

THE DECREE

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NORTH CAROLINA WESLEYAN COLLEGE, ROCKY MOUNT, NORTH CAROLINA 27804

Provost Evan Duff Elevated from Interim Status

Dr. Evan Duff, head of NC Wesleyan's adult-degree program during a period of dramatic expansion, has been appointed the college's Provost and Vice President of Academic Affairs.

Duff, 38, succeeds Dr. Michael Brown, who left the college last spring. He becomes Wesleyan's 13th academic dean in the past 25 years. He served as interim provost in 2012-13 and then again during the current school year.

A graduate of Mt. Olive College with a doctorate from Nova Southeastern University, Duff moved to Wesleyan in 2011 to direct the adult-degree program after serving in a similar position at his alma mater. During the past six years, Wesleyan has increased the number of sites in its adult-degree program, known as ASPIRE, to nine, stretching from the Research Triangle to Manteo and Wilmington on the coast. Total enrollment has almost doubled—from 650 to 1,218.

Residents of Clayton, Duff and his wife, Marcy, have four children, Tyson, 14, Landon, 12, Peyton, 7, and Chloe, 6. The family belongs to Hope Community Church.

The Decree conducted a recent interview with Duff about his new position, his goals and his interests outside of work.

Q. What prompted you to pursue a career in education in the first place?

A. My father was a teacher (secondary) and there were many teachers in my family (K-12). I started my career in what would be called "Business and Industry" and came to a crossroads around the age of 23. Having completed my master's degree, I was just not happy with what I was doing. Knowing my strengths and interests, I focused on three areas: higher education, human resources, and working for the federal government like my mom. My first interview was with Lenoir Community College. I was offered the position and in a short amount of time, I knew I had found my passion.

Q. What drew you to the provost's position at Wesleyan?

A. Serving as interim provost the first time really gave me a perspective of what it would be like to be an academic dean and the provost of this college. Back then I'd only been with Wesleyan for a year, so I didn't feel the time was right to pursue the position. But when I was given the opportunity again in 2016, the timing was right. What drew me to the position was the ability to make a greater impact on Wesleyan and the community while working with excellent faculty and staff.

Q. As head of the ASPIRE program, you've been cited for extending the reach of NCWC into Eastern North Carolina. This has required vision and an entrepreneurial sense. Why make such a dramatic shift to the provost's office, which requires a different focus, a different skills set?

A. I'm not sure I would consider it a dramatic shift. Having an entrepreneurial spirit is having the ability to make things happen while growing and thriving. I'd like to accomplish the same with academic programs, faculty and staff development and community outreach. I enjoy having a solid vision and taking the steps needed to see that vision to fruition.

Q. In what specific ways has your previous position prepared you for your new one?

A. As VP of Adult Studies, I had the opportunity to create great partnerships with organizations and many community colleges in the North Carolina system. Working with presidents and vice presidents of academic affairs at the community colleges was rewarding, as we sought to enhance the educational opportunities for students in our state. The ability to communicate and negotiate effectively has certainly prepared me for the role of provost.

Q. Many provosts rise through the ranks of faculty and then into administrative positions. Though you've taught at the college level, most of your career has been spent in administrative and marketing-oriented positions. What gaps in experience and training do you need to fill? How will you do it?

A. While I didn't experience the

traditional path to this position, I have taught at the collegiate level (undergraduate, graduate and doctoral) for the last 12 years while holding administrative positions. During this time, I've participated in many faculty-related activities such as publishing (peer-reviewed and non-peer reviewed) and presenting at national and regional conferences. I've also had the pleasure of presenting at our regional accreditor's conference (Southern Association of College & Schools) as well as completing training on proper accreditation procedures. I feel it would be important to engage in professional development opportunities regarding traditional student retention, as I have the least amount of experience in that area.

Q. Will you continue to direct the ASPIRE program?

A. I'll still oversee the Office of Adult Studies from the perspective of making all final operational decisions, directing marketing efforts, and continuing to establish partnerships that benefit Wesleyan. The college may change the responsibilities of existing employees within the Office of Adult Studies to take on more of a leadership role and manage the day-to-day operations. But a new Vice President of Adult Studies will not be hired.

Q. How do you spend a typical day?

A. This is always a hard item to conceptualize because every day is different, which is one of the aspects I love about the position. Much time will go to focusing on Title III initiatives (funded by a federal grant), such as IT upgrades, space improvements in the library, supplemental instruction tutors, and a summer bridge program, to name a few. Other activities include complying with SACS requirements, creating a vision for the office, and working with Associate Provost Molly Wyatt and others to improve academic affairs.

Q. You report to the president and serve as an advocate for faculty and staff on the academic side. Describe the challenges inherent in such a position.

A. I don't see this as a challenge, but more of an opportunity. We all have our priorities and one of my main goals is to help the faculty and the president to understand each other's priorities. I have a great working relationship with the president, who has helped me to accomplish many important academic-affairs initiatives since last May. I look forward to continuing to work with him, the faculty, staff, administrators, students and board of trustees to make Wesleyan one of the best places to work and, from the student perspective, learn.

Q. How do you see higher education (in traditional-day programs) evolving over the next 10 years? What are some of the major changes on the horizon?

A. I'd recommend an interesting New York Times.com article from June 22, 2016. It's titled "Educators Discuss the Future of Higher Education" and available online. As educators, we must acknowledge that technology and online learning will be a part of students' lives long before they come to college. Many freshmen come with online learning experience and in some cases, expect that as part of their educational journey. We already have at least one faculty member experimenting with "The Flipped Classroom," where students watch lectures online, allowing them to have a more directed and hands-on classroom experience. The Times article references groups, discussions and debate. Many such activities already take place at Wesleyan, but could we do it more effectively? Could we infuse technology in some way to make learning more effective? I feel our Teaching and Learning Center and instructional technologist will help us to evolve in a way that makes sense for Wesleyan and the students we serve.

Q. What do you see as the most significant challenges Wesleyan faces as it grows its enrollment?

A. 1. Infrastructure (dorms, classrooms and labs, and offices, etc.) and 2. Donor growth. Both are challenges for small, private colleges that want to grow

enrollment. But Wesleyan has a 10-year strategic plan that addresses both items, as well as many others, to ensure we have a road map to be successful.

Q. The college's Chief Planning Officer, Larry Kelley, provided the following data on retention and graduation rates (the most recent available):

2010 Cohort	
4-year graduation rate:	11%
5-year graduation rate:	19%
6-year graduation rate:	21%

The first question is, What do you think when you see numbers like that?

A. They're disappointing and not a reflection of all of the improvements happening at Wesleyan. What most don't know, and what the numbers don't reflect, are transfer graduates, which make up 14 percent of the traditional population and 90 percent of the adult-studies population. The federal government (we use its formula to calculate the data), only looks at first-time freshmen in each cohort.

Q. While many would agree that faculty, staff and administrators can take steps to help improve retention and "progress toward graduation," what's your reaction to the argument that Wesleyan's numbers are low because it admits too many unprepared students?

A. The numbers reflect students admitted in 2010, which was before the current administrators worked at Wesleyan (aside from Athletic Director John Thompson). The college has made great strides since 2011 and, in particular since 2014, to recruit students who are prepared or well prepared to be successful in college. Wesleyan has implemented or improved programming that promotes the educational and social development of our students to include college seminars, the COL 195 course for new students, a summer bridge program and enhancements to Freshman Advantage. We won't see the fruits of our labors until 2020-2025.

Q. List your short-term and long-term goals.

A. In the short term, the college needs to focus on SACS reaffirmation, which will occur in 2019/2020. We need to begin the process now to review our policies, procedures, finances and assessment to be successful with this process. We're establishing the foundation now so that we can be prepared for the review and site visit. The college will also be working on securing approval of our Master of Science in Criminal Justice and Master of Business Administration programs, which we'll submit to SACS in September 2017 or April 2018. Faculty and staff welfare and faculty growth are also very important and, in the short term, I'll be addressing both areas with human resources and the leadership team. Long-term initiatives include improved infrastructure so that the education we're providing can be the best it can be.

Q. What new programs would you like the college to add, long term? How does the college decide on new majors?

A. The college identifies what's appropriate based on interest from prospective students, what peer colleges are offering, the needs of our community and organizations in our community, and our ability to find and hire full-time faculty in that discipline. The following (in no particular order) are programs that have been discussed in broad terms from time to time: logistics, Christian ministries, social work, forestry, healthcare administration, Spanish, music production, and hospitality management.

Q. Why do you think some faculty resist teaching online while others prefer that approach?

A. Many factors play into this: perspective, research, exposure, point of view, etc. Many faculty have demonstrated that the learning outcomes with on-line classes are similar to those found in courses taught face-to-face. Other faculty feel that there has not been enough research to support long-term learning for students who take online classes. These debates take place at almost every institution of higher education.

Q. Can Wesleyan retain its liberal arts tradition while adding pre-professional programs (e.g., marketing, health promotion, organizational administration, masters in CJ, etc., etc.)? How do you

respond to traditionalist faculty who express concerns that such programs dilute the liberal arts emphasis?

A. All students are exposed to our liberal arts tradition through our general education courses. These courses introduce students to the broad liberal arts foundation that provides them with the skills they need to be successful in their major and in life. Such skills include reading, writing, speaking, analytical reasoning, and critical thinking. As we continue to create programming like the writing minor and the Spanish minor, more students will receive the opportunity to further their liberal arts experience by adding such minors to their major.

Q. You're well known for your responsiveness on email and your multi-tasking abilities in general.

Have you always been like this?

See **PROVOST** pg 2



Mariano Silvestri, a freshman from Argentina, has helped lead the Bishops to a top-50 ranking. Turn to page 3 for coverage of the golf team and other spring sports. SI photo

Four Students Remembered On One-Year Anniversary

By Sydney Jackson
Decree Staff Writer

Wesleyan staff and students gathered March 21 to remember one of the saddest moments in the college's 60-year history, the death of four students in a car accident one year ago.

A memorial service took place at the

Leon Russell Chapel in remembrance of "Wesleyan Angels" Robyne St. Clair Barnes, Quedeshia "Donyell" Brown, Kandis McBride-Jones, and Donesha "Dee" Scott. The four friends, returning from an off-campus dinner, died as a result of a crash near the front entrance of the college.

During the service the chapel was full; there were even attendees who stood outside. Many family members traveled to campus to be in attendance.

President Dewey Clark opened the ceremony, recalling the tragic night of March 21, 2016 and the deep sadness that he continues to feel. "I thought it went well," President Clark said after the ceremony. "It was well attended, sweet, and special."

Other speakers included Chaplain Barry Drum and student Sarah Jeffers, the four students' resident advisor in Edgcombe Hall. The college's gospel ensemble, Voices of Triumph, performed, and one member, Toni Collins said she felt the entire ceremony was beautiful. "It proved to me that the tragedy affected many on campus," she said. "It showed a lot of love and support for the families."

Stephanie Garrett, a close friend and roommate of McBride-Jones, was moved by the memorial. "The gospel choir was beautiful as always," she said.

In reflecting on the accident, Dean Edward Naylor said it reminds

members of the Wesleyan community about "the fragility of life. It can end at any moment."

Following the ceremony, attendees moved to the college's front entrance, near the Gateway Technology Center, where the accident occurred. There, at 8:26 p.m., the time of the accident, a

candlelit vigil was held, led by SGA President Emanuel Williams.

Different students spoke about the memories they shared with the four students. Many cited the increased unity at the school since

the accident occurred. Campus Security Director Wayne Sears noted that the ceremony was attended by police and other first responders present on the night of the accident.

Sears said the ceremony lasted 10 minutes, but that students stayed to speak with each of the families.

Responding to the deaths of the four students, Wesleyan has established different ways to memorialize them. According to President Clark, it has created a scholarship in their honor. It has installed four memorial bricks, donated by an anonymous contributor, in the sidewalk that leads to the chapel. Near Edgcombe Hall it has built a brick archway, named "Angel Arch," and planted four trees in the vicinity, using funds given by another anonymous donor.

Artist Steve Felton has painted a picture of the "Angel Arch." Mini hand-painted canvases were presented to each of the families at the chapel ceremony. A large canvas hangs in Dr. Clark's office, and miniature copies have gone on sale at the college bookstore.



The college has erected an arch, and planted four trees, near Edgcombe Hall to memorialize four students who perished in a car crash last year. A. Stern photos