

THE DECREE

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NORTH CAROLINA WESLEYAN COLLEGE, ROCKY MOUNT, NORTH CAROLINA 27804



Coach John Thompson got his 300th career victory during a season that saw the Bishops win the regular season conference title, but lose in the second round of the tournament. See hoops coverage on page 3. SI photo

Sarah Jeffers Assumes Office After VP's Sudden Departure

By Grace Lee
Decree Staff Writer

Being a full time student is hard. Throw in a full-time job and an executive position in student government and it becomes even more challenging.

Sarah Jeffers is trying to manage the impossible this semester. Jeffers is a sophomore with a triple major in criminal justice, psychology, and political science. She is a resident advisor and now she's taken on the role of Student Government Association Vice President.

During an interview, Jeffers discussed her role, the goals she has for herself and others, and how she is managing to juggle everything.

She explained that she has always been active on campus, but has not served in an administrative role. Her new position allows her to serve the interests of her fellow students.

"My role is to know all the roles of the executive board and to fill in whenever the president is unavailable," she explained, adding that she oversees the class presidents. "They've been doing a great job so I think my role will be to motivate them to keep organizing more things for their classes."

As an older student with experience in the work force, Jeffers expects little trouble in juggling her various responsibilities. She noted that her tenure as an RA will help with her SGA responsibilities. Based on her past observations, she feels that students need to get more involved in campus life. One of her goals is to encourage that involvement. "Students complain



Sarah Jeffers

Photo by G. Lee

'Oh, the food is so bad,' and 'The rules are bad,'" Jeffers said. "But they aren't aware they can come to SGA meetings and take an active role in fixing what they don't feel is up to par with the school."

Jeffers' term ends in April, but she hopes to run for the vice presidency again. "I probably will run because the experience from this semester will help me know the position better," she said. "If I become vice president again, I can expand my work with the students instead of starting from scratch."

Jeffers was appointed vice president last month after her predecessor, Kelly Cranick, resigned at the end of fall semester. She left Wesleyan after taking her final exams.

Cranick said she was suspended

following charges that included a violation of the college's overnight visitation policy at the Wesleyan Villas, where she was a resident. In an interview, Cranick took issue with the way her case was handled. Found guilty by the college's Honor Board, she claimed there was insufficient evidence presented to prove she was guilty. "The charges were never proven," she said.

Due to privacy concerns, Dean Edward Naylor declined to confirm that Cranick was suspended. Asked to comment on her charge that she received unfair treatment, the dean offered the following statement:

"Without commenting on a particular case, I will say that every student who faces an honor board hearing is entitled to and receives the opportunity to explain his or her case, to present relevant exhibits, and call witnesses to testify. The honor board, consisting of four students, two faculty and two staff, listens to all evidence presented and renders a decision. The decisions speak for the campus community."

Cranick said she now attends Ferrum College in Virginia.

100 Bishops Volunteer on MLK Day

Some 70 Wesleyan students participated in a Day of Service program held as part of the Martin Luther King Jr. holiday in January.

According to Karie Parkes, director of Student Activities, 30 other members of the Wesleyan community took part in volunteer efforts around Nash and Edgecombe counties. Calling the day a success, Parkes said that participants "made meaningful connections to our community and want to continue to do more work." She said that residents were grateful for the Wesleyan volunteers and would welcome them back.

Among the different initiatives, Wesleyan's women's basketball team worked with "Keep America Beautiful" to clean up local parks. Two other groups did clean-up work at Rocky Mount and Nashville Boys and Girls Clubs centers, while other volunteers performed landscaping at the Rocky Mount Senior Center, and cleaned and served meals at Tarboro Community Outreach.

Freshman Grace Lee, a member of Leadership Wesleyan, was among a group that visited local shut-ins for a Meals on Wheels program. Lee and fellow volunteers delivered five meals to each of the homes on their routes.

She said that the residents were appreciative. "Some even invited us into their homes and talked to us about our majors, classes, and Wesleyan in general," she said. "This made me feel very good. This is something I am planning on doing every year."

Why Do Freshmen Leave? Why Do They Stay?

By Jessica Brown, Dustin Midgett, Elantenne Richardson, Santanlia Scoggins & Travis Thompson

Editor's Note: Last year NC Wesleyan saw 48 percent of its freshmen leave after the first year. Over the past five years, the number has averaged 47 percent, according to official school records.

Looking at Wesleyan's graduation rate, The Decree found that 12 percent of the 2009 cohort graduated in four years. The number rose to 21 percent after five years and 23 percent after six.

In January, Decree staff writers interviewed 16 freshmen about their satisfaction level at the college and their plans for next year. Here are the stories of six students, three who intend to transfer, and three who expect to remain.

Three Plan to Transfer

Cedric Liles

Cedric Liles came to Wesleyan after football coaches promised him that he would get a chance to play.

There were other colleges that he visited before looking at Wesleyan. They include Howard University, University of North Carolina-Charlotte, and University of North Carolina-Greensboro. But he knew that it would be harder to crack the starting lineup at the larger football programs.

"Football is my lifestyle, so I knew that I had to play, and I knew that Wesleyan could guarantee that," he said.

Liles quit the team after he failed to earn playing time.

He finally realized that he didn't want to attend Wesleyan one day when he went to the business office. "When they told me how much I owed them, I knew that I couldn't stay here another year. Tuition is too high for students," he said, noting that there should be more scholarships offered to athletes, as is done at other schools.

(Note: Athletic scholarships are not permitted at Division III colleges like Wesleyan.)

Liles offered criticisms of Wesleyan's campus. "The food is nasty, and they serve the same thing. There's not a lot of a social gathering on campus," he said, adding that parking is inadequate.

Liles said he came to Wesleyan even though it did not offer his intended major, project management, or a team in track and field, his other passion. "If Wesleyan had a track team I would stay," he said. "It wouldn't be as large as the football team, so I'd know there would be a guaranteed spot."

Sports are important to Liles, who said that athletics will take him far and that he needs a school that can back him up one hundred percent.

Liles plans on transferring. He said he's been accepted into schools like Western Carolina University, Morgan State University, and University of Maryland-Eastern Shore. He's decided to enroll at A&T, where he plans to run track and double major in comparative media studies and project management.

Liles said he's ready to explore new adventures at his new school, but he will always remember Wesleyan.

Khalil Lockett

Khalil Lockett always knew he was going to transfer from North Carolina Wesleyan College. He saw Wesleyan as a stepping stone toward better opportunities.

Lockett hoped for a good enough education and football experience to allow him to go onto a bigger school. After visiting Wesleyan, he saw that he would begin his college career here. "Coming out of high school, I wanted to better my grades and play football," Lockett said. Because of the small campus, small student population, and close relationships he could have with peers and professors, he was persuaded that Wesleyan would be a good choice. With some convincing from Head Football Coach Jeff Filkovski, Lockett decided Wesleyan was the right fit for him, for now.

In addition to his academic endeavors, Lockett wanted to use Wesleyan's football program as a bridge toward a higher level of football, specifically Division I. He did not get playing time in the 2015 season as a defensive end, and halfway through the season he decided Wesleyan's football program was not for him. Lockett said he felt there was favoritism shown towards certain players, especially seniors. "The program didn't fit my way of playing, and

I didn't want to risk getting hurt," said Lockett. "I think they should have given more opportunities to underclassmen who worked just as hard."

Although his plans with football did not work out, Lockett still enjoys his time at Wesleyan as much as he can. He commented that he likes the eating options on campus, Wild Out Wednesdays, and the campus life in general. What disappointed him, though, was that not many students attended some of the bigger student-led events on campus like fraternity parties. "Events are held but no one will attend," Lockett said. "I wish more students would come." Lockett does not blame the school or the organizations for the low participation.

A political science major, Lockett would like to work for the government one day. Because of financial issues and a desire to continue playing football, he hopes to return to his home state of Virginia and attend Old Dominion University next fall. Lockett said he intends to walk onto the ODU football team and he hopes the in-state tuition will be cheaper for him in the long run.

Isaiah Sands

Being a freshman in college can be a tough experience. In a new place, with unfamiliar faces, one can become homesick, especially if far from home. Some people can handle the adjustment to unfamiliar settings, while others look for an escape from the unknown. The first year can be the best year for some but the worst for others.

Take Isaiah Sands, an 18-year-old psychology major who plans to become a social worker after graduating from college.

He played football at Currituck County High School near Elizabeth City.

"I came here to play football with two other players from my high school," Sands said. "Coach (Quinderra) Spellman was the coach that recruited me to come and play."

Wygall Hired to Invigorate Cheer/Dance Programs

Kayla Wygal is here to establish an elite cheerleading squad and dance team, while helping Wesleyan to raise the percentage of female students on campus.

Dean Edward Naylor said that Wygal's hiring marks a dramatic shift in the college's approach to cheerleading and dance. Viewed in the past as just one of many organizations, open to all students, the cheerleading team will now be filled through an active recruitment program. In effect, cheerleading has become more like a sport at Wesleyan, though, it's not, Naylor noted, recognized by the NCAA. Besides performing at football and basketball games, the cheerleaders will take part in national competitions.

The dance team will appear at athletic events and stage a major recital on campus. "To do this, Kayla will recruit students with dance experience," the dean said.

So far, Naylor has been impressed by Wygal's enthusiasm for cheer and dance. "Kayla Wygal is exactly what anyone would look for in a cheerleading coach—passionate, knowledgeable and organized," he said, noting that she's a strong teacher and motivator, who's pushed her team members to reach new heights in their stunts and routines.

Wygall, 31, brings a wide range of experience to her position. The former gymnast began cheering in middle school and continued her career through high school and Liberty University, a Division I school in Lynchburg, Virginia, where she earned a BS in psychology and an MA in counseling psychology.

A native of Charleston, West Virginia, Wygal has owned an All-Star cheerleading gym that won many regional and national titles. She explained that an All-Star gym trains groups of cheerleaders who enter competitions, but are not affiliated with a particular school or team. "It's a multi-billion-dollar industry that's been around for 30 years," Wygal said, noting that her gym housed six competitive teams.

Sands came for a visit last spring and talked to a few players about the school and the football program. Entering the program, he felt he had a good chance of seeing game action in his first year, but it was not to be.

Despite making "great friends" at Wesleyan, Sands has decided to leave after this semester. His decision came down to money. Sands did the calculations and found that, with his parents' income, he could attend East Carolina University for about \$3,000 less. "It's hard for me to leave the people I met here, but with me being the oldest in my family and my little brother graduating high school this year, I have to help save as much money as I can."

Unlike Lockett, Sands had not planned to transfer. After the football season, he said he took some time to himself and decided to end his playing career. "I lost the love for the game. That's another reason for me not to stay. I really had hopes of coming here and playing on Saturdays. It just didn't work in my favor."

If he's not going to continue with football, Sands said it makes little sense to pay the higher tuition here at Wesleyan.

Three Want to Stay

Maddie Williams

At first, when coming to Wesleyan for her two-week pre-season soccer camp, Maddie Williams was unsure of her decision.

During pre-season her thinking was, "I didn't meet many students and thought it was too much work to play and do school," she said. Once school started and she got closer to her friends and teammates she realized it was not a bad decision. "When I started meeting my close friends Erica, Cali, and Lauren, and seeing the team grow closer, I felt better. I felt more at home," she said.

Although Williams was not always looking for small schools, she said that visiting Wesleyan showed her that the environment

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Since college, she has judged at regional and national competitions all over the country. She has choreographed at all levels, taught tumbling and skills camps along the East Coast, and worked with many other schools and "All-Star" gyms.

Wygall lives in Rocky Mount with Elvis, her Great Dane, and Franklin, a Pomeranian mix. She describes herself as a beach lover and a "huge Duke fan."

The Decree staff conducted a recent interview with Wygal about her plans for Wesleyan's new programs.

Q. What does it mean to have a full-time cheer and dance coach?

A. Building a reputable, competitive program is nearly impossible without a full-time coach. Competitive college cheerleading and dance are not limited to school size or division, so it's possible to become a nationally recognized program regardless of those things. A Division III school can be just as respected as a Division I school at college nationals.

Q. Describe the differences between the cheer and dance squads.

A. Cheerleading and dance are definitely nothing alike. The cheerleaders compete and cheer on the sidelines with stunts, tumbling, jumping, dancing and, of course, cheers. They serve as ambassadors for school spirit. The dance team performs routines using jazz, ballet, contemporary and lyrical elements. They don't lead cheers, but they serve as entertainment at events and games.

Q. Are the cheerleading and dance squads open to all NCWC students, or do candidates go through a competitive tryout process?

A. The tryout process will continue to be more rigorous each year. My goal is that each cheerleader and dancer meets the same requirements as all other competitive college programs. So far, there are seven committed 2016 freshmen who meet all of my requirements. NCWC students are allowed to tryout; however, they must be aware that this is not a "spirit program," but a legitimate collegiate-style, competitive cheer and dance program.

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