

# THE DECREE

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NORTH CAROLINA WESLEYAN COLLEGE, ROCKY MOUNT, NORTH CAROLINA 27804



Student-athletes were recognized last month at the annual Bishops awards banquet. From left are: James Carter (football), male athlete of the year; Barbara DeRatt (volleyball), female student-athlete of the year; Kelly George (volleyball), female athlete of the year; and Matt Dougherty (basketball), male student-athlete of the year. Turn to page two for a complete list of academic and athletic award winners. SI photo

## High Number of Grads Receive Diplomas at May Ceremony

By Leila Heinonen  
Decree Staff Writer

Almost 200 students—one of the largest classes in recent memory—graduated from NC Wesleyan's traditional and adult degree programs on Sunday, May 1 at the Dunn Center.

Besides awarding diplomas, the college conferred prestigious awards on two students, Desiree Driver (Algermon Sydney Sullivan Award, for service and leadership) and Joshua Akers (The President's Cup Award, for academic excellence). Husband and wife instructors Carl and Dr. Jackie Lewis were co-recipients of the Faculty Exemplary Teacher Award. During the ceremony, the audience heard talks by NC Wesleyan's chaplain, Barry Drum, and U.S. Sen. Richard Burr (R-NC), who was presented an honorary degree by the college.

The graduates have a handful of good memories but are ready to move to the next stage in their lives. Many said they will miss members of the Wesleyan community. Elizabeth Uzzell said she appreciated the students, faculty and staff who helped her to become the person she is today. "I've had some amazing opportunities, thanks to the people of Wesleyan, and I was even able to find my future husband."

A native of Iceland, Hlynur Hauksson is not just going to miss people from Wesleyan. "I'm going to miss the weather, because most of the time it is nice outside and not windy like back at home," he said. "I'm going to miss not being able to go to Wal-Mart late at night. I'm going to miss the delicious smells from the Wesleyan cafeteria. There are probably some other little things that I will miss, which I won't realize until I go back home."

NC Wesleyan's "Tutor of the Year," Terence Johnson is going to miss the school, "but mostly I will miss the students who go to Wesleyan."

Akers said he is ready to graduate, but he'll miss many of his professors with whom he's become close.

Uzzell said that she liked that Wesleyan offered small class sizes, which she feels strengthened her academic abilities and prepared her to succeed in the workforce. "And it was nice having professors stop me in the hallway just to speak," she said.

Jacob Strickland agrees with Akers and Uzzell. "I will miss my professors and my fellow students," he said, "and of course the squirrels."

Freddy Acheampong is going to miss the interaction and friendly relationships with his professors. "NCWC professors helped me a lot to get my bachelor's degree," he said. "And of course I'm going to miss my awesome friends."

According to the college registrar's office, 193 students had applied to graduate. Of the total, 109 were from the traditional day program and 84 were from the adult degree program's three different campuses. Some 162 graduates were from North Carolina and the other 31 students were from the following states: Virginia (12), Maryland (3), New York (2), Connecticut (1), District of Columbia (1), Florida (3), Georgia (1), Massachusetts (1), Ohio (1), South Carolina (1) and Tennessee (1). There were 35 graduates from Rocky Mount and 13 from Raleigh.

Twenty students graduated summa cum laude (GPA 3.86-4.00); 24, magna cum laude (GPA 3.66-3.85); and 20, cum laude (GPA 3.4-3.65). There were 63 graduating with a Bachelors of Arts and 129 with a Bachelors of Science. The most common majors were business administration with 74 graduates, and psychology with 38, and accounting with 25. And the other majors break down as follows: biology (3), chemistry (1), CIS (23), criminal justice/justice studies (23), education (5), English (1), environmental science (1), exercise science (8), history (6), math (3), pre-med (5), political science (4), religion (5) and sociology (13).

In his address, Senator Burr focused on the importance of a college education in today's high-tech, global economy.

"I know that I am looking at a generation of students different from my own," he told the audience. "At the forefront of change, you've seen and experienced change more rapidly than any other generation before you."

In the last 15 years, he said, the world has seen the advent of Google, Xbox, the iPod, Wikipedia, MySpace, Facebook, YouTube, Wii, Twitter, the iPhone, Kindle, the iPad and iPad2. "It took radio 38 years to reach a market audience of 50 million," he noted. "Yet it took the Internet just four years, iPod three years, and Facebook a mere two years to reach the same market audience."

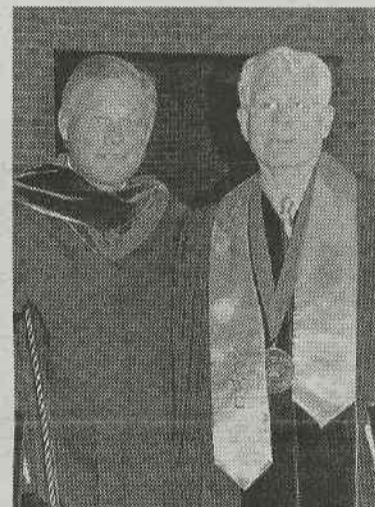
At the same time, the graduates have been "experiencing the velocity of changes in the economic and political orders," Senator Burr said, noting that the lives of the graduates have been "bookended" by the fall of the Soviet Union and the Berlin Wall and the current changes occurring in the Middle East and northern Africa.

Given the current state of the U.S. economy and the tight job market, Burr said, many graduates may question the

amount of time and money invested in attaining a college degree. "Was it worth it? I promise you, even if it doesn't feel that way—yes, the education you have received at North Carolina Wesleyan was worth it; and yes, that education has prepared you to compete with every person in the world."

Burr, a two-term senator, a former congressman, and a former executive in a wholesale commercial products company, said that tough economic times often produce innovation and other positive changes. "By having completed your degree, you've chosen to participate in the world and obligated yourself to working toward solutions to our most pressing problems and creating a future that is better and stronger for those who follow behind you."

Reverend Drum was the other featured speaker at the ceremony. "This is the first Sunday graduation that we've had in the 11 years I've been here and I was truly honored when I was asked to speak," he said beforehand.



President James Gray and U.S. Senator Richard Burr (left), who delivered the commencement address at the May 1 graduation. PR photo

Rev. Drum spoke about perseverance. At the outset he struck a lighter tone, telling the graduates: "You endured the heat and humidity of two-a-days in August, homesickness in September, mid-terms in October, term papers in November and final exams in December. You ran laps around campus in the cold of January, endured break-ups in February, survived spring break in March, and in April pulled all-nighters and prayed for May."

The chaplain then became more serious as he recounted the life of John Wesley, the 18th Century founder of the Methodist movement. He related that Wesley overcame numerous obstacles in his life to become one of the "greatest Englishmen" of the 18th Century. "Wesley embodied the English bulldog spirit" that was found, Drum said, in Winston Churchill ("Never, never give up") and Drum's own mentor, the Rev. Dr. William C. Turner, the first black football player at Duke, who proved the naysayers wrong by not only graduating but then earning two graduate degrees.

Rev. Drum left graduates with the following advice:

1. Participate. "Don't be just a spectator."
2. Punctuate properly. "Do not place a period where God puts a comma."
3. Pursue excellence. Rather than mediocrity, "I challenge you to push yourself to achieve a high level."
4. Prove them wrong. "Them" refers to "the ones who like to tell you that you cannot accomplish certain tasks."

Prior to the graduation ceremony, Rev. Drum stated that he is glad that he has had opportunity to meet a number of the graduates as a chaplain and a religious studies instructor at the different NCWC campuses. "Behind every graduate is a story, many of them very moving, inspiring stories," he said. He pointed out that the stories of successful students had motivated him and his peers. "Congratulations to the Class of 2011, and thanks for the inspiration!"

## Many Students Angry about New Book Rental Program

By Leila Heinonen & Josh Meeks  
Decree Staff Writers

Next fall NC Wesleyan will institute a new book rental program that has aroused the ire of many students on campus.

More than 200 students signed a petition that opposes the program. It will require that all students pay a \$325 fee every semester to rent their textbooks, regardless of the student's major or number of hours enrolled. President James Gray unveiled the change when he announced next year's 6.88 percent increase for tuition and costs. The \$325 will be part of each student's tuition.

Some 25 Wesleyan students presented the petition, organized by SGA President Jacob Strickland, at the April 15 Board of Trustees meeting. Students reported that the trustees were eager to hear their concerns about the new book rental system, which was discussed during a break in the meeting. According to Strickland and school officials, the protest so far has not led to changes in the program.

A month earlier, President Gray and Rachel Dix, manager of the college store, attended an SGA meeting to explain the program and address student questions and objections.

According to President Gray, Wesleyan decided to adopt the rental program as part of an overall plan to raise academic standards. Classes often suffer, he said, because too many students fail to buy the required textbooks.

"We're doing this to help the students," President Gray said. "Our responsibility is to provide the tools to learn."

He was adamant that the new policy will benefit students more than it will hurt them. He stressed that the new program was not devised to raise money for the college or the book store. "I'm not here to run a business. I'm here to get you educated," he told students at the SGA meeting. Dix explained that the college uses bookstore revenues to help students through scholarships and other programs.

It was clear at the SGA meeting, and from the resulting petition, that many students are upset about the program.

There have been a range of objections expressed by students as well as some faculty. Some believe the program will save money for students in certain majors while raising the costs for others. Some said that the mandatory program prevents them from purchasing books on-line, while other students said they prefer to buy and keep their books. Under the new program, students may purchase individual books after the semester at a discounted price. The purchase costs would be on top of the \$325 fee.

Hanna Hintikka, a junior English major, is frustrated that the college is taking away her freedom of choice. "This is a college, not an elementary school," she said. She believes the rental program will end up costing her more money. "I could buy my books for less than \$200 and keep them," she said.

Dix pointed out that across all majors, there is not much difference in the costs of books over the long term. She said that her research has shown that there is, for

example, only about a \$100 difference between the cost of books bought by humanities and biology majors.

Like Hintikka, biology major Janne Tusa likes the option of keeping his own books. "If I spend hours and hours reading a book, I want to have the option of keeping it and using it in the future," Tusa said. "Plus, if I buy my own book, I have the option of selling it and getting my money back for it."

Citing costs and other factors, some students contended that the new program is designed to help the weaker students at the expense of the stronger ones.

Lakwanua Hicks, a junior sociology major, thinks that although the president's intentions are good, the policy is hurting the students who really care about their education. If a student is here to learn, she'll "find a way to get it done," Hicks said. "Just handing the books to the students isn't going to make them want to do anything."

Gloria Arizpe agrees with Hicks that the book program will not increase the motivation level of students. "If some of the students were not motivated enough to buy the books in the first place, I don't think their motivation to study would increase, even if

they're provided with the book," Arizpe said.

Marcelo Prata used a sports analogy to voice his dissatisfaction with the book program. "I'm a tennis player," he said. "If we would give tennis rackets to every student in the school, not every student would go and play tennis. If the president wants to make the school better, it's time to start listening to the students, not the other schools."

Tusa and others said that the book rental program is just one of several moves made by the administration that has worsened student attitudes about NC Wesleyan. Another is the recent tuition increase. A chef in his native Finland, Tusa said that negative "word-of-mouth" may hurt the college.

"One bad customer takes 12 potential customers away from a restaurant, but one happy customer brings only two customers back," he said, adding that the recent moves have fostered a lack of trust of the administration among students.

Freshman Sophie Morris said the prospect of higher book costs has led her to transfer. "If I would stay here until earning my degree, the policy would not save me money," she said. "I would end up losing money. This is just another policy that helped my decision to transfer next semester."

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## Simpson Wins Run-off For SGA Presidency

By Kandyse Shaw  
Decree Staff Writer

With the elections for Student Government Association ending, Wesleyan students have a new board that has high expectations to meet. The new executive board members are Megan Simpson, president; Marcus Wright, vice president; Vivian Brown, treasurer; and Sharise Jones, secretary.

In the initial voting, Simpson garnered 69 votes, two more than Jamie McCleave. The third presidential candidate, current SGA Secretary John Williamson, got 11 votes. According to outgoing president Jacob Strickland, because Simpson and McCleave finished within five percentage points of each other, a run-off was held several days later, with Simpson winning, 52-44.

Vice President Wright tallied 100 votes to 45 for Erik Higginbotham. Brown and Jones were unopposed.

The outgoing junior class president, Simpson becomes SGA's first new president in three years, succeeding recent graduate Strickland, who first won election in 2008 and then ran unopposed in 2009 and 2010.

"I ran because I felt the school needed a strong person as president and I felt I could be the person that the campus needs," explained Simpson, who said she is proud to have attained the presidency. She said she is ready to begin her work.

Simpson and her fellow board members have indicated during the campaign that students need to become more unified. She would like to see an improvement in overall student morale and increased involvement in SGA.

"My biggest concern is making all the different voices of this diverse campus into one voice and getting this voice to be one," Simpson said. "This is not about me—it is WE now."

Among its other priorities, Simpson said,

the new SGA board would like to:

\*Explore the possibility of strengthening campus security, with either increased patrols or a new gate system at the main entrance of campus. She said she wants to leave students in a safe environment.

\*Seek student input to improve the condition of the dorms and other facilities on campus.

\*Investigate the reasons for the recent tuition increase and implementation of the book rental program, an issue that is on the minds of many students, Simpson said.

Simpson has been involved in several organizations over the years. President of Sisters of Distinction, she has been active in the Campus Activity Board (CAB), the Peer Advising (PAL) program and the Criminal Justice Association. During her time at Wesleyan, she has devoted a number of hours to community service projects and leadership conferences. "I think I have been active with many students on campus and I think many are comfortable talking to me about their problems regarding campus life," said Simpson. "Being an approachable person, I would be able to approach the administration and faculty about the student needs. I could provide a clear indication of the needs that should be met." She added that she can help close "the gap" between students and administration.

Wright is a member of the football team, president of Habitat of Humanity, SNT coordinator for the National Society of Leadership and Success, and a member of the NC Criminal Justice Association.

Like Simpson, he believes that one of his strengths is that he's approachable. "When they feel that they can't go to faculty, staff, or administration, students can come to me to explain their issues and needs," Wright said, adding that he's confident in his leadership abilities.

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