

THE DECREE

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NORTH CAROLINA WESLEYAN COLLEGE, ROCKY MOUNT, NORTH CAROLINA 27804



Goalkeeper Ashley Major has helped the Bishops to an early lead in the USA South Conference, posting a sub-1.00 GAA. In other action, the men's team has opened 4-0 in the conference, the volleyball team finds itself in the middle of the pack, and the football team has split its opening two conference matchups. After a 41-31 upset of last year's conference champ, Huntington, the football team fell to Maryville, 31-17, on the road last Saturday. See sports on page 3. SI photo

Most Students Delighted with Wesleyan Enrollment Growth

Enrollment rose again in 2016, with 940 students in the day program, an all-time high, and 290 more than in 2013.

Looking at the past three years, President Dewey Clark said that the college is progressing toward its long-term enrollment goals. "Our founders envisioned a college with 2,000 students," he said. "We're well on our way."

The new student cohort includes 307 freshmen, 68 transfers and 15 who were re-admitted to the college. Females amount to 37 percent (144) of new students. According to figures provided by the provost's office, 98 first-year males, or 25 percent, came to play football. Other Bishop teams accounted for 83, or 21 percent, of the cohort.

The college has reported steady improvement in the SAT scores of new freshmen. Average scores have risen from 869 in 2013 to 913 in 2016. In 2013, 19 percent scored more than 1,000, 21 percent between 900 and 990, and 59 percent below 900. By contrast, in 2016, 44 percent exceeded 1,000, 24 percent were in the 900-990 range, and 32 percent were below 900.

Many upperclassmen have been delighted at the recent growth. Of 16 students surveyed, 14 said they were pleased, while one was not happy with the change and

one, a new transfer student, said he wasn't in a position to comment.

David Chang, a junior, expressed a common sentiment when he noted that increased enrollment means "that the school will be able to improve its services and activities. There's a more active atmosphere with new faces, which gives Wesleyan more of a true college feel. In the past campus felt emptier and dull."

Courtney Moss and Toni Collins pointed to the proliferation of new organizations on campus and the overall rise in student involvement. "Everyone can play a part in bringing a fun environment to campus," Collins said.

Hunter Staylor, Mo Jallow and Pristine Saekhou like the continued emphasis on diversity. The three enjoy the opportunity to mingle with students from various cultures. "You get students from Africa, Asia, and South America," Staylor said. "You can experience different lifestyles without leaving (the country)."

Twenty-eight new internationals have joined the Wesleyan community, with almost half coming from Asia, including 10 students from Nepal and Wesleyan's first-ever Cambodian student. Venezuela and Nigeria were the second most represented countries with 4

students each, followed by Argentina (3), Japan (2), Cambodia (1), Ecuador (1), Sweden (1), Canada (1) and the United Kingdom (1).

Desire Strong hopes the recent growth will lead to new majors, while Ebonee Robinson wants to see the continued updating of old facilities and the addition of new ones, such as the recent construction of Bradley Hall.

To meet the growing demand for on-campus housing, the college will build a new residence hall on the south side of Bradley. The new facility will open in time for the fall 2017 semester and include 40 single rooms, President Clark said.

"We're aiming for May 31, 2017," the president said, "but we can't control hurricanes, snow storms, rain, shortage of construction materials, or the litany of obstacles that might occur during construction."

On-campus occupancy has risen from 93 to 94 percent, as 666 students now live in Wesleyan residence halls, up 14 from last year, according to data furnished by Jessie Langley, Associate Dean of Students for Residence Life. The Wesleyan Inn is now home to 110 students after the college added 23 beds to the facility located on North

Wesleyan Boulevard, south of campus; it's 91 percent full, Langley said.

While students gave overwhelming approval to the hike in enrollment, many described the downsides to the recent growth. Some pointed out the increased congestion in common areas such as the library and cafeteria. Many complained about a parking shortage.

"The worst part is trying to find parking spaces," said Jerman Clark.

Some students have been frustrated at not finding a spot close to the classroom building, the cafeteria and the library.

Wayne Sears, director of Campus Security, debunked at least some of the parking concerns. He said he's heard Collins residents complain about not finding spots near the cafeteria and Edgcombe residents lament the limited number of slots at the library. "This isn't a parking problem," Sears said. "It's a convenience issue for students who don't want to walk."

Noting that the college provides 1,052 spots on campus, Sears said that additional parking has been made available in recent months. Forty-three new spots were created along the Dunn Center driveway loop. Near the library and Hardees Buildings, Sears said, two areas were converted into five slots for motorcycles.

The college is continuing to study the parking issue, in part due to concerns raised by the SGA Safety Committee. Sears said that the college re-issued parking stickers this semester to help it collect data on users and peak parking times.

"Last year's data wasn't complete enough for us to determine if we need assigned parking or more space," or if the status quo was sufficient, Sears said.

He did report that the college is in the early stages of establishing a gravel lot—room for about 70 vehicles—next to Bradley Field House to alleviate parking problems at sporting events. And it is eyeing about 20 new spots along the rear drive near the Taylor Center, Sears reported.

Despite the parking issues and other growing pains, many Bishops underscored the transformation that has occurred around campus.

Expressing satisfaction with the college's growth over the past three years, President Clark recalled that enrollment stood at 650 in fall 2013. The pace slowed from last year, as enrollment rose from 900 to 940 students. The college attracted 30 fewer new students than it did in 2015 (390 vs. 420), but experienced an overall rise of 40 due to a higher number of returning upper-classmen.

"It's really hard to call this a 'down year,'" the president said, stressing that the 390 figure represents the second largest class in the college's history. "From day one, our plan has been to grow about 100 students per year."

President Clark noted that even with the decline in new students, Wesleyan is up 290 students over fall 2013. "We're off our objective by only 10 students," he said. "That's nothing short of remarkable."

The president would like to see the college raise enrollment by 100 for fall 2017 and believes it's a realistic goal. He noted that next year will see the introduction of the communication major, greater participation in ROTC, as well as the reinstatement of the lacrosse team, whose coach, Bridget Walker, is already recruiting.

President Clark was effusive in his praise of the admissions and coaching staffs. "The entire team has done a tremendous job," he said. Referring to Judy Rollins, vice president of Enrollment Services and Marketing, the president said, "Mrs. Rollins came with a tremendous marketing background, but no admissions experience. In 2 1/2 years she's become the best admissions executive we've ever had at Wesleyan. The numbers speak for themselves."

About the coaching staff, the president said, "Our coaches are great recruiters in their own right. They're tireless workers and fine ambassadors of the college. We're fortunate to have an athletic department and admissions office that work well together."

Optimistic about next year, President Clark said he expects enrollment to reach 1,050 students. "We're expecting our largest class ever for the fall," he said. "Our best days are still ahead of us."

Kitchin To Focus on Addiction, Other Counseling Services

Lindy Kitchin has joined the Student Affairs Department as Director of Counseling & Disability Services.

A 38-year-old native of Rich Square, North Carolina, she succeeds Alan Harper, who left the college to enter private practice.

Kitchin earned a BA in psychology from UNC-Chapel Hill and a masters in social work from East Carolina University. Since 2009, she has been a Licensed Clinical Social Worker, a credential that has allowed her to identify and treat mental health disorders. With her LCSW, a primary focus has been community mental health and advocacy for social equality. In 2010 Kitchin became a licensed clinical addiction specialist.

Prior to joining the Wesleyan staff, Kitchin worked for more than 10 years as a therapist in private practice, providing clinical intake, assessment, crisis intervention, and short- and long-term therapy services to adults, families, and children with mental health and addiction disorders. Trained in cognitive behavioral therapy, she has administered and supervised case management services under the auspices of the state Department of Health & Human Services.

Regarding her hiring, Dean of Students Edward Naylor said he was impressed by Kitchin's "varied background in private practice and mental health education and her work with college-age individuals. Her professionalism and her desire to engage and help students grow in their thought process make her an excellent fit for Wesleyan and our students."

Jessica Brys-Wilson, director of Health Services, likes Kitchin's "well-rounded approach to patient care."

Noting that the two have already begun to collaborate, Brys-Wilson said, "With her emphasis on counseling and me providing medical follow-up, we're really able to offer optimal mental-health care right here on campus."

Kitchin and her husband, Rich, live in Scotland Neck with their three daughters—Deborah Hall, 14, Law, 12, and Jayme, 7—and two dogs, a schnoodle and a golden retriever. In her free time, she enjoys traveling, reading the Bible, running, and watching her children participate in sports. A Carolina basketball fan, she likes musicals and the novels of Karen Kingsbury.

The Decree conducted a recent interview with Kitchin soon after she assumed her post.

Q. What attracted you to the job at Wesleyan?

A. During the last five years in my private counseling practice I worked closely with the ECU student counseling center and provided long-term treatment for students and families with mental health and substance abuse disorders. I enjoyed working with the college students and was excited about the opportunity to apply for the Director of Counseling position and serve college students full time. From a personal perspective I have three children that attend school in Rocky Mount and I needed a position that would allow me to reduce travel

time to work. This position is a perfect fit for my professional and personal needs.

Q. So far, what's impressed you most about the Wesleyan community?

A. I've noticed a strong sense of support and genuine interest for student success among the staff. I feel my colleagues really enjoy serving and meeting the needs of our students. The students are awesome and take pride in their school and support each other. I look forward to coming to campus each day.

Q. How can you use your past professional experiences in your new position?

A. Being a therapist has given me the opportunity to work with clients from diverse cultures and backgrounds. Regardless of our backgrounds, all human beings want to understand the connection between their thoughts, emotions and behaviors. I've counseled children, adults, families and couples. Therapists often spend most of their time helping patients resolve relationship conflict. We're social beings and cannot exist without relationships, but we all struggle with managing our emotional responses. Within the counseling department, our services are more than a diagnosis or management of symptoms. I'm trained to help students learn healthy ways of problem solving, communication and coping with their emotions. Social, emotional and spiritual growth is a constant process throughout the life span. I hope students enter and leave the counseling center feeling empowered to take charge of their personal growth.

Q. Since your past positions have not been in a college setting, what areas have you been researching to increase your knowledge?

A. Dean Naylor has been a tremendous supporter with information about federal laws and guidelines for college campuses related to Title IX, Bystander Intervention, etc. I'm reaching out to other professional colleagues/friends who work in other college counseling centers and trying to learn more about resources and possible mental health awareness and education that may be beneficial on the college campus.

Q. What are the most common psychological issues faced by today's college students?

A. Isolation, depression and generalized anxiety are always concerns for college students. This is a huge transition time in life and most experience feelings of isolation and being overwhelmed with the expectations of college. However, for the 18-25 population my biggest concern is related to substance abuse. Alcohol and marijuana have always been an issue on college campuses. During the last 10 years, I've specialized in treatment of addiction disorders and I've seen the statistics rapidly increase for misuse, abuse and dependence of prescription-based opiates, benzodiazepines and stimulants.

The Centers for Disease Control reports that overdoses related to opioid-based medication and heroin have become the leading cause of death among the 18-25 demographic in the last five years, surpassing even motor vehicle accidents. This is a grave concern for our society and one that goes beyond college students. I'm thankful I've had the opportunity to provide treatment and restore hope for many struggling

with addiction disorders. Prevention and education are the key to addressing this issue. I plan to offer education to students and staff about this growing epidemic in our society.

Q. From your perspective, in what ways have social media made it more difficult to be a college student?

A. I think social media is a great tool for expression and staying connected with others. Socialization is part of our existence. I think comparing oneself to others is likely the biggest issue for college students and that can have both positive and negative consequences. Comparison is the thief of joy. Social media creates an environment where we have constant access to the success and failures of others. This can distract us from developing an understanding of our own unique strengths and talents. I encourage students to focus on their own success and failures and not to measure success based on what a peer has accomplished. Learn to celebrate accomplishments of self and others. Practice celebrating uniqueness rather than comparison.

Q. I imagine some students see you of their own volition. Others get referred to you by Jessica Brys-Wilson or other staff and faculty. How else do students come to you?

A. Word of mouth is my best source of referrals. Most students email or stop by my office to set up an appointment. Most enjoy the psycho-education and support I can provide and they share with friends what they've learned in counseling. I do coordinate with our departments like student health, athletics and residence life to make sure we identify students who need support.

ASPIRE Students Give College a Second Try

Kenneth Williams

Kenneth Williams said a near-death experience, a strong desire to learn, and support from his wife have put him months away from achieving a dream—a degree from a four-year college.

The Decree interviewed Williams, 67, about his experiences in education, the ASPIRE program in particular. The Rocky Mount native is a religious studies major.

Q. Describe your current job and your career plans.

A. I'm retired. I plan to obtain my masters after graduating from Wesleyan. A graduate degree wasn't on my bucket list, but the learning experience here has given me the desire to learn more.

Q. Tell us about your first attempt at college.

A. I have two Associate of Science degrees. I earned my first associates degree from

Wingate College in 1970. I was married after my freshman year. I didn't obtain my BA, as it was necessary to work full time after the birth of my first child. In 2004 I earned my second associates degree in respiratory therapy from Edgcombe Community College.

Q. What did you do between the time you left college the first time and then decided to re-enroll at Wesleyan?

A. I was in sales and marketing until 1990. I ran my own business in transportation brokerage until I closed it in 2001. It was at this time I enrolled in ECC and obtained my second associates degree in respiratory therapy. Upon graduation I worked at an area hospital.

Q. What brought you to Wesleyan?

A. In February 2013 I had back surgery and remained hospitalized until August due to complications. During that

time I was in the hospital I read about Wesleyan and the ASPIRE program. I was inspired by the stories of students who had given up on college and then returned to complete their degrees.

Q. How do you feel about your decision to return to college?

A. I find it rewarding that I can help clients understand why we have difficulty managing our emotions and behaviors. I like to empower them to care for their emotional health and tap into their strengths and abilities. We're all different, but we all have positive attributes we can contribute to our lives and the lives of others. In my professional work, one highlight has been the ability to support a client with an addictive disorder maintain a period of abstinence and grow spiritually in recovery. Serving others is my internal driver and I feel that God placed me in the perfect career.



Lindy Kitchin

G. Wallace photo

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