

THE DECREE

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Many New Grads Overcame Obstacles, Dismal Job Market Awaits

By Decree Staff

Micke'l Cahoon admits that he's "nervous" about the job market and cited the experiences of many recent graduates still looking for work in their field.

Opportunities are "slim," he said. "There's no guaranteed jobs out there for new college graduates. If there is a job, it's not in the major that you pursued."

The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics confirms what Cahoon and classmates have seen first-hand. October data put the state unemployment rate at 11 percent and the Rocky Mount area figure at 13.7.

Cahoon was one of 132 Wesleyan students who graduated in December. Of that total, 34 came from the traditional day program and 98 from the adult degree programs in Morrisville (Triangle), Goldsboro and Rock Mount. Many majored in business and associated fields

Many Students Doubt TWD Law Will Work

By Meghan Herd
Decree Staff Writer

Wesleyan students endorse the new state law that bans "texting while driving." But many question the police's ability to enforce it, while others admit that they will not break the habit.

Starting December 1, drivers caught texting while driving will face a fine of \$100, plus court fees.

Sophomore Drew Herring thinks the new law is necessary. "I'm glad they made it a law because there are so many accidents related to cell-phone usage," he said, "so this might limit injuries and fatalities."

Carl Lewis, a Wesleyan criminal justice instructor and former Rocky Mount policeman, said the law is overdue. "I agree with the law 100 percent," he said, citing studies that show the level of distraction that occurs while texting. "I'm not surprised that they did create this law; it should have come a long time ago."

Many students expressed support for the law, but acknowledged that it may not change behavior.

"I think it's a good idea because texting can cause drivers to not pay attention to the road and crash," said Jessie Pierce, who confesses to texting while driving. "But I doubt most are going to follow this law. Only a few will be scared and stop texting."

Junior Katanya Hall doubts that drivers will heed the new law. "Just like with the seat belt law," she said, "they don't follow it until they get fined."

While noting that many drivers are "not focusing on the road," Terrence Johnson said the law will be difficult to enforce. "I don't know how they're going to enforce this law," he said. "It's going to be very hard. I'm not sure they will be able to tell that you're texting."

Cecilia Thorpe concurred with Johnson. "I just don't see how it will be enforced," she said, "because they may not be able to tell if you're texting."

Lewis conceded the challenges in the new law, but still believes it will have a positive effect on drivers. "Drivers can put their phones in their laps and out of view," he said, "but I'm sure more tickets will be issued."

Many Wesleyan students admit to texting while driving.

Senior Orlando Webb believes that it is a good law, but may find it hard to follow himself. "I'm guilty of texting and driving," he said. "When I've been texting and driving, I've caught myself swerving or having to slam on the brakes."

Other students had already modified their behavior.

Said Edgar Zaldivar: "I only read my text messages when driving and reply when I get out the car."

Domarius Thomas has broken the habit. "I used to text and drive a lot," said Thomas, "but I don't anymore because I'm not trying to hurt anyone else or get a ticket and lose points on my license."

Johnson recalled a near accident that occurred while he was texting. "I used to text and drive but then I almost hit somebody. That's when I stopped."

because they thought such preparation would make them more employable.

Held December 12 in the Dunn Center, the graduation ceremony featured a commencement address by Susan Gravely, a Rocky Mount native, who serves as chairman and CEO of Vietri, Inc., a wholesale distributor of Italian handcrafted dinnerware and decorative accessories.

In her talk, Gravely recounted the early days of her company, which resulted from a trip to Italy with her mother and sister. "We knew nothing of starting a business," she said. "But we fell in love."

It's important, she told the graduates, to take on difficult tasks and be willing to fail. She stressed the importance of asking questions and seeking advice early in one's career. And she added, "Seek your passions in life, and your life will be passionate in every way."

Gravely was a last-minute substitute for U.S. Sen. Kay Hagan, D-NC, who was unable to leave Capitol Hill, due to a heavy legislative agenda.

Cahoon, a business administration major and former defensive player on the Bishops football team, said he's not been picky in his employment search, which has covered the Rocky Mount and Raleigh areas. He said he would take any job in business as long as it's one that pays at least \$30,000 per year with full benefits.

The Creswell native said he knows about 15 recent Wesleyan grads; four have found full-time employment in their field. "The rest are doing little jobs to put money in their pocket," he said, noting that three work in a group home and that one CIS major is in high school administration.

Another new grad, Kim Garrett, hopes to land a position in tax accounting, which would allow the Rocky Mount native to use her double major in math and accounting. She feels uneasy about the market, which, due to child care concerns, is limited for her to eastern North Carolina. "It's going to be hard to find a job around Rocky Mount," she said. "There's not much here. I think it would be easier to find a job in Raleigh."

Garrett is one of many exemplary students who have balanced family obligations with her school work. Taking 15-18 hours of classes each semester, she has maintained a GPA over 3.5 and served as a tutor in math and accounting as well as in the Writing Center. To support her children, Marquayla, 5, and Marquez, 1, she has worked 35-40 hours per week at a local Hardees, the last two as a manager of the Sunset Avenue restaurant, which often required ten-hour shifts on Saturday and Sunday.

During this past semester Garrett's typical day began at 6:30 a.m. when she woke to prepare her daughter for kindergarten. She said she fit home-

work into her schedule "any time I was free." Most days she went to sleep around 1 a.m., she said.

Like many students with children, Garrett has relied on a support network. She expressed gratitude for the assistance she's received from family members, in particular her mother, Brenda, who has helped with child rearing. "She's a big part of the reason I'm graduating," Garrett said.

Emily Perry can relate to the challenges faced by Garrett. Beginning with a single class in 2001, the non-traditional student embarked on what she called "a long, hard journey" to fulfill her dream of earning a college degree.

"Getting a college degree is something that I've always wanted," she said. "I enjoy learning, so when the opportunity was presented for me to attend night school, I decided to take advantage of it."

Problems at SGA: Do Students Care?

By Jarad Brown
Decree Editor

So there isn't enough being done by the Student Government Association on campus? You could do a better job than the current student body president, Jacob Strickland? Good luck.

"Our responsibility is to help this place get better," Strickland said. "We take student concerns to administration and bring the answers back. We are like the watchdogs of campus."

The SGA consists of 36 members that include representatives from every student organization on campus, representatives for each of the student body classes, as well as from the dorms.

With such an extensive membership, acting as a "watchdog" should be an easy task, right? Sure, if that extensive membership is indeed present.

Though SGA is supposed to consist of 36 members, it has been lucky to see six members at some meetings this semester. Strickland noted an incident where just four of the 36 members were present for an official SGA meeting.

Hard to even take roll with just four represents present, much less accomplish anything for the student body. The real question then seems to be not what SGA's role on campus is, but why there is a lack of participation on campus.

"It seems to be a case of little things adding up to a larger problem," Strickland said. "Not having an email list to contact members, and a paper shortage that prevents flyers from being printed hurts. Those certainly don't help things and I don't know what the real problem is, but mostly I think it all goes back to student apathy."

Before you bash the president for throwing blame on the students, consider that he might actually have a point.

NCWC Experiences 'Mild' Flu Season...So Far

By Decree Staff

Calling it a "mild flu season" so far, College Nurse Holly Fairley reported just six confirmed cases this past semester, the last one on November 19.

It remains unclear whether the H1N1 virus hit the Wesleyan campus. Fairley noted that Wesleyan, and many local physicians, do not test for the H1N1 virus, in part because of the cost (\$300) and the amount of time (3-5 days) it takes to learn the results.

Instead the college uses a test that detects the A or B strain of the flu. Fairley said that four students were diagnosed with the A strain and two with the B strain. It's possible that students diagnosed with the A strain had been infected with H1N1 virus. But Fairley said that all students, whether diagnosed with A or B, were sent home as a matter of policy.

"We're trying to keep exposure rates down," she said. "Yes, before the students were diagnosed, others may have been exposed in their classes, but we wanted to minimize the exposure so we sent the students home as a precaution."

The six Wesleyan's flu victims, all in their late teens or early twenties, made a full recovery and returned to classes within a week, said Fairley, who added that flu cases were not concentrated

in a particular dorm. Besides the six residential students, there was one commuter student who convalesced at home after his family doctor diagnosed him with the flu, she said.

To return to campus, Fairley explained, students must be fever-free for 24 hours without the aid of Tylenol or other fever-reducing medication.

Despite the mild flu reason on campus, Fairley said that members of the Wesleyan community should still brace for the so-called third wave of the H1N1, which is expected in January and February. She recommends getting the H1N1 vaccine, which is offered free, to all age groups, through the Nash County Health Department.

Among other steps one can take to avoid the flu, Fairley continues to recommend that members of the Wesleyan community:

- Wash their hands often
- Cough into their sleeve rather than hands
- Avoid crowds and the sick
- Increase their intake of vitamin C (it's not stored by the body, she noted)
- Follow a healthy diet
- Get plenty of rest

"I've been encouraged so far," Fairly said. "With vaccine maybe we can stop the third wave this winter."

Over the years, Perry has held a series of jobs at Wesleyan, in the development office, maintenance and now as administrative assistant to Dean of the College Jay Stubblefield, a position that she describes as "hectic and challenging," requiring high levels of concentration and organization.

Like Garrett, Perry is a single mother. "I made the decision to take one class at a time so that I would only be away from home one night a week," she said. "This also kept me from having too heavy of a homework load so that I would still have time to spend with my daughters."

The business administration major noted that there have been many obstacles along the way. "There aren't adequate words to describe how difficult it can be for a single mom to work full time, care for two adolescent young girls and go to school at night," she said. She said that she would complete her

assignments, conduct research, write papers and study for exams at night and on weekends - after working all day, cooking dinner, caring for her girls, and fulfilling "the other hundreds of duties that go with running a household alone."

Perry's secret? "I would face each day—and each class—one at a time," she said. "I tried not to focus on the long road ahead, but tried to only focus on what was before me in the short term. It's very gratifying to know that I managed to make it to the end, in spite of the challenges I encountered."

This is a special year for Perry. Both daughters will graduate in spring, Paige from Southern Nash High School, and Shannon with a nursing degree from Barton College.

"I think it's pretty neat that all three of us are graduating within a six-month period," Perry said. "I would have liked to have been finished many years ago, but better late than never."

"watchdog" or even a voice of students if students aren't willing to speak for themselves?

"The more involved students are, the better this place is," Strickland said. "If students were more engaged, I think there would be more activities and less crime on campus."

Strickland also recognized that the apathy that's spread across the student body isn't entirely to be blamed on students. When SGA wasn't in existence between 2006-2008 it created a sense that student concerns didn't matter, and students didn't have a voice because of that.

Those days are gone and some students recognize the difference.

"(The SGA) has improved a lot since I've been here," sophomore David Douglas said. "Organizations seem stronger and there seems to be more of them now. I think they're doing a pretty good job of making things better on campus."

While not every problem is addressed and not every student grievance is heard, a voice on some matters is better than no voice at all. SGA meetings are open to all students. If anyone has a problem, they should say something. The voice can't speak for students, if the students won't tell it what to say.

"We're rebuilding SGA," SGA Treasurer Taylor Huffman said. "It's improving and so is student apathy, but it's not an overnight project."

Title Rings Imperiled By Bookstore Incident

By Jarad Brown
Decree Editor

The NC Wesleyan football team had a successful season in 2009. The squad notched eight regular-season victories and a second USA South Conference championship in three seasons.

That success ended, though, when the time came for players to size up for their hardware.

While being fitted for their championship rings in the college book store, several team members stole merchandise. Included were more than 26 textbooks, and an undetermined number of book bags, cologne, deodorant as well as various other items. Suspects were identified by their teammates, who have helped in the investigation.

"It's really just sad," College Store Manager Rachel Dix said. "I mean, you've got a group of seniors who worked so hard to have the kind of season they had, and then it ends with something like this. The selfishness of a few guys hurts everyone."

Dix noted that during her 30-year tenure, the bookstore had been broken into six other times. The most recent occurred more than ten years ago, the work of a man wanted for murder in Virginia. Dix mentioned that several former players had called her to apologize and voice their distaste over the incident.

Current players were willing to voice their own displeasure with the situation.

"You almost feel depressed when something like this happens," senior

quarterback Bo Jordan said. "This makes the entire team look like a bunch of thugs, and that's not how we carry ourselves."

Jordan isn't the only player who expressed disdain for the actions of fellow team members.

"It's horrible to have a season like the one we had wiped away by ignorance," senior running back Teron Bush said. "It's terrible to be looked down upon when you're so used to being looked up to."

Dean of Students Randy Williams could not be reached for comment on the exact figures of what was stolen or about those alleged to have been involved.

Regardless of the lack of information being released by authorities, campus frustration is widespread.

"It's crazy how everything went down in the bookstore," running back Bryan Haywood said. "I really don't even know what to say about the whole deal. I do know that we worked too hard this season for this to be the way things end."

The Rocky Mount Police Department has been involved in the situation, and an investigation is ongoing. While Coach Mark Henninger was unavailable for comment, it is known that currently no rings are being ordered.

"This is awful for myself and every senior on this team," Jordan said. "You're not remembered for what you do at the beginning, but rather what you do at the end and this is how our career ended. I hate it."