

# THE DECREE

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NORTH CAROLINA WESLEYAN COLLEGE, ROCKY MOUNT, NORTH CAROLINA 27804

## Enrollment Rises above 1,000 for First Time at Wesleyan

With a freshman class of 350, Wesleyan’s day-time enrollment has exceeded 1,000 students for the first time in school history.

By hitting the 1,000-student milestone, President Dewey Clark said, the college is on its way to fulfilling a goal set by its founders.

“Our founders were very clear in their desires for the college,” he said. “I’ve read over the early documents many times and their dream was a college of 2,000 students. They had the insight to know that the economics would work better and that it would be a more vibrant college environment.”

Clark said he’s gratified that Wesleyan has gone over the 1,000 mark, a little more than three years after enrollment languished at 575. The improvement represents an 80 percent growth rate, he noted. “To finally reach 1,000 students after 60 years is monumental,” he said.

The president praised the “awesome team” the college has assembled as it embarked on its effort to raise enrollment. The recent growth will continue for the next eight or nine years, he said. “At 2,000 students, our college is a much different place than it was at 575 students,” he said.

As of September 30, traditional-day program enrollment stood at 1,027, according to college officials. Of that total, 99 are internationals, or close

to 10 percent of the population. The largest contingent continues to be from Nepal, with 23, followed by Argentina (17) and Venezuela (13).

Enrollment Services Vice President Judy Rollins noted that the number of Argentine students has been on the rise in recent years, attributing the increase to effective recruiting and “word of mouth.” “We hired a new agent about a year ago and we’ve established a good relationship,” she explained. “And current Argentine students are very satisfied and are sending the message back to friends and family.”

There has been a recent increase in Venezuelan students as well, as political turmoil back home has made American colleges an attractive option.

Freshman Dyia Ampley traveled a much shorter distance in her journey to Wesleyan. The Robersville native plans to major in biomedical science. “I really love the family atmosphere I’ve seen so far,” she said. “I was drawn by the small and unified campus and the opportunities to take part in a lot of activities.”

Dimon Roberson echoed Ampley in explaining her reasons for coming to Wesleyan. “It’s similar to my high school, close-knit and family like,” the Washington, D.C. native said, adding that Wesleyan provided the most financial aid of all the colleges on her list.

Freshman Jeremy Agosto came from the Orlando, Florida area. “During my visit I fell in love with the campus and school and decided to come here to play defensive line for the football team,” he said.

Here’s a profile of the 350 first-year students, based on data generated by the college earlier in September, when total enrollment stood at 1,030.

- Gender: Male-217, Female-133 (or 62 percent male, 38 percent female)
- Athletes: 233, or 67 percent
- Football players: 111, or 51 percent of all first-year males, and 32 percent of all first-years
- Other leading sports by number of athletes: men’s soccer (25), baseball (15), softball (13) and volleyball (11)

- First-year students who came to play for the college’s reconstituted lacrosse program: 5
  - First-year cheerleaders: 3
  - First-year internationals: 37.
- Wesleyan reported its first students from the following nations: Colombia, Czech Republic, Hungary, India, the Netherlands, Peru, Portugal, Rwanda and South Korea.

For all first-year students, high school grade-point averages and average SAT scores saw a slight dip over last year. According to college data, the average GPA declined to 3.21 from 3.24 in 2016. College officials pointed out that it was 2.52 for freshmen in 2013.

After steady increases, average SAT scores dropped to 909 from 913 last year. In 2013, the average SAT score was 869. (The Decree requested median GPA and SAT scores as well, but the numbers were not available by deadline.)

This fall 50 transfer students joined 350 freshmen for a total of 400 new students in the traditional-day program. The 400 figure includes 235 males, or almost 59 percent; and 165 females (41 percent).

Among other notable enrollment facts, the college reported that:

- Army ROTC participation is at 18 cadets
- It has seen the number of Floridians nearly triple in the past four years, to 54. Nineteen Floridians are counted in the freshman class, a drop from 32 in 2016. In 2013, the number was 20 for all students in the traditional program.
- 8 new students and transfers have joined the pep band and Wesleyan’s new music production program, while 14 have become members of Wesleyan Singers.

While traditional-day program enrollment has climbed in recent years, ASPIRE experienced a setback in 2017. Its enrollment is now at 1,001, down 213 students from fall 2016, according to Provost Evan Duff, who explained that the decline reflects a national trend in adult education.



**Class of 2021:** The new class consists of 350 students as traditional program enrollment went over the 1,000 mark for the first time. Shown, l-r: Jeremy Agosto of St. Cloud, Florida; Dimon Roberson, Washington, D.C.; Dyia Ampley, Robersville; Kevin Teague, Bailey; and Enzo Villafuerte, Lima, Peru. A. Stern photo

## Rebekah Cain Returns to Head Alumni Relations

Rebekah Cain, a 2013 Wesleyan graduate, said a love for the college and a desire to help Wesleyan students, past and present, brought her back to campus as director of the college’s Alumni Relations Department.

The Maryland native was an exercise science major, a member of the college’s honors program, a member of the women’s hoops team, and president of the Student Government Association, among many other activities, while a student.

President Dewey Clark feels confident that Cain will excel her new job. “Rebekah will perform well in her new role because she loves Wesleyan,” he said. “Her passion and enthusiasm are contagious.”

The Decree conducted a recent

interview with Cain about her new post.

**Q.** What have you been doing since graduation?

**A.** I was blessed to study abroad in Rome. It was a leadership program for individuals from around the world. We studied leadership, philosophy and religion. After returning, I moved to Oklahoma City to work for a nonprofit in the recreational therapy department, serving older individuals. I loved that sweet chapter of my life and I’m so grateful to have spent a few years building skills in the areas of volunteer management, grant writing, social engagement, event planning and promotion. I enjoyed cultivating relationships. I then decided to take another step toward professional development and joined the Paycom Corporation. During this time, I further developed skills in client relations, corporate relations and project management. I served on the board for Wings, a nonprofit organization that serves adults with special needs in the Oklahoma City area. While serving at Wings, I gained experience in fundraising, nonprofit marketing, and nonprofit strategic planning.

**Q.** Describe your responsibilities as Alumni Relations Director.

**A.** The director plans and implements programs and projects that engage alumni with the college while providing tangible benefits to alumni and current students. This includes events planning, fundraising, cultivating relationships and developing programs that benefit our current alumni, future alumni and the college.

**Q.** Discuss your decision to move from the field of exercise science to alumni affairs?

**A.** I really grew as a professional during my time at Paycom and enjoyed working with other large corporations, but my heart was in the nonprofit sector. I found that the direction God was leading me was toward nonprofits. Then the opportunity came to serve at my alma mater. I was thrilled to learn about the transformation and new vision of the college, and I wanted to join the team. I know great things are happening here and I want to help.

**Q.** You were on the NCWC hoops team. You were involved in SGA as president and you participated in other activities such as Refuge while on campus. Why do you think your involvement in extra-curricular activities was important to your development and your preparation for a career and life in general?

**A.** It allowed me to see the college from multiple angles. I interacted with so many wonderful individuals, a broad spectrum of administrators, coaches, and teachers. Through my involvement, I fell

in love with Wesleyan and saw first-hand individuals who want to make NCWC the best it can be. That attitude is infectious, and it helped me grow as a leader and a Battling Bishop. I wouldn’t trade that experience for anything.

**Q.** How has the college changed since you were a student here?

**A.** It’s amazing! I’m thankful to see how the college has improved, with a new vision and greater resources and facilities. Even the student body’s expectations have risen. When I came back for a recent visit, I could feel a difference on the campus. It feels alive, healthy and really headed for wonderful things.

In my new position, it’s my goal to enhance the student’s experience. The Wesleyan experience extends throughout the life cycle of the student—from prospective students to current students and to all of our alumni. They’re all connected; when one gives, supports and participates in the great things happening around campus, we all benefit. I know from speaking with alumni that they’re excited to hear of what’s been taking place on our campus. I always quote C.S. Lewis, “You can’t go back and change the beginning, but you can start where you are and change the ending.” I have this on my desk as a reminder, to cherish yesterday and really believe in Wesleyan by celebrating today and believing in tomorrow.

**Q.** You and your brother Joshua have demonstrated a strong commitment to Wesleyan. Talk about what makes the college special to your family.

**A.** Wesleyan has and will always have a special place in the heart of the Cain family. I can’t speak directly for Josh, but I know that we both love our alma mater. Wesleyan changed our lives and molded us into who we are today. The supportive faculty and staff made a tremendous impact on our experience as students. We’ve both said how thankful we are to have the opportunity to serve NC Wesleyan. We’re excited to see where God is leading this campus, its administration, staff, faculty and students.

**Q.** What message does it send that President Clark is an alum of the college?

**A.** I think it says a lot when you walk around campus and see so many alumni working here. We have alumni serving in almost every capacity—the administration, admissions, athletics, academics, the Dunn Center, the bookstore and advancement. It’s a healthy sign when your alumni stay and lead. Alumni have witnessed the changes, seen the needs. They cherish the vision and can talk about their appreciation of NC Wesleyan, as individuals who

have been on both sides of the story.

**Q.** How would you characterize the level of involvement by NCWC alumni today?

**A.** I’m so thankful for our alumni board and their dedication. They’re leaders in their professions and communities who believe in Wesleyan; they’re committed to being a catalyst for change. We have alumni who have faithfully given to and volunteered for Wesleyan over the years, and without their support we wouldn’t be where we are today.

See ALUMNI pg. 2

## Hurricanes, Earthquake Cause Alarm for Wesleyan Students

Wesleyan and North Carolina were spared from the ravages of September’s severe weather, but it still spread heartache among some members of the Wesleyan community.

On the heels of Hurricane Harvey came Hurricanes Irma and Maria, which swept through the Caribbean, causing extensive damage in Florida and U.S. territories like Puerto Rico. Amid the hurricane activity, there was a 7.1-magnitude earthquake that flattened areas of Mexico City and killed more than 300 around the country.

Freshman Joel Figueroa has experienced many anxious moments while at Wesleyan. The Puerto Rico native said it was difficult to be in the States when he knew his family was in danger as Maria hit the island on September 20.

Figueroa is from the town of Yabucoa, a one-hour drive from the capital San Juan. “That day was the worst day of my life,” he said.

He awoke early on the 20th and tried to contact his family, but there was no phone signal. He then turned to videos on Facebook and saw the devastation that Maria had inflicted on the island. “I started crying,” he said as he worried about the well-being of his parents and siblings.

It was three days after the hurricane that his brother reached him by phone. Figueroa was relieved to find that his immediate family was safe, but learned that his town had suffered substantial damage. According to a government estimate, Yabucoa is “98 percent destroyed.”

As of September 30, Figueroa said, his hometown was still without power, phone service was limited and water and food were in short supply. He’s concerned about the next few weeks. Communication continues to be a problem, with Figueroa frantically trying to reach his parents in recent days.

“This hurricane passed through PR, but for all the Puerto Ricans in the U.S. it passed through our hearts,” he said.

Ana Diaz, a Mexico City native, was happy to report that her family was safe and that their home was not damaged by the earthquake.

After hearing of the quake, Diaz said, “I reached out to family and close friends right away. It was a big relief to know they were all okay, just very scared.”

She noted that a local university sustained extensive damage and that at least five students there died. Other local residents lost their homes and all of their belongings, Diaz said.

Diaz said she became emotional in the aftermath of the quake as she watched videos that showed the destruction in her country. “My eyes became watery and I was so sad because of the tragedy,” she said. “I felt impotent knowing that I could not be there to help my country.”

Diaz said that she’s been proud of the way her countrymen have responded to the tragedy. “Mexicans have shown great solidarity,” she said, noting that, with the help of other countries, there has been an outpouring of aid and support provided to the victims.

As a native Floridian, Ashley Dunn is familiar with hurricanes. Reporting that her family was safe after Irma swept through south Florida, she said preparations had been made in advance to minimize property damage at their Broward County home.

Cars were put in the garage and windows were boarded in anticipation of the storm that slammed into the keys, moved up the gulf coast and even caused flooding in the northeast part of the state.

Dunn’s family—parents, twin brother, and two pet dogs—was under a mandatory evacuation order and spent a long weekend at Dunn’s grandparents in West Palm Beach. She said the family was without power for a week, but that their home experienced only limited damage when a tree fell on the roof and a second tree split and landed in their swimming pool.

“My family was lucky,” said Dunn. “The worst thing was the wind. My mom said that it sounded like a never-ending train coming through the area.”



Starr Mitchell, a member of the Wesleyan dance team, earned All-American honors during a recent event held by the National Dance Alliance in Myrtle Beach. Coach Kayla Wygal called it a “huge accomplishment,” noting that Mitchell competed against dancers from Division I and II programs as well as DIII ones. The Wesleyan cheer and dance teams, winners in several national competitions, will be featured in an upcoming issue of The Decree. Photo courtesy of K. Wygal