

THE DECREE

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March 8, 2012

NORTH CAROLINA WESLEYAN COLLEGE, ROCKY MOUNT, NORTH CAROLINA 27804



Seniors on the men's basketball team absorbed a crushing defeat in the opening round of the USA South Conference tourney at home. See story on page 4. Sports Information Photo

SGA Elections Scheduled for Late March

By Emily Bower
Decree Staff Writer

Only three out of ten NC Wesleyan students could name the current SGA president.

The results, gathered in a recent informal survey, come as Wesleyan prepares to hold elections for the next SGA administration, now headed by Megan Simpson, president; and Marcus Wright, vice president. According to Wright, the election is scheduled for March 19-23.

Whether the problem is due to a low profile by SGA leadership, overall student body apathy, a lack of coverage by The Decree, or a combination of the three, students said that they would like SGA to become more visible on campus.

"I honestly don't know who the current president is," graduating senior Sarah Whit-

taker said in comments that were typical of many of the ten students interviewed. "I don't see the president we have now around campus advocating for the things SGA is working on."

Students agree that they would like SGA to become more prominent on campus. One question is whether most students care enough to pay attention.

Rather than participate in student government or other campus activities, many students prefer, in the words of former President Jacob Strickland, to remain "in their dorm rooms and watch TV or play XBOX." Last semester, The Decree found, only 8 of 100 students surveyed had ever attended an SGA meeting.

Despite the low participation rate, in recent interviews many students were quick to identify objectives for the next SGA administration to pursue.

Some students are concerned about safety. Donovan Patrick suggested that instead of using keys, students obtain access to residence halls and individual rooms through their ID cards. "I think that will make it harder for people to break in," he said.

Chelsea Colucci agreed that safety is a major issue. She stated that she is uncomfortable walking back to Edgecombe from the library at night. "It's kind of scary walking the back way behind the buildings because it's very dark," she said. "If we could get more lights and install emergency call boxes, I think people would feel more comfortable."

Austin Arbuckle wants to see Wesleyan increase publicity of sporting events.

"If we get more spectators, we can use those extra funds to help improve sports facilities and teams," he said, "which will help raise student morale."

Sophomore Trey Ebinger would like to see laundry included as part of tuition. "It's a pain to have to find change to wash clothes," he said. "We could use our student ID and have an account for laundry like we have an account for the grill or Internet café."

Improving bathroom conditions is important to Stephen Bardswick. "The dorms aren't in the greatest of shape," he said. "If we can keep them clean, it will show the

school that we're responsible enough to take care of renovated rooms and bathrooms."

Colucci also wants to see improvements with Suddenlink cable. "It goes in and out, and it's really frustrating," she said.

Campus recycling is an issue that Briante Brazil would like SGA to address. "I think it's easy enough to implement around campus and the effect it has on the environment and school spirit can only be good."

Asked to identify qualities they would like to see in the next SGA leaders, students expressed a range of opinions.

Not only does Brazil want to see the new president take on a more prominent role on campus, she wants whoever is elected to be involved in other clubs. "If they're involved in other organizations, that will help them keep in touch with student needs," she said. "Students will be able to put a face to the name."

Connor Wright said that leadership was an important quality. "The next president needs to be able to react well with others while still being effective," she said.

Bardswick wants whoever is elected to be knowledgeable about things going on around campus, and also about school policies that students might not understand. "If our new president can explain the reasons behind some of the rules here on campus to the students, I think that general student morale will go up," he said.

Patrick wants to see a leader who will "put student's ideas into action."

Vice President Wright said that although past elections have been held in the cafeteria during lunch and dinner, he and other SGA officers have been planning to involve the entire student body through elections over e-mail.

"Because not all of the students live on campus, inviting them to have input in our student body elections via e-mail will bring a more cohesive element to the voting," he said. "We're working with the Information Systems department to put our idea into action."

Candidates will campaign in March. As of the end of February, no students had announced their candidacy.

FA Office Addresses Student Concerns about Work-Study Jobs

Decree staff members conducted a recent email interview with Bill Allen, vice president of Enrollment Management, and his staff. Among the topics covered were work-study jobs, refund payments and a penalty the college incurred for problems uncovered in the Financial Aid office prior to Allen's tenure at NCWC.

Q. Last semester staff writer Alvin Hare found that many students were frustrated that they had not been able to secure work-study jobs at the college, even though they were notified of their eligibility. Junior business major Akeem Bangurah expressed the feelings of many students when he said:

"At first I was angry when I couldn't collect my work-study and I felt that I should have had a job waiting for me, no matter what. I felt that the school didn't care because it wasn't their money. I think if they can't have enough jobs for student s to collect their work-study, they should come up with another way to give us our money that came with our financial aid package."

Please describe the step-by-step process the college follows in hiring for work-study positions.

A. The college determines eligibility for work study as a part of the financial aid award. Students may accept or decline the opportunity for a job. Once the student is on campus, he or she must seek out and apply for jobs. Hiring is at the discretion of the supervisors. Once a student is hired, he or she must complete the paperwork as you would for any other means of employment. In the aid materials we will try to make it clearer that being awarded work-study funds does not guarantee a job.

Q. So work-study is first-come, first-serve?

A. It is first-come, first serve for the jobs themselves. Sometimes it is more competitive than others. We use a formula based on the amount of money we have to award and past data on the number of awarded students who actually take jobs. The economy and the availability of good-paying jobs off campus play a role as well.

Q. If I'm a student who fails to get a work-study job, what happens to the money I was supposed to earn through that position?

A. That money follows the openings and not the students. So if all the positions on campus are filled the money budgeted for this program will be spent. The students need to earn the money from working. If they do not work, for whatever reason, they will not receive all or part of the money awarded as work-study.

Q. So, looking ahead to 2012-2013, what's your advice for students interested in a work-study job?

A. Apply for aid early and be ready to look for a job as soon as you can in the summer and fall. Also they need to check their email periodically as job openings were sent to the entire student population over the summer.

Q. Turning to refund checks that students receive from Financial Aid: many students complain that their checks get delayed. How does that process work?

A. Refund checks come at the end of the aid process, so first you need to have completed the aid process before we can bring in money to credit to your account. Refund checks are available when the net collected amount of money credited to a student's account exceeds the amount the student owes. We have to return the money to the student within 14 days of these net collected funds hitting their account. Students frequently misread their student account preliminary credit balance as net eligible credit balance. Preliminary credit balances do not represent funds that the school has actually received. The college only runs checks once a week so we have to be careful of the timing as to when the money hits the account and generates a refund. Again, if you have not completed your aid process, money does not get disbursed to your account. We still have a few students for this academic year who have not completed their aid. If they were planning on a refund, they have not received it yet.

Q. In a recent email to staff and faculty, the president announced that a settlement had been reached between NC Wesleyan and the federal government over a required payback the college incurred for not following rules with regard to aid allocation. Can you give us the details about the settlement?

A. The details of the payback must remain confidential, but the administration is pleased with the five-year payback and payment schedule. Essentially problems occurred when students were awarded aid they were not eligible for based on the documentation we had (or failed to have) on file. Since they were ineligible for the aid, it should have been returned to the federal government. It was not returned but credited to students accounts instead. There was some question as to whether this was done intentionally or by accident. I cannot answer to that other than to say we determined what needed to be corrected, and we have since set up an agreement to return that money to the federal government.

Q. The infractions occurred before you joined NC Wesleyan, but you and your staff have dealt with the aftermath. What processes have been put in place to prevent similar problems in the future?

A. First we have hired an entire new aid staff. We have more detailed reconciliation of accounts and our current aid director (Leah Hill) is well trained. Of

course she monitors the operation very closely. All staff have received additional training and will continue to do so. We hope to add some additional checks throughout this awarding cycle. I (Bill Allen) will provide closer oversight.

Q. NC Wesleyan's graduation rate is low, and it takes many other students more than four years to graduate. Given such realities, we worry that many of our students take out student loans without realizing the heavy burdens they're placing on themselves for years to come. While it's the student's responsibility to consult with his or her family about borrowing, we wonder if the college provides advice to students to prevent them from taking on excessive debt and perhaps facing default?

A. All students who borrow federal loans receive both entrance and exit counseling. Responsibilities of repayment are explained and students always have the option to decline a partial or full amount of their student loans. The aid office is available to anyone with additional questions on their loans.

Devastated by Fire, Fryar Family Grateful for Community's Support

By Melanie Rhodes
Community Engagement Writer

A family tradition turned into a near tragedy for one family from Nash County. It was early morning on December 26 when David Fryar's niece Chelsea, who was asleep on the 2nd floor, was awakened by the blaring fire alarm and saw the house in Nash County filled with smoke. Fryar said his niece sprang into action by alerting the rest of the family members, who were on the 1st floor. She then raced up the stairs to the 3rd floor to help her cousin to safety. All the while the house's ceiling was caving in on the family. Chelsea and 11 family members were able to get out of the house to safety, thanks to her quick action.

What was a joyous Christmas celebration turned into a nightmare for Fryar and his family, which lost their home—known as the Arthur Fountain House—located on highway 33 in Leggett.

"I truly believe that if wasn't for Chelsea, my family would not be alive today," said Fryar, the Sodexo custodial supervisor at NCWC. "My niece is truly a hero to us."

Fryar said that it took 20 area fire trucks and nearly 16 hours to put out the fire. Firefighters used 300,000 gallons of water, and over 20,000 gallons of foam.

Fryar believes that the fire started between the 2nd and 3rd floors. Based on an investigation so far by the fire chief and the inspector, the cause may be attributed to either the fireplace or faulty electrical wires. The house was built in 1914.

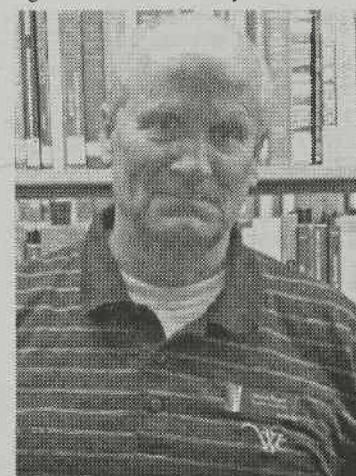
Fryar said the family members cried as they watched the destruction of their house and all of their belongings. But they're grateful to be alive.

This was only the beginning of a long road to recovery for Fryar and his family. Five family members were transported

by helicopter to the NC Jaycee Burn Center in Chapel Hill to receive treatment for 2nd and 3rd degree burns and smoke inhalation suffered during the fire.

Fryar's son suffered 2nd degree burns on his feet after he ran back into the burning house to rescue his niece, who, he thought, was trapped in there, only to learn later that she escaped the fire and was safe.

Fryar's 11-year-old granddaughter and sister-in-law were treated for 2nd and 3rd degree burns. In addition, Fryar's wife,



David Fryar

Photo by G. Wallace

Deborah; Chelsea, 20; and his grandson, 7 spent three days there and received treatment for smoke inhalation before being released.

Although most of the family members have recovered from the fire, Fryar said his granddaughter still suffers nightmares from that fateful night. She is afraid to sleep alone. "She said that she's always thinking about being trapped," Fryar said, adding that she is seeing a professional to help alleviate her fears.

Fryar said that after the fire, the family stayed at his daughter's house in Tarboro. "I'm grateful that I have my family," he said.

After a two-week stay at this daughter's house, Fryar and his wife moved into a home in Tarboro that he had renovated. Fryar said that he and his wife plan to continue to live there for the time being.

Asked whether he will rebuild the Fountain House, he said "I'm not sure what we're going to do at this point. I hope to find another old house in the country to restore one day but for right now, we'll stay put."

Noting the help he received from NCWC staff, faculty and students, Fryar said that his family "felt blessed" to be part of the Wesleyan family. "I would like to say many thanks to the Wesleyan community for all of their help since the fire," he said.

Fryar said the family received gifts which included clothing, gas cards, and money from co-workers and area churches.

The family also received many prayers throughout this difficult time.

Fryar said that he also wished to thank all of the students at Wesleyan for their support during this time of recovery. Several Wesleyan students worked together and raised money to help the family. "I appreciate what the students did and I'm grateful for the support we received. The donors wish to remain anonymous," he said.

"I appreciate the help that my family and I have received. I realize that despite all of the negative comments you hear about people, it makes me realize that there are good people out there who are willing to help a family in need," he said.

Fryar said despite the fire, he and his family will continue their Christmas tradition and look forward to many more years to come.

Bishops Scatter For Spring Break

By Sara Sims
Decree Staff Writer

What are your plans for spring break? That's one of the more popular conversations among college students in the second semester of the year. Wesleyan students are planning on getting warm and laying in the sand.

Nicole Jones of Nashville is planning her first college spring break with best friend Megan Bowl. The pair wants to go to Nags Head for a few days. Money is an obstacle for these ladies with regard to paying for a hotel and gas for the trip. "If I can get a good job, we probably won't be able to go," said Jones. She added, "I need to start making some money to be able to do things."

See BREAK on pg 2