

# THE DECREE

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NORTH CAROLINA WESLEYAN COLLEGE, ROCKY MOUNT, NORTH CAROLINA 27804

## Grateful for Family Support, APS Student Set to Graduate College at 56

Yvonne Vickers-Jordan, a student in the college's Adult & Professional Studies program, will be among the proud graduates at the December commencement.

Vickers-Jordan, 56, majored in psychology at the Durham site, while working full-time at Duke University. Married to Ronald, she is the mother of a 37-year-old daughter, Kearra, and a 26-year-old son, Brailsford, who attended Hampton University in Virginia.

The Richmond native spoke with The Decree in November about her experience as a “non-traditional student” and the excitement she feels about the next stage in her life.

**Q.** Many APS students attended a traditional four-year school right after high school and then had to withdraw for some reason—poor grades, finances, family obligations, etc. What is your story? Did you have any college experience prior to enrolling at NCWC?



Her family will be on hand to watch APS student Yvonne Vickers-Jordan graduate December 14. Photo courtesy of Y. Vickers-Jordan

**A.** Even though I was encouraged to go to college over and over again by my parents, I chose not to attend. Education was stressed in my family, but I decided to stay home and raise my daughter. I felt that the only way that I could be a good mother was to remain home and be a full-time parent.

Later I married and had my son. Life continued to happen, and my focus was juggling work, family obligations, and church commitments. Always busy, I still yearned to obtain a college degree. I thought of it all of the time. I toyed with the process of enrolling, but I lacked the courage because I thought I was just too old.

My husband and I had an ongoing

conversation about me returning to school. One day he just said to me “It’s time.” When it comes to education, we share the same values. He’s been so supportive of my dreams. He’s helped with assignments, while I stayed up late at night studying or finishing an exam. Both my children have been in my corner, pushing and cheering me toward my goal. Both have expressed their pride in me. I couldn’t have achieved this goal without my family.

**Q.** What attracted you to the NCWC program?

**A.** I began my journey in late August of 2015. NCWC is an age-friendly college. It provides an academic environment that was accommodating to my busy life and multiple responsibilities. It helped that I had the ability to take classes in online, hybrid, or seated formats.

**Q.** What was that first semester like when you began the program?

**A.** My first day was indeed a scary one as I had been out of school for over 25 years. I felt intimidated at first, but I prayed and prayed, and then it clicked and I began to soar. My courses were challenging and overwhelming, but I was effective at time management. That gave me peace of mind and allowed me to complete assignments in the limited time available during my day.

**Q.** What led you to become a psychology major? What did you like most about your field of study?

**A.** Many psychology courses that I took were fun and left me elucidated and clear on human psychology. I’ve always been fascinated by the human mind and behavior. I’ve gained a greater understanding of myself and others.

**Q.** Tell us about your current job at Duke.

**A.** I’ve been employed at Duke Health (formerly Duke University Medical Center) for more than 24 years. I serve as staff specialist within The Duke Department of Medicine.

**Q.** What challenges did you face in earning your degree? What sacrifices were necessary?

**A.** There were illnesses and the passing of loved ones. The biggest sacrifice was not spending enough time with family, especially my four loving grandchildren. Many times I had assignments or exams to complete, and I had to decline invitations and miss family gatherings.

**Q.** Would you describe one particular event that typifies the obstacles you encountered on the way to graduation?

I had to get up early because we had to be at Sony at 8 a.m. Once we arrived, we were introduced to Constance Williams. A former adjunct instructor at Wesleyan, Williams is Vice President of Human Resources for Sony. It was Williams and President Duff who first had the idea for the job shadow program.

Our first stop was a Sony marketing presentation. The speaker was Dennis Kooker, president of Global Business and U.S. Sales. Kooker discussed the ways music is marketed in the age of streaming. According to Kooker, the current focus is on enticing customers to purchase subscriptions to streaming services (such as Apple Music or Spotify), rather than selling music on iTunes or CDs. Kooker talked about the current growth of the music industry, stating that it was estimated to be worth \$45 billion by 2030.

Next, during lunch, we observed a panel with three A&R (artist and repertoire) agents who work for Sony. These men and women are responsible for scouting new talent, signing them to one of Sony’s dozen labels, and helping them build their image and marketability. A&R agents spend their time combing through social media and online streaming services to identify the top unsigned artists. Learning this, Strausser and I realized the importance of using social media and digital streaming to promote ourselves as artists.

That afternoon we toured Sony’s visual department. We met dozens of directors, music video producers, and photographers, and we were allowed to observe them while they worked. Some were making

**A.** My grandchildren’s paternal grandmother died suddenly. It was a difficult time, but we endured. During this time, it was very hard for me to concentrate and to turn in quality assignments.

**Q.** How will your degree help in your career?

**A.** I plan to seek a graduate degree in professional counseling or mental health social work. Wesleyan has given me a sound foundation in psychology. It will strengthen my ability to reach my career goals.

**Q.** Talk about the graduation ceremony on December 14.

**A.** I’m so excited about graduation that I can barely contain myself. My children are as excited as I am. I wish my parents were alive to see this achievement, but for sure they’re watching. With the loudest exhalation, I’m so thankful to God for allowing this blessing of becoming a college graduate. My life would not have been complete without this degree.

## Second Graduate Program Launches in January

NC Wesleyan begins its second graduate program in early January when it enrolls about 50 students in its online MBA program.

Its criminal justice program is in its second year of existence, with the first group of master’s students receiving their degrees last May.

In November The Decree conducted an email interview with President Evan Duff. An adjunct instructor in the School of Business and the Vice President of Adult & Professional Studies, Dr. Duff was instrumental in developing the new program.

**Q.** Why start an MBA program?

**A.** A feasibility study was conducted a few years ago, with alumni, current students, and local industry. The results demonstrated that there was a high interest from all constituents in Wesleyan offering an MBA program. Since we announced the program, we’ve received more than 110 applications, which demonstrates the demand that’s out there. Some alumni have told us that they postponed starting their graduate education to complete their MBA with Wesleyan.

**Q.** How many students will be in the first cohort?

**A.** Because of the demand and quality of applicants, we’ll start two cohorts on January 6, with 25 students in each. The next cohorts, beginning in our first summer term (in May), will include 20-25 students each.

lyric videos, while others were creating album artwork and printing posters. It was neat to see so many different jobs for those of us interested in the music industry.

After our day at Sony, Sawyer, Strausser, and I visited the Empire State Building. We ate dinner at a Japanese restaurant, which gave me my first experience eating with chopsticks: it’s harder than it looks! The day ended with a show by the Blue Man Group.



Music production students Joshua Strausser and Will Plyler visited Sony Music in New York City as part of a recent job shadowing opportunity. Photo courtesy of W. Plyler

Our second day began with a tour of Sony’s archives. Sony keeps photographs, documents, and records on file from all of its musical recordings dating back to the 1920s. Strausser, Sawyer, and I soon found ourselves thumbing through never-released photos of Johnny Cash and holding the original copies of Elvis Presley’s studio paperwork. Talk about a piece of history!

Next was lunch with Jeff James, one of the A&R agents we met at the panel on day



Among the fall sports highlights: The football team played two home games on campus for the first time, the cross-country team hosted the USA South Conference meet, and the men’s soccer team (shown above) took their second conference title in three years. SI photo

As we add more faculty for the MBA program, we anticipate future cohorts to have between 15-20 students each.

**Q.** Talk about the structure of the program.

**A.** If taking a full load, students will take two courses per eight-week term. They can complete the MBA in 12 months. Students can opt for a part-time schedule, allowing them to complete the program in 18-24 months. The MBA curriculum features 11 courses (33 total semester hours); the final course is a capstone course with a major project.

**Q.** What qualifications will applicants need to present?

**A.** Students should possess an undergraduate degree in business or a related field, with a minimum GPA of 2.5. They should provide a resume and two references. I would like to note that a 2.5 GPA is the minimum requirement, and based on the competitiveness of our current applicant pool, most students will have an average undergraduate GPA of 3.5.

**Q.** Who is making decisions on admissions?

**A.** The Interim Dean of Admissions and Graduate Admissions Representative in consultation with the Program Coordinators for the MBA program. Decisions will be based on the established admissions criteria.

**Q.** Describe the faculty who will teach in the MBA program? What percentage will be adjunct instructors?

**A.** I anticipate that 50 percent or more of courses in the MBA program will be taught by full-time faculty, once we’ve filled existing business faculty vacancies. All faculty—part-time as well as full-time—will have a terminal degree, online teaching experience, and industry experience. We prefer that they have graduate teaching experience as well.

**Q.** In light of recent retirements and other departures from the Wesleyan Business School, will the college hire new faculty, at least in part to help teach in the MBA program? If so, what specialties will be considered?

**A.** Yes. We’ll hire to fill vacancies first and then move forward with hiring new faculty positions in 2020. We’ll look for generalists in hopes that some have experience and concentrations in marketing, finance, accounting, and management.

**Q.** Will tenure-track faculty be teaching courses as in-load or overloads? If in-load, how will their typical undergrad courses be staffed?

**A.** I suspect we’ll see more overloads, staying within our overload policy.

**Q.** At least at the outset, how many current full-time business faculty will teach in the MBA program “in-load?”

**A.** We anticipate two or three.

**Q.** How will the new MBA program affect the undergraduate business students?

**A.** I don’t think this will have a negative impact on the undergraduate program except for an initial strain on the full-time faculty who may teach in both programs. But we expect to hire more business faculty to support the MBA in 2020. The MBA will have a positive impact on the undergraduate program by allowing students to continue their studies at the

graduate level, which may improve admissions and retention.

**Q.** Would you provide a profile of the typical student Wesleyan expects to attract?

**A.** We expect to see 80 percent (or more) of the students with at least two years of work experience. A smaller percentage will be recent college graduates who have an exceptional academic background and a desire to find full-time employment while earning their MBA online.

**Q.** What’s the geographic market for the MBA program?

**A.** Central and eastern North Carolina will be our primary market, but we may attract students from across the state.

**Q.** Will the program be open to students from overseas?

**A.** It can be, but we won’t market it internationally. I suspect that some of our international students who return to their home country once they complete their undergraduate degree could become future MBA (or MSCJ) students, since we offer both programs online.

**Q.** With which colleges and universities will Wesleyan compete for students?

**A.** To my knowledge, Mount Olive and Gardner Webb are the only North Carolina schools that offer an accelerated MBA online. There may be a few others. But our tuition is much more competitive, and textbook costs will be much lower than at competitors.

**Q.** What’s the total cost for students to complete the 12-month MBA? How does that compare with the price tag at competitors?

**A.** Based on the current tuition rate, plus books, the entire program will cost less than \$17,000. Barton, Mount Olive, and similar schools will cost over \$20,000 and that doesn’t include books. UNC-Wilmington, UNC-Pembroke and other state schools offer programs for around \$10,000, plus cost of books and other fees.

**Q.** Will there be a focus to the NCWC program?

**A.** The initial program focuses on management, but the School of Business will consider future concentrations in logistics, healthcare administration and perhaps information technology administration.

**Q.** How much revenue will the MBA program generate on an annual basis after it’s up and running?

**A.** It has the potential to generate \$500,000 to \$800,000 in net revenue per year with faculty salaries our primary cost.

**Q.** What will the pay be per course for adjuncts? What will full-time faculty get for teaching overloads, per course?

**A.** There will be one rate for graduate classes regardless if we use a part-time or full-time faculty member; that rate is \$3000 per class.

**Q.** What most excites you about this new program?

**A.** I would say it’s our ability to meet the needs of our alumni and the surrounding community by offering an advanced business degree that aligns with our mission of offering lifelong learning opportunities.