

THE DECREE

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NORTH CAROLINA WESLEYAN COLLEGE, ROCKY MOUNT, NORTH CAROLINA 27804

Class of 2014: Gender Gap Remains, And Many Fail to Show

By John Kostet
Senior Staff Writer

Thirty-four new students have withdrawn from the college, lowering an incoming class that was expected to exceed 300 to a total of 278, impacting campus life and cutting into the college's revenue.

The 34 students all had paid their deposits and registered for classes. The 278 figure includes 244 freshmen and 34 transfer students. An additional 30 upperclassmen have left the college after registering for fall classes, according to Jonathan Vester, director of institutional research.

Vester said many of the 34 freshmen drop-outs could not find a way to pay for their tuition and other expenses. Other reasons remain unknown, as many of the withdrawing students simply did not show up for class. When students are faced with the possibility of withdrawal, they are sent to get help at the Student Success Center. "In some cases, there are financial problems that we cannot do much about," Vester said.

Dr. Robert J. Stubblefield, dean of the college, agreed with Vester that the current economic downturn has hit families hard, citing the difficulty they face in securing loans. But he emphasized the need for faculty and staff to be aware of the alert system that the Student Success Center provides. "We need to recognize when students are about to drop, so we can get on their issues instantly," Stubblefield said.

SGA Loses One Officer, Gains Two New Ones

By Decree Staff

Two new executive officers joined. Wesleyan's Student Government Association last month after uncontested elections.

Taylor Huffman, SGA treasurer during 2009-2010, has assumed the vice presidency while Gregory Spence filled the vacant treasurer position after each was the only qualified student to apply for the posts in early September. Spence takes over the treasurer's job following the departure of Jasmine Mann, who was elected last spring, along with president Jacob Strickland and secretary John Williamson. According to Strickland, Mann cited a lack of time in announcing her resignation over the summer.

Now in his third consecutive one-year term, Strickland said he is pleased that Huffman and Spence have become part of his administration.

"Taylor brings past experience as an SGA officer," the president said. "He's a good worker. And he's heavily connected to the Wesleyan population, because he always stops to talk to everybody."

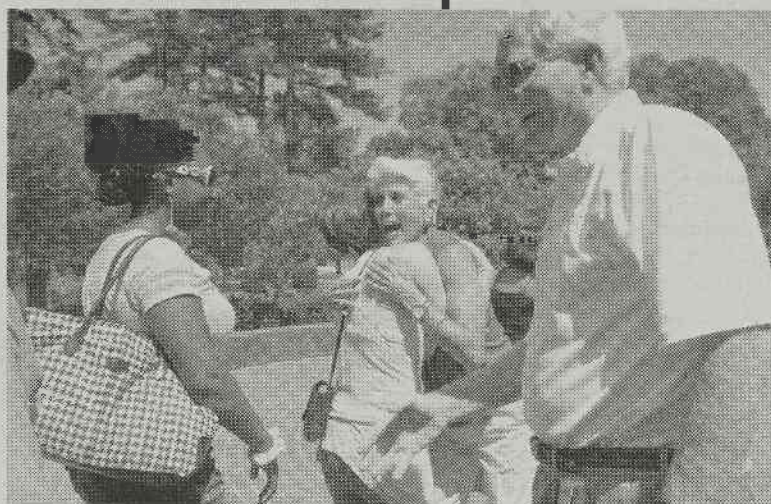
Strickland praised Spence for possessing similar qualities. "He's well liked and respected," he said. "He's never afraid to voice his opinion, which is important. Sometimes in the face of a large student population or administration, it can be intimidating. I think Greg is comfortable in that setting, no matter the audience."

Strickland lamented the lack of females on the new executive board. "I think it's important to have a diverse board," he explained, "because it encourages all groups to get involved. A female member would add a different perspective."

In a recent interview, the president, a member of the college's ROTC program, identified two new programs that his administration is implementing: "Operation Wesleyan Rewind" and "Operation Handshake."

Operation Rewind is an effort to foster student respect and pride in the college. It will involve a year-long review of college history, beginning with the original construction of campus in the 1950s, through PowerPoint presentations and other media. "Students are not going to get involved in a school that they don't like," Strickland said, adding that the promotion is designed, in part, to help students become active and contributing alumni.

Through Operation Handshake, SGA would like to re-establish trust between



President and Mrs. Gray greet freshmen earlier this semester.

PR Photo

The 64 departing students have been somewhat offset by new and returning students who came to campus after the first day of classes, Vester said.

The admissions office has sought to tighten admissions standards with a firmer emphasis on academics. This year's rejections increased to more than 40 percent, according to Gary Sherman, vice president of enrollment, who said that the administration has raised its expectations for incoming freshmen as the college amends its profile.

In discussing the tighter standards, Sherman explained that the changes are part

of a comprehensive admissions initiative. "We've been focusing on bringing in students that we know can be successful here," he said, pointing out that the increased rejection rate was by design, rather than a result of increased applications.

As part of the new admissions initiative, the college has been conducting criminal background checks on student applicants older than 18. "The focus was to determine if someone may have a background that could lead to any situation that harms our students, employees, or to themselves," Sherman said, reporting that there were several students who were denied admission based on the results of the check. "This level of scrutiny is necessary, particularly in this time of campus tragedies," Sherman said, noting the safety concerns nationwide in the wake of incidents like the shootings at Virginia Tech and Alabama-Huntsville. He explained that conducting background checks does not guarantee total safety, but reduces potential crime.

Among the new students, the average tests scores were 890 for the SAT and 18 for the ACT. Sherman said the high school grade point average for new students remains about the same, at 2.92.

Of the 278 remaining first-year students, there is a total of 97 females and 181 males. Females make up 43 percent of all traditional day students, Vester said.

Wesleyan's athletic programs constitute an essential part of the student body, as 37 percent of all students are registered athletes with the NCAA. According to

Sherman, this is a mix very consistent with other schools in the USA South Conference, and he is proud of the college's efforts in ensuring the academic eligibility of its student-athletes. "Our data does not support the common notion that a high percentage of athletes would lead to a negative situation," he said. "Instead, we are interested in all students who are a good match at Wesleyan, regardless of their extra-curricular pursuits."

Another part of the college's new admissions initiative has been to reestablish the northeast as an essential recruitment region. John Sams has been appointed to make recruitment trips and attend college fairs in New Jersey and Pennsylvania. Sherman said the goal is to attract interested students from private high schools who can afford a smaller private college. "We try to use the so-called sticker shock, as our northern equivalents are much more expensive," Sherman said.

The college has made an effort to keep up with the new channels of communication by using the popular websites Facebook and Twitter. The admissions office Facebook page has more than 500 fans and is still growing. Sherman said that the way to communicate with prospective students has changed a lot in recent years. "Young people would rather text, write messages and emails than talk in person or even on the phone," he said.

With 163 first-year students, North Carolina continues to be the most represented state among the Wesleyan student body, with Virginia (47) and Maryland (16) coming in second and third.

The total number of international students stands at 73, or 10 percent of Wesleyan's total student body of 733. This number has been sky-rocketing the last few years, as many of the athletic teams have been recruiting overseas.

But this fall the number of new international students was unchanged at 27, as some applicants ran into problems with their paperwork. "Different countries seem to have different waiting schedules for visas, and the process has not got any faster since the tightening of the homeland security," Sherman said, while hopeful the college can add several new foreign students next semester.

In recent months NC Wesleyan has been touting its diversity as it is ranked in the top three in the South, according to US News and World Report. African-Americans make up about 43 percent of the entire

student body, followed by Caucasians (28 percent), "Not Reported" (11 percent), Internationals (10 percent), Multi-Culturals (3 percent), and Hispanics (2 percent). Asian Pacific Islander, Asian-American and others each constitute less than 1 percent of the student body.

R&B Artist Valentino Highlights Homecoming Celebration

Emelie Lundgren
Decree Staff Writer

Homecoming Week will kick off with a concert by nationally recognized R&B artist Bobby Valentino on Saturday October 2 at 7 p.m. at the Dunn Center. It's the first homecoming concert at Wesleyan in recent memory.

Tickets cost \$10, a low price for a concert according to senior Jesse Williams. "It's really cheap, but of course you wish school events always will be free of charge," Williams said, though he expressed gratitude for having a contemporary artist performing on campus.

Senior Jessica Jefferson is excited about the concert. "I like his style. It's good they're bringing someone everybody knows. My favorite song is 'Beep Beep,' and he does look good," Jefferson said with a smile.

Valentino won the Best R&B Artist in the Urban Music Awards of 2009. His most famous songs are "Slow Down", "Tell Me" featuring Lil Wayne, and "Anonymous" featuring Timbaland. His upcoming album "Fly On the Wall" is expected to be released later this month.

The concert will be followed by a day of decoration on Sunday, when the Black Student Association and other students paint the campus blue and gold at 6 p.m., starting in the Hartness Center, to spread the spirit of homecoming all over the school.

Here is a list of other events during the week:

- Monday, October 4, 5 p.m.: Powder-puff Football Game at the Edgecombe lawn.
- Tuesday, October 5, 7 p.m.: "5 Minutes of Fame", where students can record their own CD in a state-of-the-art sound booth at the Hartness Center.
- Wednesday, October 6, 5:30 p.m.: Cookout & Carnival on the Hartness Patio with food, music and games.
- Thursday, October 7, 8 p.m.: Bingo evening at the cafeteria.
- Friday, October 8: Pep Rally in Everett Gymnasium at 8 p.m., followed by Campout Carolina & Fireworks at Hartness Lawn, with food and a live band, and an environmental friendly "Go Green" initiative where students can camp outside to bring down the level of energy use in the dorms.
- Saturday, October 9, 1 p.m.: The homecoming game, with the Battling Bishops taking on Greensboro College at Northern Nash High School.

Together with a homecoming committee, Adia Cuthbertson, director of student activities, has been working on this year's program since October last year. She is very excited about this year's festivities. "I think it makes our school unique," Cuthbertson said. "We want everyone to be excited about being a Wesleyan student."

The Go Green theme has been important in forming the program. Organizers will sponsor a recycling challenge among the dorms throughout the week. The winner will get a pizza party in their resident hall by the end of the semester.

Students agree with Cuthbertson that homecoming is important for the school spirit, something sophomore Raul Lopez thinks is lacking at Wesleyan.

"You have to start somewhere with building school spirit and homecoming is a great opportunity to try to increase it," said Lopez, who thinks it's especially important for Wesleyan since it's a small school in a small city.

See HOMECOMING pg. 4

After Slow Start Bishops Win Two in a Row

By Jarad Brown
Senior Editor

Update: Wesleyan won its second in a row, 24-14, over Ferrum October 2 in Virginia. The Bishops capitalized on two second-half fumbles to come from behind.

After two close losses on the road, the Wesleyan football team won its first game of the season, 35-24, over LaGrange College on September 25, as the Bishops began their USA South conference title defense.

While Wesleyan boasts a new offensive coordinator — Darrin Hicks replaced former coordinator Matt Wheeler during the offseason — and an offense that starts three freshmen on the offensive line and a fourth at quarterback, it opened its season with back-to-back losses.

The Bishops moved to 0-7 all time in season openers and began their season 0-2 for the third time in four seasons.

"We've never been able to explode out of the gate," Coach Mark Henninger said. "I'm not really sure why that is, though. Losing is never acceptable, but if you watch the film there's a lot of positives. We're two plays away from being undefeated."

In its home opener, NCWC found a way to make the "two plays" Henninger referenced.

The Bishops took advantage of a pair of interception returns for touchdowns from its defense and a strong performance by freshman quarterback Jordan Vann, who passed for 213 yard passing and ran for 101 more.

"(Vann) is a competitor," Henninger said. "He's not a true freshman when he steps on the field. He has a presence about him and finds a way to move our offense. If he keeps progressing like the coaching staff thinks he will, then he'll be something special."

The Bishops trailed 24-21 late in the fourth quarter when Vann called his own number and sprinted up the middle on a third-and-short play. Vann slipped by a pair of Panther defenders and



Jordan Vann looks for running room against Hampden-Sydney.

SI Photo

not only gained the two yards needed for a first down, but an additional 35 yards to set up the NCWC offense on the three-yard line.

One play later senior tailback Taron Bush took a direct snap and leaped over his offensive line to give the Bishops the lead for good.

On LaGrange's ensuing possession, Bishop linebacker Javon Boddie put the contest out of reach when he intercepted Panthers backup quarterback Michael May and returned the pass 24 yards for a touchdown.

"We have a very experienced defense," Henninger said. "Athletically we have the talent to be the best defensive team we've ever had at Wesleyan. The key there, though, is we have the potential to be the best, we still have to work hard."

Senior linebacker Antonio "Squirrel" Harris was pleased with the victory, but thinks the defense can indeed improve. "We definitely showed up big," he said. "Our goal was a shutout, though, and we allowed 24 points. That means as well as we played, we still have work to do to get better."

The victory snapped a three-game losing

streak for NCWC that dated back to a loss at Wesley College in last season's Division III playoffs. The Bishops' first two losses this season were by a combined eight points, a 13-7 season-opening loss to Salisbury, followed by a 21-19 setback at Hampden-Sydney.

Vann threw for more than 525 yards in the two losses, but a Bishops offense that averaged more than 35 ppoints per game last season managed just 26 combined points.

"We're very young on offense," Henninger said. "We start three freshmen and a senior with limited experience on the offensive line and rely on other freshman to produce on offense. They will be good, it's simply a matter of them learning to play together."

Wesleyan seeks to defend its 2009 USA South Conference Championship as it opens conference play October 2 at Ferrum.

"I'm happy where we are right now," Henninger said. "Before the season our goal was to win the conference and compete in the national playoffs. Everything we want to accomplish is still right in front of us."