

THE DECREE

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NORTH CAROLINA WESLEYAN COLLEGE, ROCKY MOUNT, NORTH CAROLINA 27804

Provost Evan Duff Elevated from Interim Status

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

A. While I didn't experience the

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

Q. Will you continue to direct the ASPIRE program?

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

Q. How do you spend a typical day?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Have you always been like this?

See PROVOST pg 2



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

Four Students Remembered On One-Year Anniversary

By Sydney Jackson
Decree Staff Writer

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

A memorial service took place at the

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

NEWS & OPINION

Distracted: 70 Percent Text While Driving, 30 Percent Videotape

Wesleyan's Health Center Director Jessica Brys-Wilson called results of The Decree's most recent survey of student driving habits "terrifying."

Security Director Wayne Sears took a more nuanced view. Though concerned by the data, he said he was not surprised by many of the findings, among them the number of Wesleyan students who admitted to texting while driving a motor vehicle. But he was "disturbed" to learn of the number of students who liked to videotape themselves while behind the wheel.

The unscientific Decree survey, done in conjunction with national "Distracted

Driving Awareness Month," asked 125 traditional-day students a range of questions on their driving habits.

It found that:

- 70 percent send text messages while driving (88 of 125). Fourteen do it "every time" they drive; 30 do it "fairly often" and 44 say they do it "seldom."
- "I'm not surprised at the numbers," said Sears, a former member of the Rocky Mount Police Department, noting that it's an even greater problem among high school students.
- 30 percent (37 of 125) videotape themselves while driving (5—14—18)

While he was not surprised by the texting data, Sears was alarmed by the figures on students who videotape themselves. "This is really dangerous," he said. When drivers "mug" for the camera, "that's as distracted as it gets."

According to the survey:

- 15 percent (19 of 125) wear earbuds while driving (3—7—9)
- 32 percent (40 of 125) use social

media while driving (5—21—14)

Snapchat, Instagram, Facebook, Twitter and Tinder were listed as media used by drivers. Asked to identify the app used most often, 34 students named Snapchat, an image messaging and multi-media application.

"I'm not exactly sure why I use Snapchat while driving, but I use it then more than any other time," one student said in an interview. Safety organizations have launched

a national conversation about distracted driving. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration reported that 3,477 deaths resulted from distracted driving in 2015. In March, the issue attracted widespread media attention again after a 20-year-old Texas man admitted that he was texting when he crashed into a van, killing 13 passengers on their way back from a retreat.

In a recent New York Times article, the National Safety Council estimated that 40,200 Americans died in motor vehicle accidents in 2016; that figure represents a 6 percent rise over 2015 and it's the second year in a row that fatalities increased despite, experts noted, the many safety features built into new vehicles, improvements to American roads, and extensive anti-drunk driving campaigns. While acknowledging that the higher number of fatalities is due, in part, to an increased number of Americans taking to the roads in an improving economy, the Times story quoted safety experts who put at least part of the blame on smart phone usage and other distractions.

Among other findings, the Decree survey revealed the following about Wesleyan students:

- 56 percent (70 of 125) "often talk on the phone while driving."
- 50 percent (63 of 125) "often read text messages while driving."
- 53 percent (66 of 125) "often eat while driving."

Sears cautioned students about distracted driving. He urged them to ask themselves: While in engaged in such activities, in the past year, how many times have you been stopped by the law? How many times have you been involved in an accident? How many times have you almost been in an accident after you were caught off guard, because of distracting behavior?

Brys-Wilson expressed concern that students ignore the risks associated with driving while texting and using social media. "It scares me," she said. The distraction level is significant, she added. "The danger is very real and so preventable."



The Dunn Center's Mims Gallery is exhibiting photos from NC Wesleyan Emeritus Professor Rick Watson. Titled "Watson's Grave Concern," the show displays 52 photos that Dr. Watson has taken around the world at grave sites of historical figures—from Aunt Bee to Babe Ruth. Here student Holly Long looks at the urn of Sigmund and Anna Freud, located in London. A. Stern photo

Issue In-Focus: Small Classes, Tight-Knit Campus Make Wesleyan Appealing

Decree staff writers were asked to identify what they like most about attending NC Wesleyan:

Jessica Brown

I chose Wesleyan simply because it was close to home, which meant I could keep my job and not worry about the extra money it would cost to stay in a dorm or apartment. After I started here, however, I came to enjoy the campus, students, and the teachers. The small class sizes meant I saw many of the same people and it was easy to make friends. Most teachers are willing to stay after class or meet outside to help students who are struggling. They understand that life happens and will work with students. The NCWC community is very welcoming and I've never been intimidated or nervous about asking for anything.

Diamond Fogg

I like the small-class environment, which gives you a much greater opportunity to ask questions, participate in discussion, and learn from a professor who gets to know you. It's always nice to be a real person, rather than a nameless spectator in the crowd of a mega-university. Your work is evaluated more carefully and the professor has more time to read your papers and tests and offer detailed comments. While to some this might seem intimidating, it's one of the best ways to learn and grow intellectually. Besides that, you often will receive better advising than you would at a larger university and this professor will know you when the time comes for obtaining a letter of recommendation for graduate school or an employer. At the big universities, your professor may just be a speck at the other end of a lecture hall, someone you would never dare approach.

Sydney Jackson

I love that Wesleyan is such a small college. I've always learned better in smaller classrooms, so Wesleyan has been a great transition from high school. The classroom sizes do not normally exceed 30 students. This helps me feel closer to my professors, and allows me to feel more comfortable with asking questions. I feel like Wesleyan is one big, happy family. It's encouraging to walk around campus, and have almost all of the staff know my name and speak to me. At most colleges, that would never happen. There's a sense of closeness on campus that makes Wesleyan a special place. Along with this, having a smaller campus size allows for students to make more friends. Everyone knows each other. I like the feeling of knowing my classmates.

Johnathan Pickler

Ever since I started at Wesleyan, I've felt like the college community really cares about me, that I'm not just a "number." In the classroom, almost all my professors and I have maintained good relationships. So far, the professors I've had made sure that I understand the material, while letting me know that they're available outside of class if I were to need additional help. Last year I worked in the Student Affairs office. While working there, I became pretty close with Dean Naylor. It feels good to know that someone with such authority cares about how I'm doing both in and outside of the classroom. As an athlete, it's important to have supportive coaches. At Wesleyan,

I feel like I can go to all my coaches to talk about basketball and life in general. As a dorm resident, I appreciate that the housekeeping staff is always in an upbeat mood. I'm not sure of the guy's name, but every morning when I leave for class, he'll always say "Good morning. Have a blessed day." All in all, Wesleyan feels like a big family and that's why I'm glad I chose to come here.

Mary Reynolds

I like the open-door policy. Being able to stop by anytime during a teacher's office hours makes me feel more comfortable talking in a classroom. The best part is that teachers encourage students to visit their office. Before attending Wesleyan, I never had such constant communication with my teachers and the opportunity to get help outside the classroom. Instead of feeling distant, I'm able to get one-on-one help or just stop by for chat. Wesleyan is so small, teachers and students have been able to build a close-knit community here; it's a heart-warming feeling when professors and staff know your name and take the time to care. That has never been the case at other schools that I've attended and visited.

Santanlia Scoggins

I like that it's easy to get in touch with our professors. I love that we can swing by their office during their posted office hours and ask them questions or just have a conversation about material discussed in class. I also love that the professors know their students and their names. The small class sizes make it easy for our professors to give us individual attention and, if we need additional help outside of class, we can come to their office or meet in the library. Sometimes, the professor may hold a study session with students outside of class hours and that's a key reason I succeeded in some of my courses.

Quinn Tobias

A major attraction is the student-to-faculty ratio. I've been able to develop relationships with professors and that's helped me feel welcome on campus and comfortable when I need additional help. The small class sizes come with many benefits. Questions are always answered and each student gets the appropriate amount of individual attention. Going into a new semester there is no fear of an unknown professor since either you've already taken a class from the professor, or you know other students have taken that class. The faculty's approachability fosters a sense of community that I didn't experience at the other school that I've attended. While the extra attention from faculty generates pressure for the students, the relationship makes me want to work harder in the class. The pressure and individual attention have motivated me to be a better student.

Toni Tutt

For me, the best part is the scenery. After taking campus tours at Barton and Chowan, I was captivated by NC Wesleyan. The school grounds reminded me of my previous school, Louisburg College. While touring the Wesleyan campus, I noticed a multitude of spots for reading and relaxation.

PROVOST

from pg 1

A. Yes. My wife would tell you it's because I'm OCD and controlling, but I prefer to consider it as having a good work ethic. I've always been able to juggle many activities and responsibilities. But that comes at a price. I spend many hours outside of work responding to emails and solving problems, which does impact my work/life balance. But I grew up with two parents who both had very strong work ethics and I don't ever recall them "calling out sick" for work. My father was a teacher and my mother was a contract specialist for the U.S. Department of Defense. It was instilled in me at a young age to always do my best and I think responding to emails in a timely fashion is just a courteous thing to do.

Q. How many text messages and emails do you receive in a typical day? How many do you send?

A. I easily get 100 emails a day and respond to at least 75 of them. Some don't require a response. I generate far fewer emails, but on average I create 25 emails a day that aren't responses to message I received. I may average 30+ text messages a day, but not all are work related. I try to stay in touch with my wife and oldest son throughout the day as needed.

Q. We want to ask you about terminal degrees and on-line graduate degrees. In the years to come, will you insist that all faculty hired for tenure-track positions hold a doctorate? If not, what circumstances can you foresee that would lead the college to hire a tenure-track faculty member who lacks a doctorate?

A. My preference always is to hire faculty with terminal degrees for tenure-track positions. Any deviation would require full support from the hiring committee and the president in fields where it may be difficult to recruit faculty with terminal degrees. Some such fields include accounting, information systems, and perhaps marketing. The Master of Library Science, Master of Fine Arts, and the Juris Doctor degrees (law classes only) are considered terminal degrees in the eyes of SACS.

Q. Can you envision the college hiring a tenure-track professor who earned a doctorate (or masters) from a for-profit institution and/or an online graduate program? In what circumstances would that be acceptable or perhaps even preferable? In general, what's your view of online degrees and graduate degrees from for-profit/non-traditional universities (e.g., Capella)? What does SACS say about such degrees?

A. I envision hiring the best applicant for the position based on his or her qualifications and how well he or she performed during the interview process. Having regional accreditation and coursework/experience directly related to the content being taught is what SACS values. We should value that, along with a solid teaching record, contributions to the community, and contributions to the field. From my experience, I've seen more business and criminal justice applicants with non-traditional doctorates because they pursued a career in their fields before going back to school and changing to a career in higher education. In some cases, I've found that that proves to be beneficial because their corporate or field experience enhances the learning process for students.

Q. Talk about the classes you teach and describe your teaching style.

A. I teach courses in management, leadership, human resources, and organizational strategy. I enjoy giving students practical assignments where they can apply what they're learning to their personal and professional lives. Working primarily with adult students, I focus on group- and student-facilitated learning as well as hands-on learning.

Q. Let's turn to Evan Duff outside of work. What books have been most meaningful to you, shaping your approach to your job and life overall?

A. I loved "The Last Lecture." It really



Provost Evan Duff

PR photo

gave me the perspective on not sweating the small stuff and enjoying life. I struggle with that, but Randy Pausch was such an inspiration and I encourage others to read this book.

Q. What do you and your family like to do in your free time?

A. Go to the movies, try new restaurants, attend church, and just hang out at home.

Q. Who helps with homework at your house?

A. My wife. She's amazing. Having a graduate degree in elementary education doesn't hurt either. With my hours and the fact that I drive an hour to work, she has the flexibility and, more importantly the patience, to champion our kids with their homework and school activities. I refer to her as superwoman.

Q. How much time do you spend on social media? What's your favorite?

A. I'm on Facebook the most because I use it for marketing purposes for Wesleyan and to keep up with family. I'm also enjoying the new Wesleyan app. It has some great features. I average 45 minutes or less per day on social media.

Q. Describe your exercise routine.

A. I need one.

Q. What would your wife say is your most annoying habit?

A. Her quote: "Your lack of patience."

Q. How would your kids respond to the same question?

A. It's not really a "habit," but I'm always asking them to clean the house, do their chores, help with our pets, etc. I enjoy being the "bad cop" with stuff like that.

Q. Identify your favorites from the following list:

Food: Seafood or Italian.

TV show: "Alias."

Movie: "The Shining" or "A Time to Kill."

Musical artist: Evanescence

Dream vacation destination (with kids and without): Ireland and Amsterdam

Q. What do you like most about working at Wesleyan?

A. I'd say it's the ability to be challenged and motivated by employees who have dedicated their lives to the college. I like working alongside them to make a positive impact on the college, community, and the students we serve.

Bishops Go Mad for DI Hoops

Reported by Johnathan Pickler
Decree Sports Writer

Like many around the nation, Wesleyan students were consumed by "March Madness," the annual NCAA basketball tournament that decides the national champion.

With perennial powers like Duke and UNC-Chapel Hill in the state, North Carolina is one of the basketball hotbeds. It's been an exciting tournament, students and staff said.

"During March, the only thing people are watching is the NCAA tournament," said Marcus Williams.

Many Bishops not only watch televised games and follow them online; they participate in the annual rite of choosing "a bracket," a pool to select the winners in each game, round by round. After initial "play-in" contests, 64 teams qualified for the tournament.

Due to the number of upsets, it's nearly impossible for a fan's bracket to emerge unscathed. In fact, according to fivethirtyeight.com, in one recent season, 2015, only 273 fans filled out espn.com brackets that survived the first round. Almost 12 million had entered the competition.

The NCAA tournament allows schools of all sizes to make history. But many Wesleyan students went with local teams or traditional powerhouses in identifying their top pick before the tourney.

"I feel like Kansas is the team to beat in this year's tournament," said Chris Sause, "UNC-Wilmington is a team that could surprise a lot of people."

Malique Judd favored UNC. "Carolina will win it all this year," said Judd.

Justin Tankelewicz singled out Arizona as his selection to take home the title. "It's the best team in the tournament," he said.

See HOOPS pg 3

SPORTS

NCWC Teams Head to Georgia after Successful Seasons

Deep Golf Team Breaks into Top 50

The Bishops golf team has cracked the top 50 in the national rankings after a strong spring season.

The team will travel to LaGrange, Georgia for the USA South Conference tournament, where it will face competition against a tough host school as well as talented Huntingdon and Methodist teams.

Now in his seventh season, Coach Gregg Ripke said the 2017 team is one of his strongest. The team is so deep, he said, that, barring injury, experienced seniors Matthew May and Pearce Parsons will not participate in the tourney.

As of early April, the Bishops were ranked 45th (of 280+ schools) in Division III golf. "I'm very proud of the boys for this accomplishment," Ripke said. "But more important than rank and scoring is the way this group has bonded with each other. We don't have any 'prima donnas' on our team. Everybody is considerate of each other and very respectful of the privilege they have to play golf here."

The team made an impressive showing at the Marine FCU Invite Tourney, placing 4th among 16 teams in the three-day competition at Camp LeJeune (March 31-April 2). Paced by Grady Anderson's 1-under 213, the Bishops finished 21 strokes behind Methodist, the first-place team and one of Wesleyan's top rivals.

Ripke was pleased with his team's performance. "Methodist is one of the leaders in a very strong conference, but we're 'breathing some of the same air,'" he said, noting that his players were paired with Monarch golfers in the final round. "My guys got to see that they're human as well. Methodist golfers can slice the ball off the tee as well as we can. Our guys hit it off the tee better than four of their guys. Methodist came out on top at end of the day, and that's because of their scrambling abilities and their consistency over the duration of a match, areas we need to improve."

The USA South has long been among the country's most competitive conferences for golf. Methodist, perhaps the most dominant team over the years, is ranked seventh in the nation this year, placing it just third among conference foes behind Huntingdon at number one and LaGrange at five. Greensboro is ranked tenth.

Earlier in the season, Wesleyan racked up two first-place and two second-place finishes. Last September it hosted and won the Don Scaff Invitational and in March, it won the University of Mary Washington Eagle Invitational, topping the host school by 18 strokes. It took second in both the St. Andrews Fall Invitational and the Sand Hills Community College Invitational last month.

As his team prepares for the USA South tourney, Coach Ripke provided brief descriptions of the five players who will represent the college in LaGrange this week. "They're the same five that have played for us all semester long and I really didn't want to break up the group," the coach said.

—Grady Anderson: "He's been a scoring leader for us from his freshman year. Now a sophomore, he continues to lead in that category by a half stroke, 74.5. He's the shortest-hitting guy on the squad, but hits more fairways and gets more birdies on average than his teammates. His strength is consistency in scoring and his determination to score as low as possible. He never seems to give up; he's always upbeat."

—Mariano Silvestri: "A freshman from Argentina, he came in last semester and medaled (won) the Don Scaff we hosted at Northgreen last September. He's an awesome driver of the ball. I've seen a 340-yard drive from him and he does well with greens in regulation. He's a tremendous addition to the team this year because he pushes Grady and is just .2 strokes per round behind him for tournament play."

—David White: "From Kinston, he's a junior who's been our MVP for the last two years and continues to do well and push the other guys at the top. He played junior golf with Grady a few years ago. An absolute bulldog on the course, he gets in a zone and doesn't come out until after the 18th hole. He's consistent and you can always count on David to be in the mix for one of the four low scores in a five-player match. When he's not in that, it's a big surprise."

—John Luke Thornton: "He's another

freshman who's has been an asset to the team. He played golf with Grady in junior high at Parris Island when their dads were stationed there. He's not as consistent as he will become. But he's an absolute bomber of the golf ball, averaging 290 yards off the tee."

—Dustin Wood: "He's yet another freshman, who has come into his own just this semester. He didn't travel at all for fall-season tournaments. But he bought new clubs through our arrangement with Titleist, and got more comfortable with collegiate-level competition. A baseball player in high school, he came to golf later. He could play football with his size, but prefers golf and can bomb the tee shot about as far as Mariano. He led us in par-5 scoring at Camp Lejeune."

The Bishops have not played at LaGrange's home course, but plan a tune-up round there. In an effort to simulate tournament conditions, Ripke's team has practiced at Benvenue Country Club, with its small, fast greens. "Target golf will be our focus—hitting greens," he said.

Balanced Baseball Team To Challenge LaGrange

Coach Charlie Long is confident about his team's prospects in the upcoming USA South Baseball Tourney, scheduled to begin April 12 in LaGrange, Georgia.

"Our league is evenly matched," Long said. "If we execute the small things, we have a great chance."

After finishing their 18-game conference schedule, his Bishops were in third place at 11-7 (22-14 overall). LaGrange dominated regular season action, compiling a 14-1 record as of April 5.

Long said two teams named Panthers, LaGrange and second-place Ferrum (11-4), should present the toughest competition for the Bishops. He looks forward to the potential matchups.

Profile: Logan Lowery and Her Seven-Pitch Repertoire

By Quinn Tobias
Decree Staff Writer

If the adage "Pitching wins championships" is true, then North Carolina Wesleyan's softball team is in great shape. The team had high expectations this year, coming off a successful run last season. Junior pitcher Logan Lowery has been a major contributor for the Bishops.

Lowery is from Kannapolis and went to South Rowan High School. She was introduced to softball by her family at the age of 10. "I really looked up to my cousin who played," Lowery said. "My whole family played softball."

Her senior year was crucial to her development in becoming a Bishop. "I started feeling confident," Lowery said. An assistant principal, a former Wesleyan coach, was a major factor in her decision to pitch in college. Her influence guided Lowery on her path to the pitching circle at Edge Field.

Lowery stepped in her freshman year playing a major role. "When I came, there were some really good players," she said. "I thought I'd have to wait my turn." Instead of waiting her turn, Lowery started in 16 games and appeared in 23. She experienced quick success finishing the year with a 2.67 ERA. Lowery's improvement is evident by the increase in her strikeout ratio, which is now almost two strikeouts more per seven innings than it was her freshman year.

Last year the softball team finished third in conference with a record of 20-15. Lowery appeared in 23 games finishing with a 13-5 record and a 2.94 earned run average. Coming into this season, her goals were to reduce her ERA and home runs given up. She also wanted to remain confident in the circle. "Pitching is mental," Lowery said. "I can't get down on myself."

To reach her lofty goals, Lowery worked hard during off-season, trying to perfect her craft. "In the off-season I focus on pitches," Lowery said. "I'm a movement pitcher so spin is a real big deal to me."

Lowery challenges batters with seven different pitches. The catcher has to use complex hand signals rather than the traditional "fingers-down"

"LaGrange has a tremendous balanced attack," Long said. "And Ferrum can run some good arms at you."

The Bishops did not face LaGrange in the regular season and will not play Ferrum until after the conference tournament, whose winner will advance to the NCAA Division III regional tourney.

Wesleyan's season featured a solid offense and strong pitching as well.

Ryan Grant (5-1, 1.81 ERA, 9.42 strikeouts per game) and T.J. Wilkie (2-2, 3.52 ERA) have anchored the pitching rotation. The two seniors, and sophomore Nathan Gardner (3-2, 2.76), would start the first three games in the tourney, which is in double-elimination format.

Long praised Grant's performance as his number-one starter. "Ryan's changeup has been great this season," he said. "He's very competitive and really attacks the hitters."

If the Bishops make an extended run in the four-day tourney, Long's staff will need to decide on additional starting pitchers. Long noted that, in a double-elimination format, it's important to win the first game. "If you drop the first one, then you need to win five or six games in a row," he said.

Like LaGrange, Wesleyan has thrived on the strength of a balanced offensive attack. As of April 5, four Bishops ranked in the USA-South's top 20 in RBIs—Tony Sanchez (30), Brad Pennington (27), Gardner (26), and Trey Croom (21). Sanchez tied for third in home runs with 5, while Cedrick Kornegay was hot down the stretch, collecting five hits and five RBIs in the team's season finale at Piedmont, a performance that boosted his average to a conference-leading .388.

"Balance is the key to offensive performance," Long explained. "When a few players have a bad game, we feel comfortable knowing that a few more will have outstanding games to pick up the needed runs."



Pitcher Logan Lowery SI Photo

signaling because of the number of pitches Lowery throws. Her most effective pitches are the drop curve and change up. "I rarely throw my fastball," Lowery said. "I feel more confident with my movement." With an arsenal of off-speed pitches Lowery has kept opposing hitters off balance posting a career 2.70 ERA.

Like opposing batters, Lowery's teammates struggle when facing her during practice. Lindsey Sharpe, a senior outfielder and pitcher, attests to Lowery's pitching. "She's hard to hit," Sharpe said. "She has a lot of movement and off-speed pitches. She mixes them up well and keeps the batters off balance."

Ashlyn Gosnell, a freshman pitcher, admires Lowery's breaking pitches. "She has a lot of movement and a very good drop curve," Gosnell said. Sarah Bowyer, a junior catcher, makes up the second half of the battery. "I like catching Logan because she is more of a movement pitcher," Bowyer said. "Her best pitch is a drop curve."

Lowery has a commanding presence when on the field, according to her teammates. "She's a leader. She's vocal," Sharpe said. "The team is pretty confident when she's pitching." Bowyer agreed. "When Logan's in the circle, we know we're going to have a good game," she said.

See LOWERY pg 4

Coach Departs, Tennis Teams in Hunt for Titles

With a new coach at the helm, the Bishops men's tennis team will try to capture its ninth consecutive USA South championship and advance to the NCAA regionals.

As of April 8, the Bishops were 9-0 in conference action, with a stranglehold on first place. The team has won by shutout, 9-0, in eight matches and won the ninth, 7-2, over Averett.

At one point Wesleyan went on an 11-match win streak, with a key victory, 5-4, over former rival Christopher Newport, then-ranked 28th in the nation. After losing all three doubles matches to the Captains, the Bishops stormed back to win five of six in singles, with junior Sebastian Sikh crushing his opponent, David Reed, 6-4, 6-1. Other wins came from Ioannis Brokakis (7-6, 6-2), J.D. Telles (6-3, 6-4), and David Appelqvist (6-1, 6-3). In a gutsy performance, David Chang took number-six singles, overcoming an early deficit to claim victory, 6-7, 6-3, 7-5.

The winning streak ended when the Bishops fell, 6-3, to Barton, a DII school in Wilson.

"Barton is a great team with a great coach," said then-coach Dustin Hale. "The match was played in tough conditions and we lost a couple tight three-set matches as well as a hard-fought doubles match. Those matches proved to be the difference."

Hale said the team made changes to its doubles teams after the Barton loss and the adjustments paid instant dividends. The Bishops posted a 9-0 shutout of Methodist, perhaps the team's "biggest conference threat," and then turned in an impressive match the next day, as it vanquished Pacific College (Oregon), the 32nd-ranked team, 6-3. "Beating Pacific showed us that our win against CNU was no fluke," Hale said. "We've been working hard all year and the guys are starting to believe they can do great things together. We played the best doubles we've played all year."

Hale praised Mark Sokolov and Richard Gende, who won at five and six singles. Sikh led the way against Pacific, teaming with Brokakis for a win at number-one doubles and then dominating at number-one singles, 6-2, 6-3. "Sebastian went out there and proved he is one of the top players in the country," Hale said.

On the women's side, consistency has allowed the Bishops to build a 5-1 conference record. In its most recent match, April 8 at Greensboro, the Bishops demolished The Pride by winning 75 of 76 games (two other matches were won by forfeit).

Number-one Flor Sorrentino has been solid all year, taking on the opponent's top players. She is 4-1 in singles, and 2-1 in teaming with Stephany Barbera in the top doubles pairing. Leigh Hales (5-0) and Nicole Halabi (5-0) have been perfect so far in their conference singles matches, while Andrea Tobar is 5-1.

The team's only conference loss was at the hands of perennial power Methodist, 7-2.

Both the men's and women's teams will be led on an interim basis by Albie Brice, in his first season as assistant coach. Hale, a second-year coach, left the

team in early April, just weeks before the USA South tournament and an expected berth in the NCAA regionals.

Asked to comment on Hale's abrupt departure, Sports Information Director Rikki Rich said, in an email, "Coach Hale resigned to pursue other opportunities."

Softball Team Gets Eliminated by Ferrum

The Wesleyan softball team, predicted to finish first in a tough USA South Conference, saw its season come to an end in a preliminary round of the playoffs in Virginia.

The host school, the 3rd-seeded Ferrum Panthers, shut down the 4th-seeded Bishops' offense and swept a Saturday afternoon doubleheader, winning 6-0 and 5-1 on April 8.

Coach John Brackett conceded that his team may have been a little nervous—"That's normal, considering the stakes"—but did not feel Ferrum's home-field advantage was much of a factor. "We had already beaten their ace there earlier this year," he explained. "We were confident."

Defensive lapses led to five unearned runs in the first game, with the Panthers scoring three in the first inning after an error by right-fielder Hannah Ivester. The Bishops committed three other errors on the day, and starting pitcher Shelby Godwin issued four walks.

"We could have been sharper defensively, but our lack of hitting was the difference in the first game," said Brackett, as his team was limited to six hits and one walk by Panther pitcher Courtney Rudd. Ivester led the Bishops offense with two singles and a double.

Facing a must-win game in the best-of-three series, the Bishops were unable to unleash their offense in game two. Panther pitcher Ashton Lambeth was dominant, yielding five hits and no walks on the day. Catcher Sarah Bowyer drove in Wesleyan's only run.

"We just didn't swing the bats well in game two," Brackett said. "But you have to give their number-two pitcher credit. We're a good hitting team, but that was the second time she beat us this year. She did a good job of keeping us off balance with her off-speed pitches, and she kept the ball down in the zone."

Though disappointed their season ended at Ferrum, the team took satisfaction in its play down the stretch. Before Saturday's playoff, the Bishops had won 10 of their last 14 conference matchups, while getting strong pitching from Godwin and Logan Lowery and a solid offense.

"The USA South is a very balanced and competitive conference," Coach Brackett said. "Our team had a good season. In fact, we were able to beat every team in our division at least once and even swept a couple of teams along the way, including the second-place team. We played all three phases of the game well at times this year. I just wish we could have been a little more consistent doing that."

HOOPS from pg 2

Both Judd and Tankelewicz, his teammate on the Bishops hoops team, like Rhode Island. "Rhode Island will be the Cinderella team this year," Judd said. Added Tankelewicz: "Rhode Island is a well-rounded, tough team"

Many students become so engrossed in the action that they watch games during their classes, either on phones or laptops. In an informal survey, all 10 students interviewed indicated they would sneak a look during class lectures and lessons.

"I have to check each game because I want to see how long my bracket will stay perfect," said Williams.

Robin Pietryk, a professor in sports administration, has noticed the uptick in distracted students, in particular during the early rounds when many games take place in the afternoon.

"The students are on their phones more during March Madness," said Pietryk, who picked Gonzaga to win it all.

For students in North Carolina, and

other die-hard basketball fans around the country, March Madness is equivalent to the Super Bowl, considered by many the greatest sporting event in the world (with all due respect to soccer fans).

"March Madness is arguably the best style of playoffs in sports," Judd said. "It's best because any team can win each game and it's single elimination."

Tankelewicz agreed with Judd. "The Super Bowl and March Madness are 1a and 1b because the Super Bowl is just one night and everyone stops what they're doing to watch it," he said. "But March Madness holds an advantage over the Super Bowl because more teams make the playoffs."

This year saw UNC-Chapel Hill take the title over Gonzaga, which was ranked number one for much of the year, since it lost only one game. The Cinderella team was the University of South Carolina, a seventh-seed, which made it to the Final Four. And by the end of the tourney, according to NCAA.com, no perfect brackets were reported.

CAMPUS LIFE

Students Miss Their Pets

By Jessica Brown
Senior Staff Writer

Many students agree that one of the hardest parts about being away from home is separation from their pets.

Whether a family or personal pet, many students have left behind a beloved furry or scaly friend to attend NC Wesleyan. Some live only an hour or two away, so visiting is easy. For others, like international students Bikash Thapa and Sainabou Jallow, visiting is more difficult.

When asked about her pets, Jallow revealed that she has a cat named Kafka. Due to her living situation at the time, the Gambia native left Kafka with her uncle and she missed out on a majority of Kafka's kittenhood.

After moving off campus, Jallow brought Kafka to live with her. When she had to leave for a week during spring break, Jallow made her brother check on Kafka every day and send picture updates. "My friends like to make fun of me a little bit, but I think they get it," she said. "It's hard to not get attached to something that depends on you for everything." When she's not feeling well, Jallow said she sometimes will isolate herself in her room, and Kafka is her only interaction for those days.

Jallow also mentioned her dog named Biscuit, who stayed behind in Ethiopia when she first transferred to NCWC. "When I went home during Christmas break, my mom told me he had run away months ago," Jallow said. "She hadn't wanted to tell me while I was at school because she knew I'd be devastated." Her mother was right: Jallow didn't leave her room for days after receiving the news of Biscuit's demise.

Though a native of Gambia, Jallow has lived in Ethiopia, on the other side of the African continent, because her mother worked there. Biscuit was a rescue dog which her mother acquired to cheer up her daughter during a long illness. At the time, Jallow spent most of her time in her room, watching television. Biscuit put Jallow in a better mood and helped her get out of the house.

Jallow has always loved animals. "My mom suffered through me bringing all kinds of things home: kittens, deer, puppies," she said. "I even rescued mice from my dad's mouse traps. He would go crazy, thinking the traps weren't working. He ended up buying like a dozen different traps, when what really happened was that I would get up in the middle of the night and free the mice in the garden." Jallow continued to say that her mom let her keep the animals that "followed" her home for a little while before finding them a new family.

Like Jallow, Thapa left a dog back home in Nepal. Thapa related that his father acquired Tommy from an army camp. He had been injured, receiving a bullet wound, and Thapa's father was able to take Tommy while he healed from his injury.

Thapa and his family grew attached to the dog. When it came time to return Tommy to the army, Thapa's father went to an officer about letting the family keep the pet. The army agreed.

Thapa said it was very hard to leave Tommy back in Nepal. They had grown up together. Thapa would walk every evening, and Tommy would be with him. When he played football (soccer) with his friends, Tommy would go with him. The two would also chase monkeys and birds and other animals in the fields around their home. "It was hard. I still love him," Thapa said.

To ease his sadness, Thapa said that he will sometimes video-chat with his family and see Tommy in the background. Tommy is getting older, however, and doesn't leave the room much, unless he goes for a walk with Thapa's father.

Sidney McCall calls Florida home, and her pets are there. Being so many hours away, she can only visit once in a while. McCall has a dog, a greyhound named Pippy, and three hermit crabs named Jewel, Zeus, and Donatello. She's had Pippy since middle school and her hermit crabs

for four years. She misses them very much. Just like cats and dogs, hermit crabs have their own personalities, McCall noted.

"Jewel is itty bitty and is very calm when being held," she said. "She's quite talkative at night and moves around a lot." McCall went on to say that Zeus is confrontational and likes big shells, but they're too heavy for him. Donatello likes climbing the vines and rocks in his habitat. When McCall lets him out, he moves around quickly and climbs the furniture.

Stephanie Garrett has two cats, Howl and Gigi, though she admits that Howl is more her cat while Gigi is her mom's. Garrett had already been attending Wesleyan for a year before she found Howl at her grandmother's house. He was about nine months old, very skinny, and super skittish. They had an instant connection and he went right to Garrett.

Though Garrett and Howl bonded quickly, it took Howl quite a while to get used to Garrett's mom and sister, and he eventually became comfortable with Garrett's best friend. Garrett and her mom adopted Gigi when she was eight weeks old. Gigi is now eight months old and Howl is about a year and a half. Garrett says that being with her cats is a big stress reliever. "Howl is really good at telling when I'm upset," she said. "He curls up next to me and purrs, and loves being picked up." Living two hours away, Garrett gets to visit every other weekend.

Four more students interviewed live closer to home, only an hour or two away, but due to being busy with schoolwork or not being able to drive, they still can't visit home



The author's dog, Finn.

Photo courtesy of J. Brown

much. Ivan Cockman has two dogs and five cats. Joshua Campbell has an English bulldog named Zoey and two cats, Puff and Fatty. Jeremiah Handlon owns an eight-year-old black Lab mix named Beauty. He's had her since she was a puppy.

Victoria Simmons lives two hours away and gets to visit home once every two weeks. She has two dogs named Lacie and Piper. Simmons has had Lacie, a yellow Lab, for four years and Sadie, a salt-and-pepper miniature Schnauzer, for eight years. When Simmons visits home, she plays with her dogs outside, takes them on walks, and cuddles with them in her bed.

All the students agree that it's hard to leave their pets each time they have to return to school and seeing them is one of the best parts about going home for break. "It's always hard to leave her, especially when we have breaks and it's time to go back to school," Handlon said, in regards to his dog, Beauty. "My heart breaks every time."

Wesleyan Profile: Bikash Thapa

(Editor's Note: This is the second time Bikash Thapa has been interviewed by The Decree. The first interview appeared on page 1 of the October 2014 issue.)

Bikash Thapa, a senior science major from Nepal, is about to graduate. In a recent interview, he reflected on his time at Wesleyan and the ways his impressions of life in America have changed over the past three-plus years.

Q. What are some presumptions Americans have about you and your culture?

A. I used to think that Americans (in general) didn't like Asians that much. My parents had told me to be very careful in a new land. But coming here and getting involved in various college activities taught me that Americans are not biased. My background isn't that important to them. They loved me and cared about me like I was one of theirs. But there still has been some stereotyping I've experienced along the way: Asians are smart and good at mathematics, Asian countries are poor and deprived of good food and health facilities. Many believe Asians to be too religious.

Q. Did you encounter many NCWC students who could find Nepal on a map?

A. Haha. I'd have to say no. Some friends did know about the Hindu culture, but not all knew about my country. But once I explained to them that it's between India and China, they would nod in agreement. The first time I said I was from Nepal, my friends looked at me like "Where in the world is that?"

Q. What does the average NCWC student seem to know about your country?

A. Most know about the Himalayas and the tallest mountain of the world, Mt. Everest. Some know about Gautama Buddha, the Hindu culture and that we believe in more than one God (Polytheistic society).

Q. What do you like most about NCWC?

A. NCWC provides a great environment for a student to start building a career: Excellent faculty and staff, great companionship among students, love and friendship among internationals, and a nice community in Rocky Mount. I appreciate the way the student body comes together to solve issues at the college. Regardless of their backgrounds students respect each other's identities. Internationals get treated with care here. I feel like a family member, which made me love the culture more.

Q. What about American culture most appeals to you?

A. Greetings! It's easy to say hello and start a friendship with a stranger. This fascinated me the most. The first day I was here, there were college staff members who were very outspoken and cordial to me. Then, in the

first week of class, I met many students who became my close friends in a very short period of time (Katie Tyson to name one of them; she's still my friend). So, I think the way Americans talk and share their love and affection is one of the most appealing aspects of the culture

Q. What other aspects of American culture have impressed you?

A. Let's begin with food. I was surprised by the type of extra-large food portions (the Big Mac, etc.) and fast food in general. Most Americans are always in a rush and so much fast food is available; it's crazy but reliable and efficient. Back home, our daily staples include rice and a meat curry, with vegetables and pickles on the side. So, food is surprising and amazing here.

The road trips: Very large states. One state is the size of Nepal or larger. So, there are a lot of exciting places to visit here.

Sports: There is a variety of sports; American football is the best sport I have ever encountered after soccer. Baseball, ice hockey, tennis and softball are other sports that I like now.

Independence: After 17 or 18 years, most Americans no longer live at home with their families. They do their own shopping, laundry, cooking, and pursue careers or studies on their own. This is interesting and different because, back in my country, we live together with our parents, even if we're old enough to live by ourselves. That's our culture. So, the culture here is different, but it's intriguing and lively.

Q. How have your impressions of America and Americans changed in the past three-plus years?

A. I came to America with new hopes and dreams. It wasn't just a gradual change in my life, but was a drastic step. The first day I was here, I thought that it would be hard to blend into the culture because everything was different. From the way Americans talk, to the type of food they eat and the type of clothes they wear, to the way they manage their schedules, everything was different. Today, when I look back and think about how I was three-and-a-half years ago, I feel bad for not trying to socialize more in my early days here with the amazing people. It was a fun three-and-a-half years of my life at NCWC. I'll cherish each and every moment, both bitter and sweet. I learnt a lot from my friends, professors, and the surrounding community. Due to the treatment I received here, I feel motivated to excel in my upcoming endeavors. Thank you, NCWC, for the grand, beautiful memories.

Many Spring Breakers Went Home, or Remained in Area

By Toni Tutt
Decree Staff Writer

While March is famous for Madness and flowers, spring break is the highlight of the month for NC Wesleyan students.

After rough months of piled-on work, there is that one week when relief is ever so sweet. During this week, it's traditional to go to Florida, Mexico or some other remote destination. But since many students are on limited budgets, their vacation options are slim to none. Although some take trips with friends, many traveled to visit family and catch up on lost sleep.

Other students remained in the area, due to athletics and other commitments.

Savannah Flanagan studied and attended "Fiddler on the Roof" rehearsals. While she was saddened at not being able to see her friends, she contented herself with memories of past trips to Myrtle Beach.

Anna Dick mentioned going to see her family, sleeping and spending time with friends back in Virginia.

Compared to Mexico and Florida, Virginia isn't a top destination pick, but

Sierra Yount traveled there with friends and saw her family as well. While in the state, she toured lighthouses, which she called "amazing."

Rex Sauls stayed closer to home, going to Boone, North Carolina, but said the fun was limited by family obligations and other responsibilities.

Many athletes remained in the area. The softball team made a road trip to Virginia and then hosted two teams later in the break. The Bishops baseball squad participated in the Ripkin Spring Training tournament in Myrtle Beach and then followed that by sweeping three games at Covenant College in a conference series.

Mary Reynolds was among a group of Wesleyan students who bussed to Atlanta on a trip sponsored by Students Activities. There for three days, Reynolds visited an aquarium, ate at Waffle House, played at Six Flags, tasted every Coca Cola product, took pictures with a polar bear, slept and came back home. "Most days we had to stop at multiple places to eat," she said of the group. "Nobody could agree on one type of food."

Some Students Resort To 'Shopping Therapy'

Reported by Diamond Fogg
Decree Staff Writer

Due to the location of the Wesleyan campus, students will report occasional boredom and sometimes lament the lack of fun weekend activities.

But many will travel off campus, to the surrounding area and even Raleigh to indulge in one of their favorite pastimes: Shopping.

"To me, shopping is very therapeutic and it seems to relieve stress," said Victoria Ingram. "This is what is called retail therapy. Shopping is my passion. It's what a drug is to a junkie."

Imani Scarborough considers shopping a hobby and, like Ingram, she uses it as "therapy." "When I go shopping, it sometimes lets off stress," she said.

Fellow student Raelin Davis expressed enthusiasm about her shopping excursions. "Shopping means everything to me," she said, highlighting the joy she feels in spending money. "I love being able to wear the latest trends."

She shares the view that shopping can be therapeutic. "It's like a massage. I like being able to go to a store when you're stressed and to just shop till you drop. I could spend hours in a store shopping. I love shopping and will forever love it."

At the present time she likes the ability to spend her own money on clothes and other items. "It just feels good to say you bought something nice with your own money." But she added, "I hope my husband's pockets are full and he's ready to swipe that card when we go shopping together!"

With their hectic, unpredictable schedules, some students expressed a preference for on-line shopping, noting

the many conveniences: The "store" is open 24 hours, there is no need to catch a bus or find a parking spot at a busy mall, and it's not necessary to wait in line at the cash register. Often it's possible to find deeper discounts on-line as well.

Despite the conveniences of on-line shopping, some still favor the in-store experience, especially when shopping for clothes. There's always the fear of coming across "fake goods" or poor quality material or even a shipment error.

Taylor Black likes to shop in person, because "you get to try on clothes. If it's a store that doesn't have fitting rooms, you can still view the item and place it against you."

She added that online clothes shoppers run into risks. "You have to trust the size and measurements" at online stores," she said. "At times I've received items with completely different measurements than they described" on the site.

Alexis Collins views every shopping trip as an opportunity to spend time with loved ones, her mother in particular. "Shopping is a time for my mom and me to hang out, to catch up on each other's lives," she said. "Even though we live together, there is just something about bonding over a purse that we can share, or finding the perfect dress for a date. Shopping is when my mom and I are ourselves."

LOWERY from pg 3

In an early-season interview, Lowery said she knows the team is capable of winning the conference title, but didn't want to focus on the championship yet. "We have to play like we did last year, continue the momentum and work as a team," she said, adding that there is a strong team chemistry, just like last year. "A championship is a good accomplishment, but we shouldn't focus on it. We should just go game by game."

Off the field, Lowery is working toward becoming a large-animal veterinarian. "I'm a dog person," said Lowery, who owns a dog named Auggie. "I've always loved animals and had pets."

She is majoring in biology and minor-ing in psychology. After graduation she plans to go to North Carolina State University for graduate school. Aside from veterinary work, Lowery is interested in coaching. "I've always wanted to coach or give pitching lessons," she said.

On New Year's Day, 2015, Lowery and her high school boyfriend, Bryan Burke, got engaged. Burke attends Rowan County Community College and the two are waiting until after her graduation to get married.

By early April, the Bishops were 13-9 in a balanced conference. After a slow start, the team won 10 of 14 down the stretch. Lowery was 9-8 with one save and a team-leading 2.57 ERA.

Despite her fine statistics Lowery is reluctant to take credit for the team's success. "I owe everything to the fielders behind me," she said.

THE DECREE

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