

THE DECREE

since 1960 “of, by, and for the Wesleyan community.”

October 16, 2019

NORTH CAROLINA WESLEYAN COLLEGE, ROCKY MOUNT, NORTH CAROLINA 27804

Evan Duff To Serve as Interim President for Two Years

Evan Duff, the college's Provost, was named Interim President over the summer following the resignation of Dewey Clark, a Wesleyan alum who served as president during a five-year period that saw a significant enrollment increase in the traditional program.

Dr. Duff signed a two-year contract to serve as the interim successor to Clark, who was one of 15 employees to leave the college in June. Among the others were Edward Naylor, Dean of Students, and Judy Rollins, Vice President of Enrollment Management and Marketing.

Dr. Molly Wyatt, Associate Provost, was appointed to a dual role as Interim Vice President of Academic Affairs and Dean of Students. Michael Drew, a veteran administrator in the adult-degree program, was named Dean of Admissions and Adult Studies.

The Decree interviewed President Duff over email in mid-September.

Q. In interviews some students wondered whether the college will share details on the sudden departures of President Clark and Dean Naylor, as well as other staff. Will the college ever provide explanations?

A. During the transition, I was as transparent as I could be about what was happening. Faculty, staff, students and alumni received specific details about the transition and how Wesleyan was moving forward. I'm unable to share additional details.

Q. What's the timetable for hiring a new Dean of Students? Will the college seek replacements for other positions that were vacated?

A. For the next 12-24 months, the college will operate with the current organizational structure. I suspect we'll hire individuals that have a direct impact on student support, but they won't be upper administrative positions. If we search for a new Dean of Students, I'll make sure the student body is involved in the process.

Q. It's our understanding that the college's trustees awarded you a two-year contract as Interim President. Can you give more details—why was it a two-year contract? When will the college begin a search for a permanent successor? At this point, do you hope the college will consider you for the position?

A. I'm honored and humbled the Board of Trustees appointed me to serve the college in this capacity. The two-year contract was to give the new organizational structure a chance to implement important changes that will benefit the students and the community. The administration hopes that faculty, staff, students and the community are already starting to see positive changes. The Board of Trustees will determine when a search will be conducted.

Q. On a more personal level, what attracted you to the interim position? What factors did you weigh? What were your reservations?

A. As the president (interim or not), I have the opportunity to work with our gifted faculty and staff to make an impact on the students



Interim President Evan Duff talks at a recent Rotary Club meeting at Rocky Mount Mills. NCWC photo

who attend Wesleyan. For almost nine years, I've worked with my colleagues at different levels as Vice President of Adult Studies, Provost and now Interim President. The only factors I considered were my passion for Wesleyan and my family. I knew I could help make a difference in this role, but because of how quickly events evolved this summer, I wasn't ready to uproot my family. I have four kids who are active in their school and busy with activities local to Clayton. That was my only real reservation. The Board of Trustees has been understanding with us becoming a "dual" community family. When we're in Rocky Mount, we'll live in the president's house; we'll also continue to live in Clayton.

Q. How was your summer? What was your focus prior to the beginning of the fall semester?

A. The summer reminded me of the title of the movie franchise "The Fast and the Furious." The administration acted quickly to make sure all aspects of the college were settled before the fall semester. We also worked hard to assure the community and our donors that Wesleyan, more than ever, is committed to providing an excellent education to our students. Students will start to see many new initiatives that will align their education to

the expectations that will be required of them when they attain their first full-time position or (for adult-degree students) when they get that next promotion or new position. We want every student to have multiple experiences (job shadowing, unpaid internships, paid internships, service learning and active learning) to build their resume and equip them to be productive citizens.

Q. What initiatives will occupy most of your time this fall?

A. I have three right now:

1. Establishing relationships with individuals and organizations that want to help Wesleyan attain its mission and vision.

2. Collaborating with faculty to revise, improve, and develop curriculum to be innovative and dynamic to meet the needs of organizations that hire our graduates. We want students to be effective communicators, to understand and solve complex problems, and to become a life-long learners.

3. Working with all constituents to develop a vision statement and a set of values for the college.

Q. Identify three objectives you hope to accomplish or, at least, initiate in your two years as Interim President.

graduate programs, giving us a total of three or four.

3. Build more indoor and outdoor space to enhance the students' academic and social experiences.

Q. You're living in the president's house, part-time. Tell us what you see as the purpose of the president's house.

A. It will be used for myself and my family to host multiple events a year for the students, faculty, staff, Board of Trustees, and the community.

Q. Some interviewees have expressed concern about the college's financial situation and long-term viability. It's been reported that the college ran a \$2 million deficit last fiscal year. What's the current state of the college's finances?

A. This summer part of the transition involved developing realistic budgets based on economic conditions and enrollment trends. We're working with a break-even budget, which is the typical goal of a non-profit organization. But we're striving to create a surplus so we can reinvest that money into the college to enhance infrastructure, programs, and the welfare of our hard-working faculty and staff. While we faced challenges in 2018-2019, we have a strong relationship with our bank, our accrediting agency maintains a high level of confidence in Wesleyan, and we're set to have a break-even budget for 2019-20.

Q. Besides personnel moves, what specific changes has the college made to restore financial stability?

A. 1. We've established a more realistic budget based on data analytics.

2. We're assessing all financial initiatives and renegotiating contracts with vendors.

3. We have refinanced our debt with First Carolina Bank.

4. We're creating new relationships with donors and organizations that want to invest in the mission and vision of Wesleyan.

Q. In previous interviews, you indicated that the ASPIRE program—now Adult and Professional Studies—has seen a sharp decline in enrollment, part of a national trend in adult education. What can you say about the current state of APS, which is integral to the college's bottom line?

A. We're starting to see a plateau in this decline and there's a lot of interest in our MBA program. To date, we have received almost 100 applications for our first term.

Q. Still on budgetary issues, can you update us on the following:

• The Entrepreneurial Center/Business classroom building:

A. We're still several million dollars away from our goal. Some money is tied up in a land trust and we need about \$1.5 million more in donated funds. We're working on this as well as funding for other academic buildings.

• The Wesleyan Bed and Breakfast:

A. The Bellemonte House is no longer a bed and breakfast, but the downstairs will remain space that can be rented by the community for a number of events (meetings, receptions, parties, etc.). The upstairs will become the office space for our Advancement Office. The downstairs can also be reserved and used at no cost for meetings and other events by students, faculty, and staff.

• The Career Services and Internships Department:

A. This is now led by Dr. Gena Messer-Knode, who runs the Entrepreneurship and Business Center. She has excellent connections with small and large organizations and

she's equipped to assist students with all their career service and internship needs. Her new office will be known as the Office of Career Development and Business Innovation.

Q. Can you detail the way the college will select speakers for graduation and other major events?

A. Almost all college speakers will be filtered through the Executive Leadership Team and we'll work on ways to include SGA in that decision. The December commencement speaker, to be announced soon, was reviewed by the Executive Leadership Team, which includes representatives from the faculty and staff.

Q. Through research, surveys, and feedback from all constituents, I hope that within two years we will have one or two additional

graduate programs, giving us a total of three or four.

Q. President Clark brought more of a religious emphasis to the college, whether it was in the school's messaging, ceremonies like Founders Day and commencement, or the creation of the youth ministry program. Describe the way the college will maintain its focus on providing a Christian education. What changes might we see in your administration?

A. We'll continue to offer programs and activities to help students explore or enhance their faith development. Dr. Wyatt and I have been working with Rev. (Barry) Drum and Mikah Brondyke to enhance our programs and church relations. My goal is to make sure that every student, regardless of their background or belief system, feels welcomed and accepted at our college. Because of our dynamic and diversified student body, we also want to make sure students of other faiths (Jewish, Muslim, Hindu, etc.) are connected with leaders of their religions to give them access to a local mentor.

Q. One of President Clark's major initiatives was to grow enrollment by 100 students each year in the traditional program until the college reached a total of 2,000. Will you continue to lead the college in that direction?

A. The Board of Trustees and the college administration are focused on growth based on the current conditions in higher education, research, and best practices. This may mean 25 or 200 students a year, depending on such factors. We need to make sure our growth is measured and well thought out. Without taking on additional debt, we want to make sure that we can financially support the growth in terms of new academic buildings, residence halls, and other social spaces.

See DUFF pg 2

Three New Professors Join Full-Time Faculty

Wesleyan's newest faculty members—Melanie Townsend, Macon Hammond and Danielle Braxton—prorovided the following capsule biographies.

Dr. Melanie Townsend

JOB TITLE: Visiting Professor, Logistics and Supply Chain Management.

HOMETOWN: Memphis.

DEGREES EARNED: B.S., Management & Organizational Development, Bethel College; M.S., Operations Management with a certification in Business Management, University of Arkansas; and Ph.D. in Human Services, specialization in Nonprofit Management & Leadership, Capella University.

PREVIOUS JOB EXPERIENCE: I have more than eight years of experience in the logistics industry, working with FedEx Freight, DDN Pharmaceutical Logistics, Duprè Logistics, and Kenco Memphis Logistics.

PREVIOUS TEACHING EXPERIENCE: For five years I provided corporate training—from frontline employees to management staff—at DDN Pharmaceutical Logistics, Duprè Logistics, and Kenco Memphis Logistics.

AREAS OF SPECIALIZATION: Business, Logistics, and Operations Management.

COURSES YOU EXPECT TO TEACH AT WESLEYAN: All management-related courses.

WHAT ATTRACTED YOU TO WESLEYAN: I enjoyed attending a small liberal arts college as an undergraduate, and I wanted to participate in creating the same kind of meaningful experience for others.

YOUR TEACHING PHILOSOPHY: Research has shown that passive lectures provide the lowest knowledge retention rate. For this reason, I favor active-learning strategies. My typical class involves group discussion and activities that construct knowledge and understanding. I also like to recreate authentic situations and assign hands-on activities to further reinforce the lesson and allow for individual discovery.

YOUR HOBBIES: I love to travel, cook, and volunteer. I'm active with the Junior League of Raleigh, founding their Women

of Color Affinity Group and serving as the Operations Chair for SPREE! (their annual weekend-long shopping event that hosts over 11,000 attendees at the Raleigh Convention Center). I also serve as the Chair for the Nash Health Care Foundation's Young Ambassador's Council, and I'm a board member for S.A.F.E. Rocky Mount (a human trafficking prevention and service organization).

FAVORITE TV SHOWS: "The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel," "Stranger Things," "Bachelor in Paradise," "Late Night with Seth Meyers," and "The Real Housewives of Atlanta."

MOVIES: Recent—"Crazy Rich Asians" and "Tag." All-Time—"About Time" and "Shaun of the Dead."

FAVORITE MUSICAL ARTISTS: Beyoncé, Bruno Mars, Rihanna, Jill Scott, El DeBarge, Britney Spears, and Lizzo.

FAVORITE CUISINE: Italian.

FAVORITE SPORTSTEAM: I'm not into sports, but I'll root for the hometown basketball teams: the University of Memphis and the Memphis Grizzlies.

SOMETHING INTERESTING/SURPRISING ABOUT YOU: I have a passion for evening gowns and keep a closet full of them in nearly every size in my guest room. I loan them like books for black-tie affairs.

See NEW PROFESSORS pg 4



Professor Melanie Townsend



Robin Pietryk, Wesleyan's Coordinator of Disability Services and an instructor in the School of Business, is among the new inductees to the college's Athletic Hall of Fame. In a 15-year coaching career, Pietryk led the Bishops volleyball team to seven 20-win seasons and 247 total victories. In 2013, Pietryk, a three-sport athlete in college, entered the HOF at her alma mater, Bethany College (W.Va.). For more sports coverage, turn to page 3.

SI Photo