

# THE DECREE

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NORTH CAROLINA WESLEYAN COLLEGE, ROCKY MOUNT, NORTH CAROLINA 27804

## Students Want Trump to Focus on National Unity, Health Care

Like the rest of the country, the Wesleyan student body, in reflecting on the election of Donald J. Trump as America's 45th President, expressed a range of emotions: delight, fear, validation, anger.

Christopher Imoukhuede was one of numerous students who also expressed shock at Trump's election. "I was surprised to wake up in the morning to learn that Donald Trump had won the election," he said.

Other students had positive feelings about Trump's victory.

"I'm glad Trump won," Courtney Moss said. Nikolaus Dunlap felt the same way. "I believe Trump will be a good president," he said.

Gregory Moore agreed, calling it a "good choice. It will help our job rate."

Johannie Benton sees Trump as a necessary change agent. "America's in need of change and I think Donald Trump can help," he said. "Being a businessman, he knows what it takes to be successful."

Sully Reece wasn't satisfied with either Clinton or Trump. "I don't have a problem with the election results," he said. "I felt like neither candidate deserved to be president, but the best choice won."

Many students deplored the protests by Clinton supporters and others who opposed Trump. Saying that she was "very happy that my party's candidate won," and that she has "new hope for the future of America," Trump backer Alyssa Clark said she was "angered by all the rioting going on because Hillary lost."

Brittany Manning expressed a similar view. "I understand why people are upset over the results," she said. "But I don't think violence, protesting and spreading hateful messages is acceptable."

Kate Butler was "appalled" by the way some Americans have responded to Trump's election. "No matter the results, it's important to respect the nominee who won the election," she said.

In short order, some Trump opponents have resigned themselves to the outcome. "The election results aren't what I wanted, but that's life and I have to deal with it," said Ricardo Bullock.

Said Tim McDonald, "I was shocked about the results and at first I was discouraged, but I've come to realize this is the reality and there's nothing I can do to change it. I wish

President-elect Trump the best and hope he recognizes the true problems in the country."

In the wake of the election, Mary Reynolds said Americans must come together and support each other. "I was disappointed in our country and afraid for my fellow citizens," she said. "But I'm pushing that aside."

Jessie Harbour was more optimistic. "I'm hopeful that everything will work out for the best," she said.

After the initial shock, Alexis Jenkins is willing to give Trump a chance: "When I learned the results I felt fear. But I'm open to seeing what the president-elect will do."

Rafael Bella, a native of Brazil, wasn't prepared for the outcome either, but believes that Trump may upend America's expectations, once in office. "I couldn't picture Trump as a president," he said. "But I feel confident he'll do a good job. Who knows, maybe we underestimated him."

Some Clinton supporters, and Trump opponents, struggled to reconcile themselves to a Trump presidency.

"I feel that America didn't make the smartest decision," Toni Collins said. "Trump is a good businessman, but without

a political background and real experience, he's going to turn this country into turmoil."

Adrian Moore said he's concerned about Trump's past statements on women, African-Americans, Muslims and other minorities. When he learned of Trump's victory, he was "a bit devastated," he said.

Though not a Clinton supporter, Ryan Halliday expressed anger at Trump's election. He objects to the president-elect's views on immigration and the wall he wants to erect on the Mexico border. "I think his views are horrible," Halliday said. "He's just a rich brat. I think we're screwed."

Zach Gibson believes America wasn't ready to elect a woman. "I knew Trump was going to win," he said. "I felt no way a woman would win the election. That's not my personal feeling, but there was no way others would vote for her."

Even after the election, many students continued to wish the choice had been between two different candidates. "It was as if I was dealt a bad hand," said Digiovanni Lugo.

As part of the survey, students were asked to identify the most urgent issue for the Trump Administration to tackle after it assumes office in 2017. Like the election outcome, student responses were somewhat surprising.

Of the 109 students polled, only two mentioned the high cost of college education while seven indicated that the president should focus on creating jobs and improving the economy over all. Four called for cracking down on illegal immigration, one for attacking climate change, and one for outlawing abortion.

By far, the two most common responses were unifying the country and overhauling the American health care system, Obamacare in particular.

Noting the fractious nature of the presidential campaign, 19 students called

## Maryville Wins Tight Match, Blocks Soccer from NCAAs

The men's soccer team fell to Maryville, 2-1, in the USA Conference finals, ending a successful season that saw the Bishops compile a 9-1 record and tie the Scots for first place in the regular season.

Senior Toby Thorfinnsson said that players were devastated by the loss. Most years, he said, "it's the seniors who're sad, but this time everyone was very emotional."

First-year midfielder Ryan Halliday was disappointed as well. He felt the Bishops lost to an inferior team. "We had a good season and played a good game in the end, but luck wasn't on our side and we just couldn't put the ball in the back of the net."

A win would have vaulted the Bishops (14-6 overall) into the NCAA Division III regional tourney. The team last won the regular season title in 2010 and the tournament championship in 2009 under former coach Jason Kilby.

In 2016, both conference losses came at the hands of Maryville (18-2), which beat the Bishops, 2-1, in overtime at home on October 22. That win allowed the Scots to tie the then-undefeated Bishops for the regular season lead and earn home field advantage in the tourney.

Having just finished his sixth season as head coach, Frankie Taal said the 2016 group was impressive. "This was by far the most talented team and collection of players," he said.

What set the team apart was its depth. "I mean good depth," Taal explained. "We had a lot of players coming off the bench who were as good as the starters."

Goalkeeper Alex Magner, a junior, agreed that the 2016 team was the best in his time as a Bishop. "More players were buying into the system put in place by the coaches," said Magner, who recorded a 1.21 goals against average and five shutouts during the year.

Taal added that the Bishops were loaded with seniors. "With 10 seniors, we had much better leadership than we've had in the past."

Thorfinnsson echoed his coach's statement on leadership. A senior defender and team captain, he noted that in 2013, his first season, there was only one senior on the roster. He said the higher number of four-year players helped with continuity and the mentoring of younger student-athletes.

Injury prevented Thorfinnsson, a native of Iceland, from playing in the tourney championship. Bothered by a nagging groin problem, he played in the semi-final game, a 1-0 win over Greensboro, but watched from

for the president to unite the country. Within this group, many cited racism as an issue the president should address.

Asked to identify an issue for Trump to tackle, Zach Byers was quick and to the point: "Bring the country together."

Harbour was just as succinct: "Unite the country."

El Salvador native Ivan Herrera hopes to see greater unity as well. "The country is completely divided," he said. "There's too much hate between the parties. Trump should figure out how that can be fixed. He should try to unify the country as soon as possible."

Fixing the health care system was right behind unifying the country, with 16 students citing it as the most important issue.

"Obamacare has bankrupted a lot of insurance companies and forced people to pay higher premiums for insurance with limited coverage," said Kate Butler.

Foreign policy came in third with 9 responses, while fighting terrorism was next with 7.

Here is a breakdown of the remaining survey choices. Students called for:

- Addressing cases of police brutality (5)
- Lowering the national debt (4)
- Toughening gun laws (4)
- Strengthening national defense (3)
- Overhauling Welfare and income redistribution programs (2)
- Stopping violent protests (2)
- Establishing Congressional term limits (1)
- Prohibiting flag burning (1)

Students were surveyed during the weeks of November 14th and 21st and on November 28.

Eighteen respondents gave their reaction to the election results without identifying a leading issue. Some left the question blank, while others offered partisan statements such as Trump should focus on "getting impeached."

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## Elena Koutouzou ('10) Named New Financial Aid Director

Elena Koutouzou, a 2010 Wesleyan graduate, has been elevated to the key post of Financial Aid Director.

The 28-year-old Rocky Mount resident had been serving as a budget analyst in the college's Finance Department since September 2015. In that job, she was responsible for accounts payable, budget tracking, and coordination of the college's Title III grant.

Jason Edwards, her supervisor as Vice President of Finance & Administration, has been impressed with Koutouzou's performance and expressed confidence that she'll be a quick study in her new post. "Elena has an insatiable desire for knowledge and a unique ability to transform that knowledge into action which produces excellent results," he said. "She possesses wisdom beyond her years."

A certified public accountant with a degree in accounting from NC State's one-year masters program, Koutouzou was a double major in business and accounting and a member of Wesleyan's Honors Program. One of her honors program peers was Ben Lilley, Assistant Director of Admissions, who said that Koutouzou possesses the skills set and critical thinking abilities to flourish in her new job. "And she's very creative," he said. "That should be an asset down the road when it comes to innovation and exploring new methods to help us outrun our competitors in the world of college admissions."

Koutouzou and her husband, Manoli, a technician at a local Toyota dealership, live in Rocky Mount, where she moved with her family from Trenton, New Jersey at age 10.

The Decree interviewed Koutouzou in mid-November.

**Q.** Describe your new responsibilities as Wesleyan's Director of Financial Aid.

**A.** My job is to provide leadership and management for all facets of financial aid to ensure we maintain regulatory compliance as well quality customer service. This includes overseeing all federal, state and institutional funds and programs; processing of loans; and maintaining regulatory compliance.

**Q.** What's the most important thing you learned about yourself while you were a Wesleyan student?

**A.** I would say that it's important to learn who you are by trying different things. It seems like I changed majors as often as I changed the color of my hair. But in doing so, I could determine what was and what was not a good fit for me.

**Q.** How did you become interested in the field of accounting?

**A.** Accounting was one of the last fields of study that interested me. I dabbled in multiple other majors (including elementary education, psychology, political science and English) before I realized that accounting fit my personality. I grew to appreciate how methodical accounting can be. That's not to say that there aren't gray areas (something I quickly realized when I became an auditor).

**Q.** When you were a student, I was always impressed not just by your intelligence

and writing skills but your attention to detail. Have you always been a detail person?

**A.** As long as I can remember, I've always been a detail person. I'm not sure if it's a good thing or not, but I tend to notice the items that many others don't. You can probably blame genetics as much as the fascination I've had with shows like "Law and Order" since I was a child. I've always been one who tries to figure out the twist or solve the case. As the saying goes, "the devil is in the details."

**Q.** How difficult was it to earn a CPA? I know that many candidates take it more than once.

**A.** The CPA exam was extremely challenging for me. Luckily, I was able to pass all four sections on my first attempt. I felt positive that I had failed one section. I took two portions of the exam while I was in graduate school. This was during the fall semester of the program. I was planning on taking the remaining two sections of the exam during my spring semester, but that semester was substantially more technical so I waited until I had graduated and used summer to finish my preparation and the exam itself. I'm glad I did. Each time I left the Prometric test center, my brain felt like putty. Before I sat for each section of the exam, I would even have nightmares consisting of Excel spreadsheets and Becker study material.

**Q.** After you earned that credential, did a lot of family and friends ask for help with their taxes?

**A.** Yes, I did and still do have friends and family ask for help with their taxes. Tax accounting is a specialized field and has never been my forte. I've always prepared my own taxes using software such as Turbo Tax.

**Q.** Describe the jobs you held prior to your return in 2015.

**A.** I was a bookkeeping assistant at Standard Insurance & Realty while I was as student at NCWC and while I was a student at NCSU (I worked remotely). I was an assurance associate at Ernst & Young where I audited public and non-profit companies. Then I served as a fund accountant at the Nottingham Company. There I calculated net asset values for mutual funds, hedge funds, and government funds. The mutual fund calculations were sent to and displayed on the NASDAQ.

**Q.** Talk about the ways your previous jobs will prepare you for your new post.

**A.** In previous roles, I had interactions with a variety of people. That's one of the positive things about working in public accounting. You're constantly meeting new people (new clients and co-workers) and you

have exposure to multiple industries. Having been an auditor, I've been in situations where I didn't feel welcome initially. It's not a secret that people aren't typically excited to see auditors. However, over time I was always able to earn the trust and respect of clients and coworkers. In my various roles, I've realized the importance of being genuine and simply treating others how you wish to be treated. I think my previous positions have greatly enhanced my ability to empathize with others.

**Q.** What do you most need to learn as Director of Financial Aid? What will your focus be in the upcoming months?

**A.** I have a ton of information to learn in my new role. It really feels like I'm a student here once again. I've already attended a training session held in Raleigh, and I've sat with several of my co-workers who have walked me through various tasks. There are several webinars I would like to complete and I'm familiarizing myself with a 1,300-page handbook on financial aid. I'm excited about learning and enhancing my knowledge.

**Q.** Do you intend to make changes to Wesleyan's Financial Aid Office, either short- or long-term?

**A.** In any job that I've held, I've always looked for ways to improve and enhance current processes. We're at a point when technology is always advancing. I think it's important to increase both efficiency and accuracy whenever possible.

**Q.** Student indebtedness was a major campaign issue in 2016, and financial aid is always on the minds of our students and their families. And, when polled by the Decree, many Wesleyan students have, over the years, listed their interactions with the Financial Aid Office as one of their common grievances, citing delays and mix-ups, etc. What personal characteristics, what past experiences have prepared you to deal with disgruntled customers and other stresses that come with your new job?

**A.** I think my experience as an auditor has greatly prepared me for dealing with disgruntled customers. Additionally, my experience in accounts payable has helped prepare me as well. It's truly important to think about how you would feel if you were in a given situation and to respond accordingly. In the words of Maya Angelou, "I've learned that people will forget what you said



Elena Koutouzou Photo courtesy of NC Wesleyan



The Mims Gallery will showcase the artwork of restaurateur and painter Ben Knight from January 13 until February 26. Knight is co-owner of the renowned Chef & the Farmer restaurant in Kinston and the co-star (with his wife) of the award-winning PBS series "A Chef's Life." The gallery will host a reception for the artist with live music on January 20.