduating with a degree in criminal justice. The Goldsboro native said that when she took intro classes in criminal justice, she became interested in how the justice system works and how it can be improved. She plans to apply for jobs in the Raleigh area, where her mother lives. She is hoping to land a job as an associate probation or parole officer. After establishing herself in Raleigh, she wants to look into law school. "I'm not sure where I want to go quite yet, but I've thought about applying to Campbell," she said.

When asked what she would miss most about being a Bishop, Shaw said she would miss her friends and the environment that allowed her to see them every day. "I plan to keep in touch with the friends I've met here," she said. When asked what she would do differently, she said that she would take her freshman year more seriously. She also said that she wishes she could have gotten more students involved in student activities. When asked what she would change about the school, Shaw said that she would improve the technology, noting the slow speed of computers and issues with deleted or missing documents on student accounts.

**Stephen Bardswick**, a student from Ontario, Canada, hopes to become a lawyer, having graduated with degrees in political science and history. A member of the Bishops golf team, he plans to take a year off from school and return to Canada where he'll work at his summer job on a golf course. After some time off, he plans to return to the States, residing in Florida while he studies for the LSAT, with hopes of studying law in Canada or Great Britain.

When asked what he would miss about Wesleyan, Bardswick replied, "I'll miss the friends I've made here over the years and my professors, especially Dr. Husmann. I'll also miss my fraternity brothers and watching it (Alpha Sigma Phi) grow here at Wesleyan." When asked what he would do differently if he could redo his college career, Bardswick said that he would have taken school more seriously and would not have wasted precious free time. Asked what he would change about Wesleyan, he said, "I would like to make the campus less religious. FAITH/forward? I thought

we were here for an education?" Like Biehl, a fellow member of the college's honors program, Bardswick thought it best if Wesleyan raised admission standards to increase the quality of students and the graduation rate. "The acceptance rate is high and the graduation rate is, what, a third of that?"

**KeCharna White** sees her future in marketing, after graduating with one degree in entertainment and another in liberal arts studies, with a concentration in communication. A Washington, D.C., native, she said that originally she planned to major in journalism and communication, but neither was offered during her freshman year, so instead she chose to major in entertainment and minor in journalism. After graduation, White plans to apply for jobs at marketing firms while she works her summer job at a casino near home.

When asked what she would miss, White said that she would miss the people that she has bonded with here. Specifically, she said, she will miss "laughing with my friends." When asked what she would do differently if she could relive her college experience, White said she would make sure she graduated in four years. When asked what she would change about Wesleyan, she said that she would add more majors and minors and have the school develop a closer relationship with Rocky Mount's corporations and businesses to open more opportunities for internships.

Having loved computers since he was young, **Jessie Smith** is graduating with a degree in computer information systems. The Fayetteville native plans to work at MBM, the food distribution company in Rocky Mount, where he interned for almost a year. When asked what he would miss about Wesleyan, he responded, "I'll miss the people I met here." When asked what he would like to change about the school, Smith said he would add more CIS classes to the schedule. When questioned about his regrets, the magna cum laude grad said that would get involved with more activities and get even better grades.

## Nepal Gets Support from NCWC Community

Wesleyan came together April 29 to support its community of Nepalese students devastated by the April 25 earthquake that struck their homeland and caused more than 8,000 deaths.

The college held a candlelight vigil at the Leon Russell Chapel, which was filled to near capacity. More than \$700 was raised to help relief efforts by the Red Cross and other international and local agencies, according to Sabina Paudel, a Wesleyan honors student and Nepali, who helped arrange the vigil days before her graduation.

"What we're doing here tonight is loving our neighbors as ourselves," said Chaplain Barry Drum, who led the gathering. "This is indeed a global village where we love and care for each other."

While Wesleyan's 11 Nepalese students reported that their family members were safe, in interviews several recalled the panic, helplessness and deep sadness felt on learning of the catastrophe and seeing the suffering of their countrymen unfold on TV and social media.

Paudel, a native of the capital Katmandu, said that at the time of the earthquake her parents were in the U.S. to attend her graduation. So she was focused on contacting her brother, who soon reported that he was safe and that their house sustained only cracks and other minor damage.

Paudel's attention then turned to a friend

back home. It was difficult at first to reach her by phone, she said. Instead she used Facebook, but grew worried after hearing nothing for three days. She then sought help by "tagging" her friends' college classmates, who got in touch. "My friend marked herself safe on Facebook," Paudel said, expressing relief, "and then replied to my post."

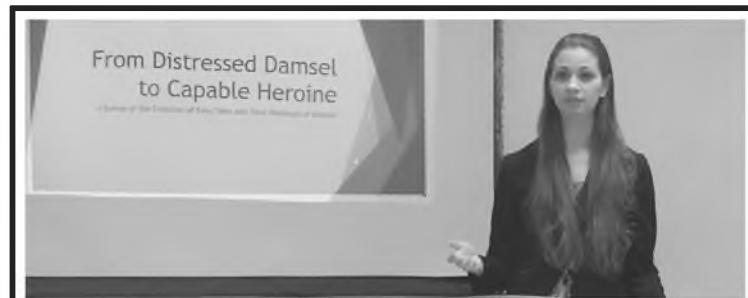
Sophomore Ojas Pradhan comes from the southern part of Katmandu. He said that his mother texted him the night of the 25th and he picked up the message the next morning. "She said there was a

massive earthquake, but that there was 'No need to worry' about his immediate family and that their house suffered no damage, though aftershocks were a worry for days after the initial event.

Though the earthquake was devastating, it was not unexpected. Pradhan said Nepalis "have had it in the backs of our minds for years about an impending earthquake. I just wasn't expecting one with such a major impact."

He said he was shocked when he looked at photographs on the Internet, noting, in particular, the damage to

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Katie Crickmore, seen here presenting the findings of her honors project, was named winner of the Algernon Sydney Sullivan award during the May 2 graduation ceremony at the Dunn Center. Megan Brabble was winner of the President's Cup award in recognition of academic excellence. The ceremony saw 168 graduates receive their diplomas, 60 from the traditional-day program and 108 from ASPIRE. The commencement address was delivered by Quentin T. Sumner, senior resident judge for the North Carolina Superior Court, who gave a humorous and at-times poignant talk about his youth. The packed auditorium was riveted as he described overcoming racism in his hometown of Rocky Mount and exhorted the graduates not to let others define them. K. Beaman photo

after going to work at my current location. I was told by my department manager then that he saw qualities in me he liked, especially the way I worked. After listening to him, two years later I enrolled in school.

**Q. What have you liked most about the ASPIRE program?** It fit my schedule. I didn't have to miss time from work, just to pursue higher education. Bills still roll in even when you're in school. NCWC is very convenient for me.

**Q. What would you change about the ASPIRE program?** Nothing, I'm pleased to have been an ASPIRE student.

**Q. What advice would you offer an older adult who is contemplating getting a college education?** I don't think people who want to learn are ever too old to learn, and shouldn't let life circumstances stop them from pursuing a high education.

**Q. How will your Wesleyan degree help you in your career and life in general?** I hope my degree will help with the upward mobility at my current job, perhaps with higher income. I hope it will even break a few glass ceilings. I'll be praising God for his love and mercy as He has allowed me to achieve another gift. I hope that I am setting an example for women of all ages and color, letting them know you can do whatever you set your mind to do.

## Cranick To Join Williams in Leading SGA

By Katie Beaman  
Senior Staff Writer

Kelly Cranick won the election for SGA Vice President in a runoff on March 27 and will be joining new President Emanuel Williams, who ran unopposed in the initial round of balloting.

Despite repeated requests by The Decree, SGA election organizers declined to provide the vote totals from the runoff and the original election, which, SGA said, ended in a tie between Cranick and Raymond Bryant.

Though he was unopposed, Williams, a freshman from Washington, North Carolina, used the election week to make himself known by putting up flyers and talking to students around campus. "I wanted to make the student body aware of what my plans were when I became president," he said.

Williams' goals start with establishing order within his own executive board. "How can we help other clubs and organizations if our own organization is not set in order?" he asked, stating that he planned to meet soon with the new board and set its agenda.

The new president would like to help organize more student activities and get a larger turnout by students, faculty and staff. He said he plans for SGA members to poll students to gauge their interest in new clubs. Williams wants to have leadership training for the presidents of all the clubs. He will continue to strengthen the relationship the school has with the city of Rocky Mount, a goal that former president Isaiah Morrow shared.

Williams expressed respect for Morrow. "Isaiah will be mentoring me through the process," stated the freshman. "He will always be a role model to me and I'm confident that I can maintain the strong leadership role that Isaiah has established in SGA."

Even though he has only been at Wesleyan for a year, Williams is confident in his abilities as president and cites God as his source of strength. "I have served a God who has brought me out of every challenging time," he said.

Raised by a single mother, Williams found male role models in his grandfather, his pastor Roy Gray, and his employer Jimmy Conleton. "I had the urge to join a gang, but God helped me through it," he said.

Williams sees starting his presidency as a sophomore as an advantage. "I can be a voice for the students," he said. "I have new ideas to bring to the table. I'm open to listening to the students and voicing their opinions."

As a freshman Williams was already part of many organizations on campus such as Leadership Wesleyan, Voices of Triumph, Nu Gamma Phi, Refuge, and The Bridge. He is a criminal justice major with a minor

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