

THE DECREE

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NORTH CAROLINA WESLEYAN COLLEGE, ROCKY MOUNT, NORTH CAROLINA 27804

Children Often Lead Parents Back to School, Degree



Ariana Atwell with son, Noah
Photos for graduation stories provided by the subjects

Ariana Atwell

When she was younger, Ariana Atwell was not so committed to school. As a result, her grades were mediocre and she began her collegiate career at a two-year college, Wake Tech in Raleigh.

The 24-year-old, a native of Grand Forks, North Dakota, took four years to earn an associate's degree. Even then she was still uncertain of her career path. Then her son was born.

“After having my son,” she said. “I made more of an effort to pick a career.”

Influenced in part by her mother, a bookkeeper and tax preparer, as well as her own desire to leave her job at the U.S. Postal Service, Atwell chose accounting and enrolled at Wesleyan's ASPIRE program. The evening and on-line classes would allow her to continue working full-time as a letter carrier.

Like many ASPIRE students, Atwell balanced a full-time job, family obligations, her social life and school. “It was hard to be in school full-time and work my 50-60-hour week at the post office,” she related. “Most evenings I came home exhausted and didn't get to spend much time with my son. I sacrificed a majority of my social life because I simply didn't have the time.”

At Wake Tech and Wesleyan, Atwell began to apply herself more. Guided by her professors, she honed both her study skills and her writing style. “I was pretty good in math, but my writing skills weren't the best,” she said. “I would write the way I talked and sometimes my teachers couldn't understand what I was trying to say.”

She credited the assistance she received from her family for helping her to finish her Wesleyan degree. “My family was my biggest support system and helped me with my son,” she said. “No matter how stressful it got to balance school with other parts of my life, they always encouraged me to keep going. You have to be really organized, determined, and disciplined to work full time and go to school full time and still make good grades.”

Atwell recalled that she came close to stopping her education. A stressful period almost derailed her progress when she was still at Wake Tech. “I had a breakdown in 2015, right before graduation, because I was so stressed with taking seven classes a semester and working long hours on top of my regular life,” she said. “I cried and let out all my frustrations and then I buckled down and kept pushing. My goal was to graduate and that's what I focused on. It wasn't easy and there were many nights I wanted to give up, but my son was a big part of my inspiration and he helped me to stay grounded.”

Atwell's already taken the next step in her career. Last January, in anticipation of her April 28 graduation, she accepted a job as a finance coordinator through an accounting temporary agen-

cy. Since then she's taken a permanent position at the firm, with the new title of Finance Associate Level 1. She intends to enroll in a master's program next fall and then sit for the CPA exam.

Letisha Banks

Letisha Banks graduated from the Goldsboro ASPIRE program at age 43, on her second attempt at college.

Like Atwell, she was led back to school by her child. She hoped to inspire her son through her pursuit of a college degree.

Banks' son is a student at UNC-Charlotte. “I've always stressed to him the importance of education,” she said. “I wanted to lead by example.”

Again, with her son in mind, she also wanted to finish a degree that she had begun



Banks

right after high school in 1992. “I also tell him that it's important to finish what you started,” she said.

Right after high school, Banks enrolled at UNC-Pembroke, in part because friends went there. She took classes for three semesters, but left after she recognized that the class sizes and the diversity of the student body were not right for her. “Because of feeling somewhat lost and ill prepared, I dropped out,” she related.

Along with hearing positive feedback about the college from friends, she was attracted to Wesleyan by the smaller class sizes.

During her second college experience, Banks, a double major in psychology and organizational administration, was able to strike a better balance among school, work, and the raising of her son. “He was in high school,” Banks said, “and there were many parental challenges,” among them the financing of his college education.

At Wesleyan, she said that one highlight for her was “the awesome instructors.”

Now more so than in the past, she said she enjoyed debating her professors in class.

Recognized as an “Adult Studies Outstanding Student,” Banks is now employed as a marketing executive at Curtis Media, a position she secured with the help of ASPIRE administrator Laura Estes.

Mylene Potter

After high school, Mylene Potter enrolled in her local community college to become a paralegal, her mother's field. But she found the course unfulfilling.

“It was what I thought I wanted, but a few months into the program, I became disinterested in the profession,” she recalled. “I tried to continue with my courses, but like a lot of my peers, I wasn't interested in school and wasn't quite sure what my calling was.”

So, Potter joined the United States Air Force, hoping for “a fresh start.” The 39-year-old Goldsboro resident served in administrative positions before she became a records specialist at Travis AFB in California. After leaving the Air

Force, while still in Germany with her family, she began to substitute teach at her children's school. Along with the classes she had taught to service members at Travis, that experience convinced her that she would make a career of teaching.

“I fell in love with the education profession,” she said.

Back in North Carolina, Potter worked for a time as an insurance agent, but she soon decided to return to higher education. With encouragement from her husband, and an endorsement from her father, Paul Thompson, a Wesleyan graduate, she registered for classes at the ASPIRE program's Goldsboro site. “Going back to college is hard enough as a working adult, but starting with a blank slate was daunting,” she said. “But I knew the support I needed was there.”

As with many ASPIRE students, there were plenty of challenges. There were rusty writing skills that required improvement. There were the late nights needed to complete homework after a full day at the office. There were weekend chores that had been left undone during a busy week. There was a period of unemployment (necessitated by her student-teaching). “It was somewhat of a hardship on my family,” Potter said.

When she was handed her diploma by President Clark, Potter became the first Goldsboro student to graduate with a degree in elementary education. While still working in insurance, Potter is now seeking a full-time teaching position for the fall.

“I never doubted that I wanted to be a teacher,” she said. “I love to teach and make a difference in the lives of the children. Nothing is better than seeing a student have that ah-ha moment after learning to spell or get their multiplication right.”

Seniors Celebrate On Sun-Splashed Graduation Day

The commencement ceremony returned to the outdoors April 28, as Wesleyan honored its 2018 graduates from the traditional and ASPIRE programs.

On a warm sunny day, the graduates and their families listened to a commencement address from Tarboro native Janice Bryant Howroyd, who connected with the crowd while she shared stories from her childhood and related advice and highlights from a career as the first African-American woman to lead a billion-dollar corporation, The ActOne Group.

Following the address, several awards were given during the ceremony. Senior Carolyn Davern was presented the Algonon Sydney Sullivan Award for academic excellence and service to the Wesleyan community, while Lucas Koons earned the President's Cup for attaining a high overall grade point average. Both Davern and Koons graduated summa cum laude.

Dr. Jay Quinan, an associate professor of psychology and the chair of the Education and Social Sciences Division, was named “Exemplary Teacher,” after receiving nominations from students. Dr. Steve Ferebee and former Library Director Kathy Winslow were granted emeritus status.

(Staff writer Johnathan Pickler interviewed five traditional-day students in the run-up to the ceremony.)

As the 2017-2018 school year approaches an end, it only means one thing... There will be a new graduating class in a couple of days. There are many seniors who will be walking across the stage on April 28th. I was lucky enough to gain info on some of our successful graduating seniors.

Adrian Moore had some words of advice for incoming freshmen. “Don't be afraid to step outside the box and get involved,” said Moore. “Meet different people and don't settle for anything.”

See Seniors pg 2

NCWC Greenville Student Finishes 32 Years After First Try at College

At 52, Steven Lassiter is proud that he persevered, overcame his own self-doubts, and earned a college degree 32 years after his high school graduation.

A New Haven, Connecticut native, Lassiter earned a degree in criminal justice through Wesleyan's ASPIRE program, which he began in 2011. He works in the Greenville area.

Lassiter was interviewed by the Decree after the April 28 graduation ceremony.

Q. Describe your first attempt at earning a degree.

A. I first enrolled in college beginning in the fall of 1986 after completing high school. I never thought that I was good enough to attend college, but some friends and I decided to attend the local community college. I chose to study accounting since I liked math and numbers. I had planned to complete college and become an accountant. After a few weeks, the dream failed, and I left school and returned to the work force. I just didn't have the motivation and support needed to keep going.

Q. Then you moved to the area from your home state of Connecticut.

A. Work and family life led me to North Carolina in 1994. While working in manufacturing, I looked into Pitt Community College, but after taking a beginner typing course I once again returned to the work force. I didn't have the desire to find other courses, and family considerations outweighed the need to spend time chasing a college degree.

Q. Talk about your third attempt.

A. Many years later while working in criminal justice, I wanted to advance to a higher position. It became clear that I would need to get a college degree. The only obstacle was me. I kept telling myself that I was too old to attend college and that I had missed so much learning that I wouldn't be able to keep up with the changes that had occurred over the years. I sought input from professionals. One day I went to Pitt and found Phillip Baggett in the criminal justice department. Mr. Baggett informed me that the obstacles I had envisioned were only in my head. If I really wanted to get a degree, he assured me that it was possible. I then went home and talked to my children and family. They were excited and supported me. So I went back to Pitt and signed up.

Q. What led you to NCWC?

A. When I was completing my last semester at Pitt, my advisor asked me if I planned to further my education. I was excited about completing something I never thought I would ever do. She gave me a pamphlet for Wesleyan and put me in touch with a representative from ASPIRE.

Q. What was the biggest adjustment or challenge for you in terms of academics? How did you address the issue?

A. Besides being one of the oldest students in class, the biggest challenge was that I had last attended school in 1986 (25 years earlier). During that time,

I wasn't the greatest student, graduating in the lower 25 percent of my high school class. In college I was in classes with some students who weren't even born when I went to high school. Besides the age gap, I was a working adult with a full-time job and I was a single father of two children. It helped that there were some older adults in my classes and that the younger students looked forward to connecting with older adults for that life experience that can't be learned from a textbook. My family and friends encouraged me to strive for success. I'd always taught my children to work hard and not give up on their dreams and I used this to ignite my own desire.

Q. Why did you select criminal justice as your major?

A. I was working in this field and I enjoyed what I did for a living. Every day I wanted to elevate my level of knowledge to do more in the field.

Q. Describe your current job and talk about possible job or career changes you expect to make with your degree.

A. I work for the Pitt County Sheriff's Office stationed in the detention center. I've been there for the last ten years. On



Lassiter

January 28th, I was promoted to supervising sergeant in one of the housing areas. I supervise four detention officers of various skills and experience. Together we monitor a large housing unit divided into four separate dormitories. I have no plans of changing my career at this time, except that I'd like to get promoted. I plan to use the information and skills learned while

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Plyler Elected SGA President

By Quinn Tobias
Editor-at-Large

After three attempts at electing the new SGA president, the students chose freshman Will Plyler over junior Ariel Wilson by three votes.

Wesleyan held its first election in two years after Emanuel Williams, the former SGA President, graduated. The election process proved to be strenuous for first-year Director of Student Activities Elliot Smith.

During the first attempt, it was determined that the voters were improperly influenced at a balloting location. “I was made aware of an issue at the voting booth,” Smith said. “A student running the voting booth influenced the voters.”

While Smith declined to comment on whom the influence favored, Wilson revealed that she was the beneficiary. More than 200 students took part in the initial voting, but participation dwindled in the second attempt and the two candidates tied with 70 votes apiece.

Smith commented on the election process: “We followed the SGA constitution,” he said. “Whenever there's a re-vote, you lose participants.”

Both candidates acknowledged the stress of the multiple rounds of voting. “Three ballots have been a real exercise in faith,” Plyler said. “I prayed a lot about the outcomes.”

Wilson also expressed frustration. “This has not been fun at all,” she said. “It's frustrating not for myself but for the inconvenience of the students.”

As SGA President, Plyler hopes to increase retention at Wesleyan. “I want to

create an atmosphere that makes upper-classmen want to stay,” he said. He identified the current housing crisis as an area that can be improved. “Students are being shipped to Wesleyan Inn or forced to pay for a single dorm,” Plyler explained. “This could push students away. I'm on board with growing the school as long as it's not done at the expense of the upperclassmen.”

Having chosen Wesleyan due to the spirituality on campus, Plyler would like to increase Christian leadership at the school. “I don't want to get into office and convert everyone,” Plyler said. “But this is a Christian school and faith is important to me.” He said he had developed a previous relationship with President Dewey Clark; the two attend the same church.

In addition to the school's religious affiliation, the new music program attracted Plyler to stay in his hometown of Rocky Mount. He said he was encouraged to run for SGA president by friends and faculty and he feels he can make a positive impact on campus. He attributes his successful run to his campaign manager, Blaise Gourley, a freshman marketing major who helped by hanging posters and canvassing students.

After running unopposed, Joseph Lloyd returns as the SGA Vice President and Aayushma Shrestha returns for her second term as the SGA Secretary. Runner-up Wilson will work on the cabinet as SGA's Treasurer.

Despite winning the election his freshman year, Plyler is unsure of his future. “I'm not sure I want to hold the position for three years,” he said.

WESLEYAN PROFILES

IS Coordinator Dawn Turner: Investing in Student Lives

By Bijaya Lamichhane
Decree Staff Writer

"I try to be organized," Dawn Turner said, sorting through a planner with pink, blue and yellow post-its, each one detailing events scheduled with students. I was to have lunch with her at Chick-fil-A. Her office was decorated with pictures of international students at Global WesFest, the freshman dinner and other campus events. In a corner, pinned to a bulletin board, were passport-sized photographs of new freshmen.

Turner, Wesleyan's International Students Coordinator, wore a light-weight cream-colored sweater and a dainty two-toned gold pendant to go with it. "I just love Chick-fil-A," she exclaimed as we walked toward her Toyota Camry. In the car, I noticed she had a box containing props from Global WesFest, the biggest international student event at Wesleyan. "I haven't taken them out yet," she explained. "I plan on it, but I always got something in my hands."



Dawn Turner

Photo by B. Lamichhane.

At Chick-fil-A, she ordered an eight-count chicken nuggets meal and asked for Polynesian sauce. She insisted on paying for my lunch as well. "Have you tried the Polynesian sauce? Oh, it's great, it's my favorite," Turner said, as her blue eyes glistened with excitement. "I've never tried the grilled ones," she said, glancing at my order of grilled chicken nuggets.

Turner grew up in Rocky Mount. As the youngest of four siblings, she said that her childhood was wonderful. "I was the peacemaker in the family," she said, giggling. "With four siblings, I had to be a peacemaker."

She attended Barton College. After graduation, she moved to Seattle to teach and then moved back to Rocky Mount. A second-grade teacher, she twice won "Teacher of the Year" awards, the first at Benvenue Elementary in 2006, the second at GW Bulluck in 2014.

Before joining the Wesleyan community, Turner worked with both domestic and international students at

her alma mater. Including her current position, she's now been in education for 23 years. "I love relationships with people and investing in their lives to help them become better," she said.

Turner enjoys interacting with Wesleyan's internationals. "Rather than go across the world, the world has come to me," she said. "I get to experience the world through you. This is more than I could ever experience in my lifetime if I were to travel." She added that her relationships with students were important to her. "I want you to have a family here," she said.

When I offered Turner my order of fries, she only took a piece. "I'm trying to cut carbs," she revealed. I then proceeded to compliment her well-maintained figure to which she humbly responded that she tries to be fit.

Turner has been married for 23 years to her husband, Bruce Turner, who teaches Bible at Faith Christian School. "My husband is my best friend," she gushed.

They are parents of twin sons, now aged 21. "It's so great being a mother of twins. Even though they're a lot alike, they're very different in many ways," she said. "I can celebrate their differences."

Turner loves singing, reading inspirational books, writing, and serving in the community and her church. In fact, she has written a children's book titled "Little Racers: Running Towards the Prize" and had it published for a children's ministry program at Englewood Baptist Church.

She's also an avid journal keeper. "I've kept 25 journals since my boys were born," she said. "When I'm not around, I want them to have it so they can see how God got me from one place to another."

Turner kept glancing at her phone. When I asked her if she had to be somewhere, she looked at me and revealed that she soon had to meet with a student.

Throughout our lunch, as we took bites of our nuggets, she stressed the importance of maintaining strong relationships with her students. "I try to see and treat people the way I want to be treated," she declared. "When a student comes to me, I drop everything and focus all my attention on them."

She believes the biggest challenge in her job is juggling the different needs of students. Her strategy is to try to understand their diverse backgrounds. Listening is an important skill, she said. "I try to empathize and listen to what ya'll have to say, so I can know your viewpoint," she said. "I try to make students feel as important as they are."

On our way back to campus, Turner reminded me, in a rather reassuring way, that for her it was all about others. "It's never about me. I want to help ya'll," she said. "I want to help ya'll and help enrich your lives so one day ya'll can be successful."



Joshua Campbell, a Decree staff writer and new grad, said that a Wesleyan scholarship allowed him to leave his home state of Tennessee and enroll in a private school. After a short time on the football team, Campbell committed himself to his education and other extra-curricular activities. He majored in history and political science and won academic awards along the way. He will attend graduate school in history at East Tennessee State in the fall. He said he'll miss friends, staff, and faculty.

Photo by B. Bayse.



Tara Greco

SI Photo

Tara Greco: Her Own Sports Injuries Led to Interest in Training

By Sarah Grossman
Decree Staff Writer

"Are you ready?" asked Tara Greco, the new athletic trainer on Wesleyan's campus.

We started our run from the fieldhouse toward the nearest campus exit on a cool March morning. She wore grey and pink Asics shoes, dark grey capris running leggings, and a black and white long-sleeve Arkansas State University shirt that she wrapped around her hands to stay warm. We turned right out of campus and then left onto two-mile road as she told me about her history.

Greco started gymnastics when she was just 18 months old and continued to participate through high school. In middle school, she started running track, but didn't

take it seriously until she attended King's Park High School in New York. "Looking back now, I realize I still didn't try that hard in track," she said. "Track came easy from being in gymnastics my whole life."

As a track athlete, she competed in sprints, long jump, triple jump, and pole vault. "They gave me a paper test in high school and if I passed then I could pole vault," she recalled. "They handed me a pole and said go jump."

Once in college at Salisbury University on the eastern shore of Maryland, she became burnt out on gymnastics. She continued track for two more years, but stopped running to focus more on her schooling. She majored in athletic training because, she said, "I was constantly injured as a gymnast, and I always was interested in my injuries, my rehabilitation process, and sports."

About half way down two-mile road we turned right into the neighborhood. Greco had taken her hands out of her shirt by now and we continued at a ten-minute-mile pace. She relaxed into her form and kept a consistent stride.

After college, Greco earned a master's degree and served as a graduate assistant trainer at Arkansas State University. There she worked with the cross country and track and field teams. "Athletic training gives me a chance to stay around sports, help athletes better themselves, and create

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studying at Wesleyan to enhance my skillsets and make me a better supervisor.

Q. What other obstacles did you overcome along the way to earning your degree?

A. There were many obstacles. Some were obligations while others sprung up out of the blue. There was less time with family and friends, going to church, etc. As a single father of two, I was taking care of sick children and missing lots of milestones—my nephew's wedding, a family reunion, children's birthday celebrations. At work there were missed promotions, missed overtime opportunities and missed special duty assignments.

With the accelerated classes, there isn't any time that you can miss. So, when there's no time to spend with family or friends, on birthdays, church, the reunion or a wedding, you just rely on the support of family and hope they understand that you'll be done soon and that there'll be time in the future. Many times, in dealing with all the challenges, I debated over whether to continue or quit. I had a job already and I could just STOP and go on working till I retired. I confronted this feeling more than once. A friend reminded me that God never puts more on me than I can bear.

Q. What did you most like about the ASPIRE program?

A. The instructors. They designed their classes and assignments to fit the course and the adult student. They were very knowledgeable and willing to provide assistance. This was helpful due to the accelerated pace of the curriculum and the fact I was working full time. I liked the advisors, who assigned classes and kept students informed of upcoming events and classes. Advisors were very helpful and excellent communicators. Mrs. Joy Smallwood was very supportive. In fact, near the end, when I needed to vent, Mrs. Smallwood invited me to her office where she talked with me and calmed my fears. I enjoyed the different types of classes that were offered. Each term, I tended to take one face-to-face class and one online, which helps relieve the strain on a working adult.

Q. What would you change about the program?

A. There's not much that I would change. But I would like to have had more interaction between the ASPIRE students and the students and faculty on the main campus. At graduation I felt a little lost and disconnected from the other students. I would also like to see the ASPIRE students be involved in more activities on campus. I had looked into the different clubs and organizations. When I joined the main campus to inquire about joining one, I was informed that it was only for students in the day program. This happened with more than one organization. As ASPIRE students, we can benefit from membership in organizations that can last well beyond our time in college.

Dr. Jarrod Kelly: Challenging Minds One Day at a Time

By Joshua Campbell
Decree Staff Writer

It was a warm sunny day on campus when I met with Dr. Jarrod Kelly in his Braswell office and then walked with him to the cafeteria. As always, he wore a plaid long-sleeved shirt with blue jeans and his signature Clarks, a huge smile on his red-bearded face.

While we walked, we shared laughs about his carpet-chewing dog and the latest presidential scandal. We soon went up the steps and into the cafeteria where the smell of cooked vegetables and old bay-spiced flounder filled the air. After going through the line, we found a table and began to talk about his recent wedding (his wife just graduated from medical school), but conversation soon took a nosedive into politics.

Dr. Kelly was raised in the rural town of Chillicothe, Ohio, located an hour south of Columbus. I asked him what was significant about Chillicothe and he said, "First and third capital of Ohio. We lost it twice." This humor sums up the kind of person Dr. Kelly is—laid back, relaxed and always ready to crack jokes and talk.

He began his college education at Ohio State University, but after two years, he settled at Miami University of Ohio. While there, Dr. Kelly found a love for psychology. He majored in that discipline, but was soon intrigued by political science. "I worked in a psychology lab, and it overlapped with the political science department," he explained, adding that he became more involved in

the department because of a friendship he developed there.

At first Dr. Kelly had wanted to attend a doctoral program in educational psychology, but he was persuaded to apply to a few political science programs. After applying, he contemplated pursuing a career in political science, and the deal was sealed after he heard from the University of Pittsburgh. "I got accepted to Pitt and decided to be a political scientist instead of a school psychologist," he said.

At Pitt, Dr. Kelly wrote a dissertation titled "The 'Ideological' Electorate: A Self-Categorization Theory of Ideological Identification." In it, he argues that voters identify as ideological, but do not know enough about politics to label themselves. At Wesleyan, Dr. Kelly teaches all American political science courses—from the American presidency to American political thought.

Despite his ultimate choice for a doctoral degree, Dr. Kelly still views himself as a psychologist. "I consider myself a political psychologist rather than a scientist," he said.

This identity has influenced his style of teaching and enabled him to care more for students. Dr. Kelly believes that developing strong relationships is important, because it encourages students to talk politics outside the classroom. "Political science is unique because it has so much connection to

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It'll get hard, but when you want to give up, you have to fight harder."

Moore, majoring in organizational administration and minoring in leadership, is from Plymouth, North Carolina. After graduating, he plans to attend graduate school at North Carolina A&T University to get his master's in physical education on his way to a career as a basketball coach. He stated that he most enjoyed Wesleyan's family atmosphere as well as the time he spent on the basketball court here.

Moore believes that the diversity of NC Wesleyan will help him in the long run by making him able to connect with any type of person, no matter the race, religion, or gender. Asked to change one thing about the college, Moore believes Wesleyan should focus on improving the quality of the cafeteria food.

Greensboro native Raelin Davis described graduation as a "remarkable feeling that you can't really explain." She added, "It's been a long four years, but I made it."

Davis plans on taking a year off from school. However, after majoring in both psychology and sociology, she is contemplating a position in social work. In 2019 Davis plans to pursue her masters and Ph.D. in clinical psychology so she can become a therapist for adolescents.

She stated that she most values the friendships that she made at Wesleyan. She advises all incoming freshmen to take at least 15 or more credit hours to stay on track toward graduation. Similar to Moore, she also believes that the incoming freshmen should get involved to make connections that could be beneficial in the long run. Like Moore, Davis believes that Wesleyan should improve the cafeteria.

Malique Judd, a Jacksonville native, said that for him graduating is bittersweet. "I'm happy, but I'm not so happy about

leaving a great group of people," he said.

He plans on starting a master's degree before training for the highway patrol in February. Judd stated he most enjoyed meeting people as well as the time he spent as a Bishops hooper. "I made endless connections with people as well as memories I can keep with me forever," he said.

Asked to share advice to next fall's freshmen, he encouraged them "to get your GPA up early." Asked to name a change he would make at NCWC, he urged the college to establish 24-hour visitation in the residence halls.

Desiree Strong majored in business administration while at Wesleyan. After graduation, the Siler City resident plans on working for a bank in Charlotte and then hopes to work her way up through the ranks.

About graduation, she said she feels "a little bit of nervousness, excitement, and joy." Strong said she most enjoyed the "family-like bond between the students and the staff." She's grateful for the way Wesleyan has prepared her for a career. "It helped me search for jobs within my major and provided me with faculty members who checked over my resume," she said.

She advises incoming freshmen to "get your work out of the way so you can have fun later." As with Moore and Davis, Strong's biggest complaint was the cafeteria food.

Trey Jones said that for him, graduating "doesn't feel real." A resident of Chesapeake, Virginia, Jones plans to work at home for six months and then intends to come back to North Carolina for graduate school.

"The friends I've made here are friends I will have forever," Jones said, adding that he relished the diversity at Wesleyan.

He warned freshmen not to procrastinate. While at Wesleyan, Jones majored in psychology and criminal justice. Asked what changes he would make at Wesleyan, he said it would be...any guesses?...the food in the cafeteria.

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SPORTS

Golf Team Upsets Methodist to Claim Conference Title

(Update: NC Wesleyan placed 24th in the NCAA Division III golf tournament in Greensboro May 15-18.

The Bishops advanced to the national tournament after capturing the conference title, but failed to make the top 18 that continued to play on days three and four at Grandover's East Course.

Grady Anderson led the Bishops with a two-round total of 148 (73-75), four over par. Mariano Silvestri was second among NCWC's golfers with a 156.

Perennial powerhouse Methodist—the team the Bishops upset to win the USA South Conference tournament in April—won its 12th national title with a four-round team score of 7 over par, 11 strokes ahead of Washington and Lee.)

Propelled by a strong final round, the Bishops golf team vanquished reigning champ Methodist to win the USA South golf tournament April 12-14 in LaGrange, Georgia.

It's the first golf championship at Wesleyan in 45 years.

Trailing both Methodist and Huntingdon after two rounds, the Bishops rallied in round three, paced by medalist Grady Anderson (2 under par for the tournament) and freshman Juan de Giacomi, who shot a final-round 69 to finish in a tie for second place.

The win was foreshadowed 10 days earlier as the Bishops clipped the Monarchs by eight strokes at the Lynchburg Invitational in Virginia. Wesleyan's Dustin Wood (2 over par) was the medalist in that tourney.

After the USA South tournament, the Decree interviewed Coach Gregg Ripke about the championship and the season overall.

Q. What did you tell your guys prior to the third and final round?

A. I told them that we can do it. Our motto has been "We can do it if we finish the job," so if we stayed patient and kept grinding, we could finish the job and win the tournament. Everyone had had positives the first two rounds as well as earlier in the year; we talked about drawing from those positives and executing them in the final round and, at the end, hope our best is better than the fields' best. It was—by two shots!

All year long I knew that I had a special group of guys; their team chemistry has been amazing to watch and experience. We also talked just before leaving for the conference tournament about how this team could be part of history because it's been 45 years since the school's last title. I believe they embraced the challenge and the Lord blessed us in this endeavor. We're not finished yet; our goal is to get through the first two rounds of the NCAAs and then see how well we can play the last two rounds.

Q. Methodist has been a dominant team in the conference (and the nation) for some time. How did you get your guys believing that they could be beat? Have past teams been just a little intimidated by Methodist?

A. One thing that has helped us is having played with them in the past. That experience showed us that they're human and do make mistakes out there on the course. Having played with them in the second round at LaGrange, watching them make bogeys or worse, we saw they had holes in their armor and we were ready to capitalize on their mistakes. I think yes, in the past they have been a little intimidating for our guys because of the accolades they had earned as a team.

Q. What parts of their game were going well for your players, in particular Grady and Juan?

A. They both played very well that last day. Juan almost made it look easy. A Methodist player told his coach that Juan's round was the most effortless-looking 69 he'd ever seen. Grady played solid as well and, if he made a mistake, battled back. His short game was very good that final round; on the back nine he made some long putts for par, which



The Bishops golf team rallied in the final round to win the 2018 USA South Conference title, its first championship in 45 years. SI photo

was clutch for us when the tournament was neck and neck between us and Methodist. They both hit smart shots the last three holes to finish strong, while the Methodist players were making mistakes.

I'm very proud of the way our guys kept it together that final day.

Q. What were course conditions like during the three days?

A. The course played tough the final

round with the wind blowing steady, forcing the guys to stay on their toes with their shot selections. The greens were rolling pure, which was great for the players to pick out their line, trust it, and let the ball pour in the hole. Overall the course conditions were good and a lot better than the previous year when the fairways were really dry and not as full.

Q. Talk about the poise shown by your young team—one freshman (de Giacomi) and two sophomores (Mariano Silvestri and Luke Thornton). How well did they handle the pressure?

A. I thought Juan handled it very well especially since he had never been in that position. The sophomores handled it nicely as well with Luke shooting his best round of the tournament the final day. Pressure was palpable, but, knowing what was on the line, these guys finished strong.

Wesleyan Dominates USA South Tennis Championships

After winning their respective conference tournaments, Wesleyan's women's and men's tennis teams were eliminated in the NCAA Southeast Regional Tournaments.

Women's Team

Fredericksburg, Va. - The Bishop women's tennis team saw its 2018 season come to an end May 12 with a 5-0 loss to Amherst College in the second round of the NCAA Division III Tournament.

Wesleyan (13-4 overall) had advanced to the second round by posting an opening round sweep of Lebanon Valley College on May 11.

Versus Lebanon Valley, the Bishops opened up a 3-0 lead in doubles play as the duos of Stephany Barbera/Talitha Rowan, Nicole Halabi/Giulia Zanetti, and Florencia Sorrentino/Ana Aguilar all dominated in 8-0 shutouts. Rowan brought NCWC to within a point of the team win with a 6-1, 6-0 win at #4 singles, while Aguilar clinched the match with a 6-2, 6-0 victory at #6. Sorrentino, Zanetti, Halabi, and Barbera were all up a set in their respective matches when play was halted at 5-0.

The next day the Bishops fell to 8th-ranked Amherst. After taking all three doubles matches, the Mammoths clinched the overall match with victories at #1 and #4 singles.

Sorrentino, a senior from Argentina, was interviewed after the conference tournament, which the women won 5-3, over Methodist in Atlanta. The victory avenged the team's only conference loss.

Q. What was going through your mind when your teammate clinched that fifth match to win the USA South championship?

A. I cannot express my happiness in words, and I had a lot on my mind in that moment. I was nervous and felt a lot of pressure. I felt like I didn't give my best performance (she lost her matches in singles and doubles). I'm sure my teammates had the same mix of feelings as I

did. As soon as I finished my match, I asked my coach the overall score and I ran to the court with my teammates to cheer for Talitha (Rowan), who was playing the fifth point. We were very excited, and we couldn't wait for her to finish, so we could run over and hug her. I felt so happy because we made it. As a captain, I felt so proud of my team and how each of my teammates put forth the effort and worked hard to win the conference championship.

Q. What did it mean to you to win the title in your last year here?

A. I was very happy. It means a lot for me to win the title in my last season. Last year we were so close, and we lost, 5-4, in the semi-finals against Covenant. But since the first day I believed in my team and I knew that by working hard, we would have the chance to win the conference title. Our huge rival was Methodist, and we played them three times this season (a 5-4 win, a 5-4 loss, and a 5-3 tournament win).

In my first year we won the conference and we played in the regionals. I was the number 7 on the team and I didn't feel part of winning the championship since I only played two matches in the entire season. But this year, playing at #1, everything changed.



Flor Sorrentino SI Photo

Baseball Team Is Runner-up in Long's Final Season

The Wesleyan baseball team capped a strong second-half with a successful run in the USA South Conference tourney, losing in the championship to LaGrange.

The Bishops won several tough contests, including a 10-inning win over Piedmont, which snuffed Wesleyan's playoff hopes in 2017. The victory sent Wesleyan to the finals against an undefeated LaGrange team. The Bishops needed to beat the Panthers twice, while the host school needed just one win.

To the mound, the Bishops sent staff ace Nate Gardner, who was pitching on two days' rest, after hurling a 5-hitter in the team's opening win. Against LaGrange, he yielded 10 hits and 9 runs (6 earned) in three innings of work. LaGrange's starter lasted just two innings, giving up 4 runs, but



Charlie Long has announced his retirement from coaching after 21 years at the helm of the Bishops. SI photo

the Panther bullpen quashed Wesleyan's comeback hopes over the final seven.

The tournament came after a strong stretch run by the Bishops, who won 10 of 14 in the last two weeks of March after a rough patch—9 losses in 10 games—earlier in the month.

Coach Charlie Long responded to Decree questions just before announcing that he was stepping down after a career that lasted 27 years—the last 21 as head coach—and included one national championship.

Q. In your view how did the team play? What stood out about their performance?

A. We played with a great deal of passion during the conference tournament. We played as a team! The results are amazing when everyone is involved. The guys had fun, which is most important; that translated to a successful run.

Q. As a coach, what are the biggest challenges in playing five games in four days?

A. We were fortunate to have a stretch like that a few weeks earlier with Averett, Lynchburg, and Ferrum (six games in four days). When you're playing well, the momentum keeps you going. Of course the obvious issue is pitching depth. Because of a tough spring, weather wise, our young staff was forced to grow quickly because we had to incorporate a few more starting pitchers than normal (45 games from Feb

8th to April 14th with 12 doubleheaders).

Q. What was your thinking in tapping Nate Gardner to start the LaGrange game? What options did you and the coaching staff consider?

A. Nate wanted the ball. Our hope was to get five innings from him and turn it over to the relievers. We had another starter named for the next game and felt confident that we would get there.

Q. What effect will the big wins earlier in the tourney have on your team going into next year?

A. We followed the same scenario as the previous season. Just like last year, earlier in the tournament we played LaGrange, again with both of us undefeated. When we didn't win that game, we were faced with the same situation again playing Piedmont. After the lopsided loss last season to them, I believe our team was more determined than ever to get to the final this time. Against Piedmont we lost the lead and then hung on to win in extra innings; I think that game, the way it transpired, will have a tremendous carry-over into next season. The guys really showed their grit. Watching LaGrange celebrate the championship will pay dividends as well. That's an image our returners will never forget. I'm confident we'll be the ones celebrating next year.

See Baseball pg 4

GRECO from pg 2

a safer environment to allow them to do what they love as well," she said.

Once she graduated, she job searched and applied around until she discovered Wesleyan. She was hired here to support the football and lacrosse teams. She worked with the lacrosse team at Salisbury, and her brother played the game—"Growing up, I watched all his games."—so she's familiar with Wesleyan's newest sport. She's enjoyed her first job so far. "It's great to be a part of the sports medicine staff as well as the entire athletic staff at Wesleyan," she said.

She followed the winding road and then took another right to the more populated area of the neighborhood. Greco pushed up her sleeves and asked how I was doing. As we continued, the sun beamed down, taking the chill out of the air.

Greco said she had started running again because she and Kelly Bly, another athletic trainer, had signed up for a half marathon in Nashville and the Tar Heel 10-miler in Chapel Hill. Her first half-marathon was two years ago. I asked her how she stayed motivated to run and she laughed. "I don't," she explained "Kelly's been a big motivator to keep me running!"

Greco's usual week consists of runs on Tuesday through Thursday and cross-training sessions on Monday and Friday. For her cross-training days she lifts weights, performs circuit workouts, and does other forms of cardio. On Wednesdays, Greco runs with Bly; they sprint for a minute and then take a 3-minute break, repeating the process 7-10 times.

We heard the beating of our shoes on the hard pavement as we continued down the road. To our right we passed the golf course, and on the left a dog ran back and forth in his yard, wagging its tail at us.

Greco related that March is "National Athletic Training Month"; this year's slogan is "Compassionate Care for All." "It's a nice way the National Athletic Trainers Association tries to promote our profession, make it more well known, and educate more people about what we do," she said.

We made the final left turn back into the college with the baseball field on our left and the softball field to the right. Breathing harder, Greco slowed to a walk for a cool-down the rest of the way to the field house.

Today's jog was a little earlier than normal for Greco, who likes to run the same loop during her lunch break. After her workouts, she always rolls out her muscles and stretches. "I definitely need to stretch more," she admitted.

Our run came to an end at the fieldhouse. She was headed inside to eat a snack of bell peppers and hummus. Just before parting, she reminded me to stretch.

Men's Team

After a dominating performance in the USA South Conference, the Bishops fell in the third round of the NCAA national tournament to its regional nemesis, Emory.

The Eagles, ranked second in the nation, snapped Wesleyan's 16-match winning streak.

After sweeping doubles play, Emory clinched the overall match with wins at #4 and #6 singles.

The Bishops had received a bye and played its first playoff match against Sewanee, winning 5-3, after jumping to a lead with wins in #1 (Ioannis Brokakis/Roberto Puig) and #2 doubles (J.D. Telles/Aditya Iyer).

NCWC claimed its 10th straight conference title after posting a 10-0 record. (SI contributed to this story)

CAMPUS LIFE

Decree Drama: 'The Interview' by Shamon Wright

Editor's Note: Wesleyan student Shamon Wright won the college's annual 10-Minute Play Competition with one of two scripts he submitted for consideration. "The Interview" is reprinted here with permission of the playwright.

Characters:

MAXWELL LINUX: A technology company interviewer
DANIEL: A young hopeful being interviewed
SIMON: Maxwell's co-worker
MOVERS 1 & 2: (lineless) Two almost nameless grunts working at the company

Action begins in a simple business office. The walls are white. Sterile. Almost clinical. There are no markings on the walls, nor are there any windows. It gives the aura of a blinding prison or isolation cube. The lights above are wide panels of smooth LEDs, shiny like a mirror. The lights are entirely off on stage, casting all nearly in darkness. There are simple furnishings in this office. A solitary table, sturdy, but unremarkable, sits at center stage. At its sides, almost perfectly distanced, are two chairs facing each other, one at stage-right and another at stage-left. There are two doors directly behind the chairs, leading off stage.

Sitting in the chair on stage-left is DANIEL, completely motionless. He sits upright and proper, but his head lulls forwards like he's asleep. His eyes are closed as well.

For a few moments, DANIEL remains motionless before he is joined onstage. MAXWELL enters from stage-right carrying a simple clipboard. He does not acknowledge DANIEL. MAXWELL hits a button near the doorframe, and the lights above them ignite suddenly, flooding the room with searing amounts of light. DANIEL does not react to the sudden light. MAXWELL turns towards the table and DANIEL, and gets his clipboard ready.

MAXWELL: (directly to DANIEL) It's time to begin.

DANIEL jolts his head upwards and his eyes open finally. He is not startled by MAXWELL'S voice and slowly rises his head to meet MAXWELL'S eyes. DANIEL smiles at him.

DANIEL: I've been waiting. I'm so excited for this.

MAXWELL begins moving toward the table and the empty seat as DANIEL speaks and sits down while writing on the clipboard.

MAXWELL: (not looking at DANIEL) As am I. As am I.

MAXWELL locks eyes with DANIEL as the two men sit across from each other. DANIEL has not removed the smile from his face.

MAXWELL: Can you give me your name?
DANIEL: Daniel.
MAXWELL: First and last name.

DANIEL loses his smile and gets confused for a moment.

DANIEL: Last name? I'm sorry, but it's slipped my mind.

MAXWELL shakes his head subtly and writes something on his clipboard that only he can see.

MAXWELL: Never mind that, then. Do you know who I am?

DANIEL: (immediately) Maxwell Linux.
MAXWELL: Good. Now, I am going to give you a series of questions and I want you to answer them truthfully. Say the first thing that comes to your mind. I want to know if you're made of the right stuff... if you're right for this company.

DANIEL: Why?

MAXWELL is slightly taken aback by this question but quickly regains himself.

MAXWELL: You want the job, don't you?
DANIEL: (shaking his head, almost like cleaning cobwebs) My apologies. I'm sorry. It was my mistake to ask that. Yes, Mr. Linux, I want this job. It would be a great opportunity for me.

MAXWELL: (undeterred) Now that we're back on track, answer this-

Suddenly, DANIEL begins bouncing his left foot and leg up and down anxiously and rapidly; the sound of it is gnawing and unavoidable. MAXWELL looks down at the offending appendage with a blank expression, no emotions expressed. He returns to Daniel's eyes and locks with them firmly.

MAXWELL: Stop.

DANIEL immediately does so but seems agitated. It seems almost as if the energy he was expunging from his leg has spread to the rest of his body, desperate for release.

MAXWELL makes what seems to be a few sentences onto his clipboard. DANIEL notices him doing this and looks worried.

DANIEL: Mr. Linux? Am I doing something wrong?

MAXWELL: No. It's just interview anxiety. It will pass. Let us continue the interview, if you may.

DANIEL seems to calm down.

DANIEL: Yes, let's.

DANIEL smiles widely at MAXWELL.

MAXWELL: Now, Daniel. Tell me, who are you?

DANIEL: Well, I'm-I'm-I'm-I'm-

DANIEL suddenly has what seems to be a seizure in his head. He begins twitching his head randomly and keeps stammering out the word "I'm" at the same pitch and volume as he began in the sentence. His fists clench and his arms shake as he keeps saying that word over and over.

As DANIEL has his episode, MAXWELL looks down in dejection and sighs. He has become visibly upset now. He turns away from DANIEL, towards the audience, and stares out into the distance.

DANIEL keeps having his "seizure".

DANIEL: (endlessly continuing) -I'm-I'm-I'm-I'm-I'm-I'm-I'm-I'm-I'm-I'm-I'm-I'm-I'm-I'm-I'm-I'm-

MAXWELL sighs hard and deep again and clenches his fist in very palpable frustration.

As DANIEL continues to ramble on and on, MAXWELL slams his pen onto their table hard, causing a loud bang. DANIEL is unfazed and continues his endless tangent.

MAXWELL: COMMAND: SHUT-DOWN, Subject number 6-4-2-4. Authorization level: LINUX Dash 0-1.

DANIEL suddenly stops speaking and convulsing and goes limp. He essentially returns to his status as the play began, but seems much more like a doll than a human being. But he isn't a human being.

He is a robot. For the moments that feel like bliss as the stage returns to quiet, MAXWELL sits there and ponders to himself. He eventually stands from his seat and paces around stage-right. He stops and then looks out towards off-stage-right, clearly frustrated.

MAXWELL: (yelling towards off-stage) I need two movers in here, now! Get this model back into Engineering to reset it.

Quickly, the two MOVERS shuffle in hurriedly from stage-right's doorway, fearful to make eye-contact with MAXWELL. They quickly go over to DANIEL and pick him up from his seat by the torso and legs and carry the lifeless android off-stage.

MAXWELL returns to his clipboard as he begins to finish up his evaluation. He moves to the center of the table and leans on it as he writes.

MAXWELL: Simon, get in here to finish the evaluation.

Although MAXWELL is not speaking towards anything but the general direction in front of him, his request is heard loud and clear.

A younger man, SIMON, comes in slowly from the door on stage-right and cautiously approaches MAXWELL.

SIMON: You rang for me- s-sir?

MAXWELL: (coldly) The evaluation. Let's not waste any more time on this faulty model than we already have.

SIMON: Yes, Mr. Linux, sir.

SIMON produces what appears to be a high-tech tablet from behind him and begins using it.

SIMON: Our observations on his internals were stable at first, but he seemed to crack at the pressure. The tests have proven very... undesirable.

MAXWELL: It questioned me. It wondered why it had to answer my questions. This could be dangerous.

SIMON: The Turing Test is unreliable. The fact that his glitches were almost easily swept away as simple anxiety

was good; the severity was noticeable at a point. Anxiety is a very human trait, but that was far too much. He did seem as though he wasn't aware he was an android, but the cracks were beginning to show. Therein lies the problem. Should we destroy the unit, sir?

MAXWELL: Possibly. But not yet. Maybe, just maybe, we can push these things and pass them off as human.

SIMON: Even with all the memory defects?

MAXWELL stands properly and moves over to the door he came in through and motions for SIMON to follow.

MAXWELL: What other choice do we have? It's 2137. We should have figured this out by now. I founded this company so long ago, and our Credits won't run dry just yet. Unit 6424-

SIMON: (correcting, and cutting MAXWELL off) Daniel.

MAXWELL: (glaring severely at SIMON, very coldly) Unit 6424- has had the most promise. We have more time on our hands, and we are bound for some breakthrough.

SIMON: I don't know. I'm just anxious, is all.

MAXWELL and SIMON have reached the door and begin to leave off-stage.

MAXWELL: So am I.

SIMON leaves off-stage and MAXWELL goes and turns off the lights in the room, returning it to the darkness. END OF PLAY.

MINDS

from pg 2
 the real world," he said. "It's around us all the time."

Dr. Kelly elaborated by underscoring the importance of our participation in the American political process. "Every two years, citizens are able to vote. It's the way we impact government," he said, noting that students should be concerned about everything from the regulation of products to laws governing student financial aid.

Through his courses, and his one-on-one relationships, Dr. Kelly hopes students will find and develop their own political beliefs and then talk about them. "I try to lead students to find their beliefs, and I want them to learn to justify their beliefs with facts," he said.

Dr. Kelly believes that with the rise of social media, Americans today tend to only hear the opinions they want to hear. As a consequence, he urges students to listen to opposing viewpoints and then, when necessary, defend their own ideas. "We've done a good job of creating an echo-chamber," he said. "In my classes, you're going to get information that's in opposition to your views. You need to know how to respond."

At Wesleyan, Dr. Kelly likes that it's easy to continue discussions outside the classroom. "I enjoy talking in a casual environment," he said. He stated that he's been eating in the cafeteria more often because it gives him time to not only get to know students better but help them apply his lessons. "You could talk about chemistry over lunch, and that's interesting, but it's not as applicable," he said.

While Dr. Kelly grew up and was educated in the North, he thinks that Wesleyan is an interesting place. "The faculty are great," he said. "Students love the faculty." Dr. Kelly explained that when he first came to the college, he saw the closeness between professors and students.

He believes that Wesleyan is ambitious in its expansion plans, but has not lost its focus on students. "It's very student centered," he said. It's because of his ability to build relationships that Dr. Kelly has been successful in his first year as a faculty member.

After finishing our meal, Dr. Kelly and I left the cafeteria and talked all the way to his office. On entering, I saw a bust of John F. Kennedy and posters of Presidents Richard Nixon, Barack Obama and Lyndon B. Johnson. There was also a Lego sculpture of the congressional building in D.C.; we laughed over the cost of this miniature masterpiece.

We resumed our lunch conversation, now focusing on the differences between neo-conservatism and conservatism. I found myself applying our discussion to my own political thoughts. Then I realized, that was his objective all along.

Dr. Kelly not only can connect to students and speak to them like peers, but he helps them reflect on their beliefs.



AD John Thompson presented Athlete of the Year Awards to Sebastian Sikh, tennis, and Ella Burkart, soccer. Sikh won for the third consecutive year. SI photo.



Student-Athletes of the Year winners were Nate Gardner, baseball/football, and Kaitlyn Checkan, softball. Congratulating them is Dr. Carl Lewis, the college's NCAA rep. SI photo.

Album Review: The Rise of Hobo Johnson

By Landon Clark
 Decree Staff Writer

Early this year rapper Frank Lopez—stage name Hobo Johnson—released an NPR Tiny Desk Concert contest video that went viral, sparking a conversation about his raw rapping style, and gloomy lyrics.

As I began to listen to this album, I realized that people have the same feeling about Lopez's rapping style that they had to the singing of The Front Bottoms' Brian Sella; they either appreciated the sincerity and rawness in his voice or hated it because it wasn't pleasing to the ears.

From the first song I felt jarred into an entire new world, one of pain, depression, homelessness, self-indulgence, malt liquor, cigarettes, hunger, and a deep need to feel loved.

Lopez starts off the album with "Sex in the City," which features a mellow, airy grand piano playing in the background that gives off the impression of space. He will go on to use this same sound for the majority of the album. I appreciate how hard this song pushes you into Lopez's mind with this unsure melody, which works in tandem with his lyrics. I also love the musical build-up before the hook. It seems to represent a spiraling of his mind, as he's trying to understand the overcrowded atmosphere and the sexual tension that exist in the city. This song is a good "track one" because it establishes the foundation by introducing the ideas that will follow in the rest of the album, such as homelessness, self-deprecation, and the complications of love.

The follow-up song "Demarcus, Cousins, and Ashley," takes a darker mood, with a hard-hitting, almost industrial music-like synth melody. This song shows the mental instability of the artist, and his attachment to his family, and you can see that Lopez fantasizes about love and uses it as a prescription for his mental depression. However,

BASEBALL

Q. We'd like to ask a few questions about earlier in the year, March in particular. What were the big issues during the losing streak in the first few weeks of the month?

A. Offensively, we simply left too many runners on base. Methodist (the opponent that kicked off the losing streak) was really good as well. They hit everything we threw up there. This disappointing series carried over to the mid-week games with Wittenberg. Baseball is like that at times. When you're not getting key hits, overall team confidence takes a downward turn.

Q. How did the team turn it around in the second half?

A. Confidence. We also made an effort to be more aggressive offensively; the guys executed the plan.

Q. Drew Tubb established himself as a solid starting pitcher at the college level. You have him and Nate as the two top starters in 2019. Who on the current staff might emerge as 3rd and 4th starters?

A. There should be a good competition for the spots next year.

Q. Do you have any incoming guys who look like they might make the jump to starting pitcher?

A. We have a few that'll make a push.

Q. Do you recruit by position? Are you looking to add pitching for next year?

A. We do recruit needs. You can never have enough pitching depth.

Q. You had a nice offensive output this year. You must feel excited about next year's starting lineup, with only Caleb Narron graduating from the current starting eight.

A. I'm very excited about next season. The team should be motivated to have a great year!

this song is rather different in that it doesn't follow a simple verse-hook-chorus pattern that many rap songs do. In fact, Lopez's creative genius shines, because this song slips between four different styles of rap, beginning with a repetitive synth and pushing into a hardcore rap beat all the way through to a simplistic and spacey smooth-rap beat, and finally into a sample of "America the Beautiful."

You can see from this song that Lopez is pushing his agenda of hating on both the political climate in America and the political climate in the music industry. "Really look into the real history."

America has @\$\$%ing caused a lot of problems for the general world," said Lopez in "Demarcus, Cousins, and Ashley."

The words come straight from his soul after he was constantly thrown around by the American government during his period of homeless. Many young people would describe this and the following lines as either being "woke," or complaining when you're living in the greatest country in the world. Personally, I think he should use his art to open people up to a different understanding of the American government.

His next song, "Dear Labels," is a perfect telling of the struggle faced by all modern-day small bands.

"Pay my rent and I'll sell you my soul," says Lopez.

Lopez sings of the struggles artists, and listeners, confront in the music business. "Dear Labels" is a great representation of how labels take advantage of artists, who must either give in to the demands of the record companies or not make money and starve.

In this album, Lopez cuts open his soul and his mind and hands them to you in hopes that you'll understand what he has seen in this world. Pushing against boundaries, he isn't afraid to comment on the music industry and its problems.

Lopez also is willing to explore the issues of domestic abuse and divorce. In a way the song "Father" is the source of the album, for he blames his own relationship issues on his parents and their strained marriage. If it wasn't for his father leaving his mother and marrying a "shape-shifting monster," then Lopez wouldn't have to "breathe Nicotine until you fall asleep."

What I think is best about this album is its ability to continue a story and allow it to resolve not just in one song but between songs. If "Father" is the source of the entire album, then "Romeo & Juliet" is the background. "Romeo & Juliet" goes through the story of how his father caught his mother cheating.

Lopez's deep emotion is highlighted by the screams that end "Father," which I have interpreted as a representation of the fight between his mother and father when his father found out about her infidelity. The screaming could represent either his father's screaming or his own screams after witnessing the traumatic experience.

After these songs, Lopez finishes off the album by further showing his alienation not only from this world but Jesus Christ.

The next few songs focus on his issues with relationships. In the last four tracks, he emphasizes that he's never good enough, and at the end of the record we feel that relationships will never work for Lopez ("Life is unfair") and that he'll continue to hope for a brighter future, no matter how much his life throws at him.

This album brought so many unexpected emotions through my headphones. Nonetheless it's worth a listen if you can handle the random awkwardness in some of the songs such as moaning, yelling, and an alien-voice encoder.

Once you get through the awkwardness, you'll understand that this world isn't easy on anyone, regardless of age; you'll be reminded that this world is cruel and sometimes it's that way because of our own doing and sometimes it's because of things we can't control.