THE DECREE

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Wesleyan Students Extol Benefits of Summer Internships

Many Wesleyan students have taken advantage of summer internship opportunities offered through university programs, exploring career interests, honing their skills, and making vital connections as they prepare to enter the job market. Some even earned a salary while gaining course credit.

Five current students shared their experiences from this past summer:

Ksenia Goncharuk

For junior Ksenia Goncharuk, a Wesleyan class led to a fulfilling summer internship at a local business.

During her sophomore year, Goncharuk took Advanced Operations, an upper-level course taught by Dr. Paul Ewell, a former instructor in supply-chain management. For a class project, she said, Dr. Ewell brought in Crown LSP Group, a third-party logistics outfit, as a "client." Goncharuk became the team lead on the project. "Crown was impressed with my presentation," she said. "A few months later, the company president reached out to me on LinkedIn about an internship."

Goncharuk interviewed with the company, secured the internship and then worked there throughout the summer in a paid position that included course credit. She noted that in August, she was invited to remain with Crown during the fall semester. Crown provides warehousing, transportation, and other logistical services for businesses.

The Russian native said she learned a lot about the field of logistics. "Before my internship, I knew almost nothing about the industry," she said. "You could describe logistics simply as 'the package is here, and it needs to get there.' But there is so much happening between point A and point B. I gained a lot of knowledge about the industry while learning how different parts of a business work together."

Goncharuk's internship began in May, stretched through the summer and involved 20 hours of work per week. Crown granted her wide latitude in her responsibilities. Among her many projects, she worked in strategic planning and marketing and created social media campaigns. A main initiative involved developing a standard operation procedure (SOP) for the company. She is now working on individual SOPs tailored to particular Crown clients.

"Through the SOP project," she said, "I've been able to shadow employees across different areas and learn more about how the logistics business operates."

Goncharuk appreciated that Crown's management treated her like part of the team rather than "just a student." The internship has allowed her to build relationships with Crown staff members across different departments as well as the management team.

The Wesleyan honors student, a double major in accounting and business, is a resident advisor in Taylor Hall and Student Government Association treasurer. She believe an internship is a critical part of a college education and urged fellow Wesleyan students to pursue one, either during the semester or in summer. "Go for it," she said.

Despite a heavy course load and other demands on her time, Goncharuk is excited to continue her work at Crown during the fall semester. "An internship helps you understand whether you actually like a certain field. Your 20s are one of the best times to try different things and challenge yourself. Right now, I'm taking 21 credits, working on campus as an RA, and doing my internship. If I'm not going to challenge myself and gain these experiences in my 20s, when will I?"

Ashlyn Bulluck

Senior Ashlyn Bulluck admitted that at first they were nervous about taking on an internship, but they're glad they did it.

A double major in English and environmental science, they served as an aquatic wildlife diversity intern for the North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission. The ten-week paid internship involved about 15 hours of fieldwork per week.

As part of their internship, Bulluck undertook duties that ranged from tearing down beaver dams to acquiring water samples for scientific research. The experience taught them the importance of asking questions and engaging in "active communication" while part of a field research team.

Much fieldwork focused on endangered aquatic species; Bulluck "snorkel-surveyed" in local creeks for endangered species, tagged and documented them, and released them back into their habitat. "I learned a lot about the ecosystems in our local creeks and forest and the importance of conserving them," they said.

Like Goncharuk, Bulluck encouraged other Wesleyan students to consider summer internships.

"I was very uncertain and nervous to commit to the internship," they said. "If you commit and, in the worst-case scenario, absolutely hate it, at least you got your benefits (payment, credits, experience) and now know you dislike that field of work. If you never even try, you'll never know how it could have benefited you. Taking risks is crucial to success."

At the moment Bulluck is weighing several careers in wildlife conservation after they graduate from Wesleyan. Another option, combining their two majors, would be scientific journal editing.

Bulluck was grateful for the connections they made as a result the internship. Besides meeting staff at the NC Wildlife Resources Commission, they collaborated with researchers from the North Carolina Museum of Natural Sciences and NC State University.

Mary Bentley

Mary Bentley urges Wesleyan students to consider internships as a way to explore an interest and make connections with professionals in their field.

Over the summer, Bentley conducted research at the Los Alamos National Laboratory's Biochemistry and Biotechnology Division. Located an hour from Santa Fe, New Mexico, the lab is known for its contribution to American efforts in World War II and it was depicted in the 2023 film "Oppenheimer." Bentley noted that, aside from weapons production and nuclear science, Los Alamos is now a center for interdisciplinary research that includes environmental scientists, physicists and analytical chemists.

"It was wonderful connecting with others in my field," she said. "It's rare to meet people doing novel science outside of academia, and national labs exist in a cool intersection of a university-like setting and the industry."

Bentley said her paid, summer-long internship allowed her to refine her research chops. "Internship supervisors don't expect you to be perfect," she stressed. "You're there to learn. Even though I have months of experience with mass spectrometers (an instrument used to measure wavelengths of light), I still tend to mess things up or take a while figure out troubleshooting solutions. If you're in a STEM field, the only real way to learn is to start messing around."

The senior estimates that she dedicated 45-50 hours per week to lab work and reviews of scientific literature. She spent a significant amount of time troubleshooting instruments and preparing samples via techniques such as solid-phase microextraction (SPME).

Bentley said her Los Alamos research taught her to "never stop troubleshooting." She explained that at one point she was working with a chemical substance (or analyte) that was "over-fragmenting" despite application of every fix she knew from her previous research in mass spectrometers and her classes at Wesleyan. "By getting creative and digging into the literature, I successfully resolved my analyte into sufficiently high quality data for structural confirmation," she said.

This was Bently's second internship, after she conducted research at a University of Pittsburgh summer program in 2025. Having completed her honors project last spring, Bentley will graduate in December with a B.S. in chemistry. She has just been admitted to the Ph.D. program at East Carolina University where she intends to study blood clots as part a joint project in analytical chemistry and biophysics.

Ulrick Volk

Ulrick Volk said that an intensive summer internship gave him a headstart and an advantage in his chosen field of law enforcement.

Volk interned from early May till mid-June at the state Department of Adult Corrections (NCDAC). Working an estimated 60 hours per week, the Wesleyan junior completed training in firearms use and "Controls, Restraints, and Defensive Techniques" (CRDT). He learned about NCDAC policies and the responsibilities that come with working in corrections. "The experience gave me a better understanding of what it takes to work in that environment," he said.

Asked to describe the main takeaway from his training, Volk mentioned the intangibles that come with corrections work. "Officers must treat offenders with fairness, firmness, and consistency," he said. "I learned that consistency in enforcing policies and interacting with offenders is important for maintaining professionalism and respect. My internship helped me understand that working in corrections is not just about enforcing rules but how you conduct yourself and treat people while doing the job."

Besides becoming acquainted with the field of adult corrections, Volk said that the internship, and the internship application process, taught him the importance of getting to know people and asking questions. "If you're willing to talk to people, it can lead to opportunities that you might not find on your own," he explained. "Simply asking questions such as, "Where do you think I would be a good fit?" has opened up several doors and helped me learn about different career paths."

Volk advised his fellow Bishops to take a methodical approach to finding an internship, which he called one of the most important decisions a college student can make. "Getting a head start and gaining experience to go along with your degree is a huge advantage," he said. "We go to college so we can prepare for careers, and an internship gives you the opportunity to gain real experience before you graduate."

Volk said that, after deciding on a career path, students should first talk to a faculty member with a connection to that career and then start looking for an internship. He said he's grateful for the guidance he received from his Wesleyan advisors. "I've had a lot of support from Wesleyan, both personally and professionally," he said. "Professors have helped me connect my education to my career goals and encouraged me to pursue opportunities that fit my interests."

Volk stressed the critical nature of making connections and building relationships, noting that an internship can lead directly to a permanent job after graduation.

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2026 Freshmen Enrollment vs. 2025, 2020

	Fall 2026	Fall 2025	Fall 2020
Total Freshmen	186	292	259
Male	130	185	176
Female	56	107	83
Internationals	15	33	13
Athletes	127	200	153
Non-Athletes	59	92	106

Source: NC Wesleyan Office of Institutional Research



Sophomore Jordan Fernandez in recent action at Scalf Field. As of October 21, the women' soccer team found itself in fifth place, two behind Peace in the USA South standings. The Bishops have played stout defense enroute to a 3-3-1 conference record, yielding just 10 goals on the season. Meanwhile the men's team was atop the standings (4-0-1) as it seeks to defend its conference title. In volleyball, the Bishops were battling to qualify for the post-season tournament, compiling a 1-9 record so far. In other sports news, President Evan Duff has announced that Wesleyan will add a new NCAA sport, women's flag football, with the team set to begin play in 2028. C. Lewis photo.

Freshmen Advice: Living in Harmony with a Roommate

By Brooklynn Covic
Decree Staff Writer

For many freshmen, college is the first time they have had to share a space with someone who isn't family. Different schedules, habits and upbringings can make living with a roommate an adjustment, but Wesleyan upperclassmen say communication and understanding can make the experience much easier.

Moving away from home can mean adjusting to more than just a new campus. Junior Brock Lemons said that living with a roommate also meant learning how someone from a different part of the country could have different habits.

Lemons grew up in Columbus, Ohio and said he and his roommate from Windsor, North Carolina had different routines, including when and what they liked to eat. When going out to eat, Lemons preferred Raising Cane's, while his roommate introduced him to places he had never tried. Instead of allowing those differences to create problems, Lemons said he used them as an opportunity to learn more about his roommate and his new home. "It was honestly kinda fun," Lemons said. "I got to experience what it would be like to grow up in North Carolina."

Lemons said having similar schedules also helped the two adjust to living together. Both were baseball players who had to wake up early for weightlifting and practices, so they understood each other's routines. Although he believes the two were simply lucky to have similar personalities, Lemons said Wesleyan freshmen should focus on being considerate if they don't immediately get along with their roommates.

"Just try to be the best roommate you can be," Lemons said. "If they stay difficult or rude, that's not on you."

Senior Samantha Hughson had a different experience with her first-year roommate, but she also believes freshmen should avoid putting too much pressure on the relationship. Hughson barely knew her roommate before they moved in together. The two had played against each other in softball tournaments around the state but had never spent much time together.

Hughson said their friendship developed naturally once they began living in the same dorm room. They practiced together, got food at Chick-fil-A and spent time watching shows like "Stranger Things." One of their more memorable experiences came when they bought some video game equipment.

"We really bonded when we bought an Xbox off of Facebook Marketplace from this sketchy man in Rocky Mount," Hughson said.

The two roommates eventually became best friends and still live together, along with two other roommates. Hughson said their experience taught her that freshmen shouldn't assume their roommate relationship will immediately become a close friendship.

"Don't go into it expecting you and your roommate will be best friends right away," Hughson said. "Just be open to getting to know them and let the friendship just happen naturally."

While some roommate relationships develop easily, Jenna Jade Pilkenton learned that avoiding difficult conversations can create problems. Pilkenton said she and her freshman roommate had different expectations about everything from cleanliness to how often they would welcome guests to their room.

The differences created tension because neither roommate directly addressed the problems. Looking back, Pilkenton said she wishes she had been more upfront about the things that bothered her.

Her experience taught her that communication is important even when a conversation might feel uncomfortable. "Talk about everything," Pilkenton said. "Be courteous. Be someone you would want to live with."

Like others interviewed for this article, Pilkenton said that freshmen shouldn't assume their roommate has to become their best friend. While having a close relationship can make living together easier, she said it can also create problems when two people spend too much time together.

For former resident assistant Kayla Simmons, many roommate conflicts come down to differences in everyday habits. Cleanliness is one of the most common issues that she's seen among freshmen.

"Some of them are nasty, it makes me mad," said Simmons, now a graduate assistant at Wesleyan.

Simmons recommends that roommates discuss their expectations

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WESLEYAN PROFILES

Former Wesleyan Athlete Asja Jones Enjoys New Role on Campus

By Brooklynn Covic
Decree Staff Writer

Asja Jones sat in her Taylor Center office, staring at her computer as she worked on staffing for an upcoming athletic event. She clicked through different screens, shuffled through papers and, at one point, put her head in her hands in frustration.

Her office is fairly simple. One of the only decorations is a small painting of the clock tower and classroom buildings on NC Wesleyan's campus. Sunlight comes through the window on the far side of the room as Jones works, wearing black glasses, a white Roger Taylor Invitational T-shirt, black cargo shorts and black New Balance shoes.

For a moment, Jones was by herself. But that is not always the case. "One person comes, and then it's the next, the next, the next, and it becomes a party," Jones said about the coaches, staff and student-athletes who regularly stop to see her.

Jones, the assistant athletic director for external operations, spends much of her time working behind the scenes, setting up various athletic events and assisting in the day-to-day operations of the department.



Asja Jones SI photo

Jones grew up in Prince Frederick, Maryland, with her parents, Tomicia and Robert, and her older brother, Isaiah. Her mother was a stay-at-home mom, while her father worked as a supervisor for Harris Company, doing sheet metal and ductwork for the construction industry.

Growing up, Jones described her household as loud. Between her parents, brother and the family dog, there was rarely a quiet moment. Her father woke up early for work, and on weekends, he expected everyone else to be awake. He would play music and knock on bedroom doors to get everyone out of bed.

Jones' childhood home was in a wooded area with a pool in the backyard. During the colder months, frogs would get into the pool, adding to the noise in their household. Her grandparents also lived next door, giving her another place to hang out.

Living in a small town meant finding different ways to entertain herself. Jones spent time with friends in the woods and even had a four-wheeler for a short period before crashing it and damaging the brakes.

As the youngest child, Jones said she had a habit of complaining and talking a lot. "My mom says I'm anti everything," Jones said, explaining that she often said "No" to things when she was younger.

Sports were another major part of her childhood. Her older brother participated in soccer, basketball and baseball as a youth and then played baseball at Virginia Wesleyan. Her father played Division I basketball at Robert Morris University (in Pittsburgh), and Jones began playing basketball at the age of 6.

Jones said her father played a major role in her development as an athlete. "He pushed me to be the best I can be," she said.

Basketball had brought her to NC Wesleyan, where she was recruited by Assistant Coach Dez Driver. Jones said that originally she had not planned to play college hoops. But Wesleyan appealed to her. Wanting to leave Maryland, Jones joked that Wesleyan was far enough away that her parents could not randomly visit but close enough that she could still go home when she wanted.

By her sophomore year as a Bishop, Jones decided to stop playing basketball. Although basketball had been a large part of her childhood, her passion had waned over the years. "I was playing for my dad more than I was playing for myself," she said.

After she stopped playing basketball, Jones found a different way to stay involved with athletics. In 2023, she became a work-study student in the athletic department after Assistant AD Mike Armbruster asked her if she wanted a job. Her responsibilities started with putting up tents and working at the concession stand during football games. By her senior year, Jones had a lighter class schedule, and she was able to devote more time to helping in other areas of athletics. Some days that meant paperwork; other times, it meant painting lines in the parking lot at 7 in the morning.

Jones graduated from Wesleyan in 2025 with a degree in marketing and business administration. She then transitioned from student worker to staff member. Instead of just taking orders, she now had to understand the operations well enough to supervise and teach her own work-study students and graduate assistants.

In her current position, much of Jones' work happens before fans ever arrive for the game. Football weeks are some of the busiest. Jones helps make sure tents and lifts (to hold cameras) are in place, the turf is cleared of debris, concessions are prepared, and the Bishop Backyard tailgate area is ready. She even has to move portable toilets with a tractor, which she said takes a lot of patience. For sports like soccer, volleyball and basketball, much of her job involves making sure games are properly staffed.

Fall is the busiest time of year, she said, because multiple sports are in season at once. Weather can also cause schedules and plans to suddenly change. Despite that, Jones said the fast-paced environment is one of her favorite parts of the job.

"There's always something bound to happen on game days, and you just need to adapt and learn to fix it rather than dwell on what's going on," Jones said.

Jones thinks her personality helps her deal with such complications. Describing herself as funny and laid-back, she said she tries to focus on the things she can control. "It can be quite stressful sometimes and all you need to do is crack a joke," she said. When something does go wrong, she recalls a favorite saying. "What's life without a story to tell?"

Jones said she likes that student-athletes feel comfortable enough to hang out in her office between classes. Sometimes the interruptions give her a needed break, allowing her to laugh and talk about something besides the "crazy life of athletics."

Outside of work, Jones enjoys hanging out with other Wesleyan alums, playing Xbox, and watching TV. Her favorite show is "Glee," noting that she rewatches the entire series about once a month.

Jones credits Armbruster with teaching her how to be successful in her job. She is also grateful to former Director of Athletics Aaron Denton for helping put her in the position she is in today.

Jones does not know where her career will take her next. For now, she enjoys working in Wesleyan athletics.

Wesleyan Profile: The Dunn Center's Elic Gurganus

By Lamont Taylor
Decree Staff Writer

I met Technical Director Elic Gurganus in the Dunn Center's control room, where he was working on the stage lights. Gurganus was wearing grey cargo shorts, a grey polo shirt, black shades, and brown shoes. The control room was well organized, except for the desk where Gurganus worked. For a few minutes we talked about the new Yamaha DM7, an audio mixer that the Dunn Center received. Then he got called to help with stage lights on the catwalk where Amanda Lucci, his assistant, was waiting. Gurganus walks fast and moves around often; that's why he dresses lightly. Gurganus and Lucci's chemistry is playful, so Gurganus joked as he worked. He made the atmosphere both relaxing and educational, explaining how the lights died as he removed the bulb.

Born in 1986 in Castalia, Elic Gurganus grew up in a broken home. Both parents had known each other since they were teenagers and married young, but they did not stay together long. His parents separated when Gurganus was 2 and have since remarried. But they did not allow their separation get in the way of raising their child. Gurganus' mother, Rachel Cummings, had primary custody of him, so it was just the two of them at home until Gurganus was 5. While continuing her education, working in a dialysis clinic, and pursuing another relationship, Cummings provided haven for Gurganus and enabled his interests, he said.

Gurganus' father, Mark, is a cattle farmer, artist, and carpenter. He lives in Virginia, so he was not around as much during his son's childhood, but his love for Gurganus transcends distance, Gurganus said. Father and son were together at Christmas and every other week, so Mr. Gurganus made their time memorable. Since both parents shared a long history, they understood the importance of being there for their son. "They both naturally had the joy of life," Gurganus said. "And they were more in-tune with each other than one might think, given their divorce. My mother can have conversations with Dad that nobody else can."

Even though Gurganus' parents were understanding and kind, he said he still had trouble at home. Gurganus had a rocky relationship with both of his stepparents. Between the ages of 8 and 16, Gurganus sometimes avoided going home and even went through a spell of depression. His birth parents never chose their partners over Gurganus, and he praises the way he was raised. Cummings took him out of situations that would hurt him, and Gurganus' father gave him the advice that helped him through a lot of issues. "Don't make waves," his father told him.

Gurganus has always loved the arts, which allowed him to express himself. During his childhood, drawing and painting came naturally to him. His art teachers encouraged him, so resources and opportunities were always there. Growing up, he had been in a church rock band, so music soon competed with the visual arts for his attention.

Gurganus's parents supported his interest in the arts, both emotionally and financially, while expressing themselves differently. Cummings bought him an acoustic guitar and encouraged him to continue down his current path, while his dad bought an electric guitar and wanted Gurganus to learn rock songs. "My group was not a traditional church band," Gurganus recalled. "We didn't hold back. We had fun. Once we were playing at this youth gathering and I got to see my dad's silhouette come into the back of the room. I think it hit him as cool."

When he was 13, music became Gurganus' driving force. He still loved art and continued to make it throughout high school. But his focus shifted after he researched different bands and listened to their albums. During that time, Gurganus started his own band with his best friend, Rob Davis, and two other friends. Over the course of five years, they created three albums and performed around the state. "Still today," he said, "if I see footage of a concert, I feel like I was doing what I was supposed to do."

Gurganus graduated from high school in 2005 and then went to college at Liberty University in Lynchburg, Virginia, to pursue a major in music. After a while he moved back home to attend Nash Community College to knock out general education classes before reenrolling at Liberty with Davis. At a well-received appearance in a "Battle of the Bands" event on campus, Gurganus and Davis drew interest from a startup record label. The two suspended their education for a time as the band focused on a new album, which would turn out to be their last one. Gurganus eventually returned to college, earning a degree in theology.

For the next few years, Gurganus worked with mentally handicapped children. Fascinated by Kenya's art and history, he spent vacation time in East Africa. Even there, Gurganus still was pulled toward music, and he began to consider a move to Nashville, Tennessee. "I believe that was God given," he said. Gurganus had heard from Davis about a recording school in Nashville. Soon after, Gurganus received an offer from friends to cover school expenses at the SAE Institute of Technology Nashville, where he would study music production.

Gurganus moved to Music City, started school and found a job at a tile factory. This was the first time he had been away from family, so juggling work, school, and new relationships was challenging for him. But two weeks into school, Gurganus became interested in the production of live music. Up until then, he had focused on performing but hadn't thought much about the process that went into producing it. Pushing through the stress, Gurganus spent a year and a half there before graduating, and during that time he pursued another goal.

By that time, Gurganus had married Corrie, a nurse, whom he had met at his church years earlier. The two had reconnected on Facebook seven years after their first meeting and then dated for a year. Gurganus said Corrie quickly became a pillar of support for him, though when Gurganus moved to Tennessee, she stayed in North Carolina. "No one should ever be engaged long-distance," Gurganus said, chuckling. "It's a great story looking back, but I don't recommend it."

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Nadine L'Heureux Finds Her Path Through Unexpected Turns

By Sean Greene
Decree Staff Writer

Across from the Dunn Center parking lot and near the quads at NC Wesleyan stands a white two-story building known as the Bellemonte House. As I crossed the mushroom garden and approached the front steps, Director of International Admissions Nadine L'Heureux greeted me.

"Yep, this is it!" she said, standing on the front porch and waving.

L'Heureux recruits international students and helps them adjust to their new environment. As director, she oversees the international admissions process and helps prospective students understand the application and enrollment requirements, including the academic records and other documents they need to submit.

L'Heureux is a first-generation Filipino American whose family history includes connections to several countries. Her background and worldwide friendships help her connect with students that she supports.



Nadine L'Heureux NCWU Photo

Her mother spent most of her life in the Philippines before moving to Germany, where she learned to speak fluent German. Her father, an army veteran and a native of Rhode Island, met her mother in 1993 while he was stationed in her adopted country. L'Heureux noted that she still has cousins in Germany that she hopes to visit soon. "I just renewed my passport," she said.

The youngest of three kids, L'Heureux was born in Fayetteville. As a child, she developed an early interest in entertainment and the performing arts. In high school, she took classes in several subjects instead of following one career track. Her counselor eventually told her that she was taking too many unrelated classes and lacked a clear direction. "I don't want a direct career path," L'Heureux told her counselor. "I want to know the foundation for a lot--a jack of all trades."

After high school, L'Heureux attended Central Carolina Community College to study nursing. She explained that her mother had encouraged her to pursue a more secure profession, such as medicine or law. "My mom wanted me to fulfill my dreams, but she also wanted me to be happy," L'Heureux said.

L'Heureux planned to complete an accelerated nursing program in two years, but complications would have required her to remain in the program for an additional year. Instead, she changed her major to entertainment.

"Well, my heart was telling me to get into the arts," she said.

Upon finishing courses she thought were required for the entertainment program, she discovered that there was a mix-up in the college's system. It turned out some of her classes did not count toward the degree she expected to receive. She started to consider leaving school, but her adviser encouraged her to complete the additional year.

L'Heureux then faced another problem: Her financial aid had run out. Rather than give up, she wrote a letter to the college explaining what had happened and requesting assistance. Her appeal was successful, allowing her to continue her education.

After finishing at CCCC in 2017, L'Heureux enrolled at Full Sail University in Winter Park, Florida, near Orlando. Full Sail offers degree programs focused on entertainment, media, art and technology, with an emphasis on practical experience through creative projects and work in production studios.

It took L'Heureux less than four years to finish both an undergraduate and master's degree. While at Full Sail, L'Heureux met Chantoni Grant, director of the Bishop Gaming Association (BGA) and now a close friend. It was Grant who told her about an open admissions counselor position at Wesleyan.

L'Heureux had planned to accept a position in Oklahoma but changed her mind after her brother Justin's sudden death. "I wanted to stay close to home," she said. "I really didn't want to leave North Carolina."

L'Heureux interviewed for the Wesleyan admissions position and got the job. That opportunity began a career that eventually led her to international admissions.

Although L'Heureux's journey was not linear, she believes her background in entertainment helps her to connect international students with American culture. It also supports her other responsibilities, including her work with the BGA and its media production branch, BGA Productions.

L'Heureux heads BGA Productions, which allows students to create and edit media, including videos, podcasts and broadcasts. "You need entertainment to teach people," L'Heureux said. "Churches do it, podcasts do it and schools do it."

Her creative interests also extend beyond her responsibilities on campus. When asked what she does in her free time,

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CAMPUS LIFE

Wesleyan Profile: Mark Silveri, New Director of Campus Safety

Wesleyan alum Mark Silveri, a law enforcement professional with extensive experience, is the new director of campus safety at Wesleyan. He succeeds Wayne Sears, who retired last spring after 11 years at the helm.

Silveri, 63, was born in Norfolk, Virginia and as a youth lived in Virginia Beach; Greenville, North Carolina; Rocky Mount; and then Nashville. After graduating from Northern Nash High School, Silveri enlisted in the U.S. Air Force. Serving for 11 years, he worked primarily in military police and his tenure included postings around the U.S., as well as Germany, Italy and Turkey. In 1991 he was deployed in Saudi Arabia during Desert Storm.

Following his time in the Air Force, Silveri joined the North Carolina Highway Patrol. Over a 26-year career, he served in various posts around the state, rising to district first sergeant (2017-19). He followed that with five years in the Edgecombe County Sheriff's Office. From 2025-2026, he worked at Wal-Mart in asset protection. Along the way Silveri earned two degrees from NC Wesleyan—a B.A. in criminal justice (2016) and a B.S. in organizational administration (2018).

The Decree interviewed the new director of campus safety in September.

Q. What attracted you to the position at Wesleyan in the first place? What are your early impressions of campus?

A. I was drawn to the smaller university and small-town setting, which reminded me of where I did most of my growing up. I wanted an opportunity to work with young people and help them navigate their journey through college and prepare for the next phase of their lives. I truly enjoy the atmosphere here and the chance to work with students, provide guidance, and help maintain a safe and secure environment.

I also enjoy supporting the students by attending and watching them compete in various athletic events. One of the things I appreciate most about the university is that everyone seems to share a common goal: encouraging our students, supporting their success, and helping them prepare for their future.

Q. Last spring you worked with former director Wayne Sears. Talk about that experience.

A. It was a very enlightening and valuable experience for me. Having served here for 11 years, Wayne had developed excellent relationships with both students and staff. His law enforcement and security knowledge and experience were a tremendous asset to the university and it was especially valuable to me as I transitioned into this role.

Q. Describe your staff and their duties.

A. We partner with Arrow Security Company, which provides a rotation of six security officers and one security supervisor assigned to the Wesleyan campus. We have at least one security officer on duty at all times. Arrow Security officers provide escorts, assist with lockouts, conduct foot patrols of the residence halls, respond to disturbances, secure university facilities, and primarily serve in an observe-and-report capacity.

We also contract with the Rocky Mount Police Department to provide an officer on campus for a minimum of three hours a night during each semester. This gives us an additional law enforcement presence and enhances the safety and security of our campus community. Finally we have a police officer who lives in on-campus housing and provides an additional level of security and protection for our students, faculty, and staff.

Q. The director of campus safety has broad responsibilities. His department issues parking tickets, provides security at major events, and broadcasts warnings about severe weather. Many students know the director as the administrator who enforces rules against drinking and drug use, as well as parking. What are some other aspects of your job that may not be as well known?

A. The office is responsible for all fire safety systems, water hydrant systems, as well as the security of the facilities. It strives to ensure student population, staff, faculty and visitor safety while on campus.

Q. Tell us three goals that you have for Wesleyan.

A. • Zero instances of drug and or alcohol use.

• Maintaining a full-time uniformed police officer on campus during times that students are here.

• To be the safest institution of higher learning in North Carolina.

Q. Turning to your life outside of work, what are your hobbies and other interests? Tell us about your family.

A. I've been married to a wonderful woman for 32 years. We have two sons together. Our youngest is 27, married and lives in Raleigh. Our oldest is 30, single, works and lives here in Rocky Mount.

In my free time, I enjoy motorcycle riding and playing softball, although I don't get much of a chance to do either. I like to do odd jobs around the house. I tinker with cars on minor issues and do a little woodworking. I do yard work and cut grass both at home and at four other houses as a volunteer for people who cannot do it themselves. My wife and I attend RISE Church in Nashville and enjoy supporting the church and its congregants.



2026 Homecoming Court: Wesleyan celebrated homecoming October 3 at Stallings Field as the football team opened conference action against rival LaGrange. After the Georgia school built a 28-7 first-half lead, the Bishops battled back, only to lose 41-31. Shown here, l-r, Marshaylah Sutton, Homecoming Princess; Trey Alligood, Homecoming King; Kelsi Oyer, Homecoming Queen; and Jared Grant, Homecoming Prince. C. Lewis photo

New Faculty Profile: Psychology's Monet Somerville

Dr. Monet Somerville has joined Wesleyan's full-time faculty as a visiting assistant professor of psychology.

A Wesleyan alum, she was already a familiar face on campus. Since 2022, she has served in various capacities at the university--adjunct instructor, professional tutor in the COMPASS Center, as well as area coordinator in the Residence Life Department. In the latter role, she oversees five residence halls—Roberson and the four dorms that form the quad.



Dr. Monet Somerville
Photo courtesy of M. Somerville

Following is a brief profile of Dr. Somerville:

HOMETOWN: Washington D.C.

DEGREES EARNED: B.A. in psychology, NC Wesleyan (2006); M.S. (2013) and Ph.D. (2024), both in psychology, from Capella University.

OTHER PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE: While living in New Orleans, I worked with children in therapeutic foster care for seven years. These children had severe medical and/or behavioral issues that required specialized foster parenting. I was employed with Methodist Home for Children and Raintree Children and Family Services. After the seven years I transitioned into a case manager position at Raintree for their group home. The home housed female residents from 13-18 years old who were unable to be placed into a foster home due to their behaviors. I helped the girls to develop interpersonal skills through a trauma-informed lens, and I identified mental, physical health, and educational services. Some residents were able to be housed in foster homes after the program while others needed a higher level of care. I also trained staff and foster parents on "Trust-Based Relational Intervention."

PREVIOUS TEACHING EXPERIENCE: I have taught various groups (i.e., foster parents, biological parents, and teens) and various topics throughout the years. I did some form of teaching in my case manager and parent educator positions. My passions are developing and facilitating instruction. I'm still growing and learning.

WHAT ATTRACTED YOU TO WESLEYAN: I was a student here starting in 2002 and I felt that it was time to come back home after spending 15 years in New Orleans after graduation. I love the small intimate family feel of the university. That has always attracted me to NCWU.

RESEARCH INTERESTS: My dissertation dealt with the impact of student-faculty relationships on the faculty member's psychosocial development. I'm also interested in understanding the developmental impacts of trauma and adolescent abortion.

CLASSES YOU TEACH AT WESLEYAN: Introduction to Psychology, Child Psychology, Adolescent Psychology, and other developmental psychology courses. I would like to create a qualitative methodology course at some point.

YOUR TEACHING PHILOSOPHY: My philosophy is simple: Make it relatable to the student. I learned many years ago that psychology is not something that you read in a book. It's a living, breathing thing that changes and should be taught as such. To give you an illustration: When I teach childhood development, I like to bring my great-niece into the classroom. It gives students a real-life example of the theories that we discuss.

HOBBIES AND OTHER INTERESTS: I enjoy attending Catholic Mass each weekend either here in Rocky Mount or with my father in Fayetteville. I like spending time with my best friend whom I met at Wesleyan 24 years ago! I don't get a lot of free time with my various roles on campus.

YOUR LIST OF FAVORITES:

TV SHOWS: All-time favorite is "The Golden Girls." Current favorite is "Midsomer Murders."

MOVIES: All-time favorites—"The Little Mermaid" and "Cinderella." Current favorite-"The Conjuring" series.

BOOKS: "The Real Story: Understanding the History of the Bible," "A Secure Base: Parent-Child Attachment and Healthy Human Development."

MUSICAL ARTIST: Lil' Wayne. Favorite genres: Rap, R&B, classical.

CUISINE: Italian

SPORT: Gymnastics

DESTINATION: I want to go to Italy someday.

SOCIAL MEDIA: Facebook (for keeping in touch with family, friends, near and far) and Instagram (for work).

A SURPRISING DETAIL ABOUT YOUR LIFE: I'm the only sibling that has completed a doctorate and I'm under five feet tall.

Robert Simpson Named Chaplain at Wesleyan

Rev. Robert Simpson, a part-time instructor in religious studies and the head women's lacrosse coach, has been appointed as Wesleyan's chaplain. He succeeds Rev. Edwin Ferguson, who served in the role for five years.

Rev. Simpson, a Maryland native ordained in 1998, has taught introductory religion courses and Religions of the East at Wesleyan since 2023. He took the reins of the lacrosse team last year.

His home base is Durham where he lives his wife, Christy, and son, Alex. As pastor at Red Oak and Bethlehem United Methodist Churches, he spends considerable time traveling between Nash and Durham counties. "I kind of live in two places," he said. "Christy and I take turns traveling back and forth."

Rev. Simpson was interviewed by the Decree in early September:

Q. What have you liked most about working at Wesleyan?

A. It's given me the opportunity to be present to the young people. I spend a lot of time mentoring and counseling them in their life, offering wisdom to them that leads in a proper direction toward the future. I walk with them in this stage in their journey.

Q. What are your primary duties as chaplain?

A. Among my many duties, I organize and help the spiritual life groups (e.g., Fellowship of Christian Athletes) to have a good place and time to meet. I attend and pray at various functions as a presence of God, reminding us of the importance of the holy and that NCWU is a part of something bigger. I try to rally area churches for special days and food pantry collections. I hold Tuesday/Thursday chapel services (from noon to 12:25). And I pray morning and evening for the campus community.

Q. What are some specific goals that you would like to accomplish?

A. One goal is to spread the positive ethos of John Wesleyan and the Methodist tradition. I want to invite the campus into the relationship that religion and education share at Wesleyan. I feel it's important to emphasize the motto indicated on our university seal: "Wisdom and courage through Christian Education."

Another goal would be to encourage prayer at all times in the education of the young person. I want us to become a praying campus.

Q. If I'm a Wesleyan student or staff member and I want to talk to you--whether it's about a spiritual matter or some general concern, how would I arrange a meeting?

A. Besides the regular office hours posted on my door and in my syllabus, I'm always available on campus. People can drop in anytime or they can find me in the cafeteria, or at the many athletic and other events I regularly attend. I want to be seen as approachable at all times. Please come up to me anytime I'm on campus.

L'HEUREUX from pg 2

L'Heureux responded, "What is that?"

Besides editing media for BGA Productions, she likes to keep busy with different arts and crafts projects. Among her favorites are acrylic painting on canvas; creating small oven-bake clay figurines; making birthday, holiday, and themed cards; and putting together collages based on images or color themes. "I have a bunch of projects I never finished," she noted.

She added that she occasionally plays video games such as Super Smash Bros, Kirby and Animal Crossing.

L'Heureux said she did not always know where her interests would lead her. She eventually discovered that her passion for entertainment could support the work she does at Wesleyan.

Looking toward her future, L'Heureux plans to attend law school and help artists understand the legal side of their careers. Her journey shows that you don't need a clear plan.

NEWS FOR FRESHMEN

Freshmen Advice: Tips for Better Time Management

By Sean Greene
Decree Staff Writer

For many college freshmen, having more control over their own schedule can make it easier to waste time. Between friends, sports, jobs, sleep and having nobody telling them when to complete assignments, students can quickly find themselves doing work at the last minute. Wesleyan upperclassmen have dealt with these problems in different ways, but their experiences show that managing time often comes down to recognizing where time is being lost and finding a routine that works.

Sophomore Parris Becton said procrastination is one of her biggest problems. Part of her problem is "thinking I have time to do an assignment when I really don't." Sometimes schoolwork gets pushed aside because, as Becton said, "I would rather hang out with my friends."

Becton believes freshmen should learn early how to separate what they want to do from what needs to be done. She said the ability to schedule and organize what's more important helps her prioritize schoolwork without completely giving up her social life. For freshmen, making plans around assignments instead of assignments around plans could prevent their procrastination.

Chris Melancon, a junior, has almost the opposite problem. Since he is not involved in a lot of extracurricular activities, he has plenty of free time outside of class. But that time is not always used for schoolwork. "I usually think 'I got the whole day, so I'll just do it later,' and then by the time I get around to it, it's already nighttime," Melancon said.

Being in his room, playing video games or spending time on his phone can make small parts of the day disappear. "It's not really one big thing," he said. "I just don't prioritize parts of the day and they add up." With senior year and graduation getting closer, he knows that routine has to change.

Melancon believes giving free time structure is especially important for students who do not have sports, clubs or other activities creating a schedule for them. "I need to give myself a schedule even when I don't have anything going on," he said. He cautioned freshmen that having free time does not necessarily mean having good time management. Planning a specific hour for schoolwork can be more helpful than waiting until they feel motivated.

Jayden McCourtney, a sophomore and a member of football team, faces a different challenge because his sport takes up a large part of his non-class time. Between classes and practices and team meetings, McCourtney said, "Sometimes it feels like I don't really have free time until evening." After practice, exhaustion can make assignments even harder to start. "Sometimes the last thing I wanna do is sit down and do homework after a long day," he said.

Football also gives McCourtney something other students may not have, a group of people working toward the same goal. The team has study hall sessions and players often complete work together in the library. Having people around who are also working can make it easier to stay focused and hold each other accountable, he said.

McCourtney has also learned not to wait for a large amount of free time to complete his schoolwork. "Even if I can't finish an assignment, I can start it or get something small done instead of waiting until the end of the day," he explained. For freshmen with busy schedules, his experience shows that 20 or 30 free minutes between classes can still be useful. Studying with friends can also create some of the accountability that athletes get from their teammates.

Sophomore Amari Williams learned that poor time management can affect what students often overlook, sleep. "Freshman year I used to stay up all night because I felt like I could just sleep whenever," Williams said. Eventually, staying up late meant being tired in class while assignments went uncompleted.

Williams changed her routine by creating a cutoff time for schoolwork at night. "If I know an assignment is due, I try to get most of it done before like 10," Williams said. Instead of treating sleep as extra time that can be sacrificed, she plans assignments around getting enough rest for the day.

For freshmen, her advice is simple: "Don't mess up your sleep thinking you could get it back the next day. You'll be stuck in a (negative) cycle." Williams said college may be the first time students have complete control over when they sleep, study and attend class. Creating a consistent sleep schedule can make the rest of a student's schedule easier to manage.

Because sophomore Myla Young works part time, she must manage her schedule around responsibilities outside of school. "If I go to class in the morning and work at night, sometimes it feels like my whole day is already gone," Young said. Waiting until after work to start assignments has proved challenging because she's usually ready to eat and rest by the time she gets home.

Instead of searching for hours of uninterrupted study time, Young started using smaller openings in her schedule. "If I get 30 minutes before class, I'll knock something out," she said. "You gotta use the time you actually have." She agrees with McCourtney that starting an assignment does not always mean finishing it in one sitting.

For freshmen who work, Young recommends looking at assignments and work schedules before the week begins and planning ahead. "If you know you're working Thursday and have something due Friday, don't wait until Thursday night," she said. Planning around responsibilities that cannot be changed gives students room to handle problems that might otherwise cause them to fall behind.

There may not be one schedule that works for every college freshman. Becton has to balance friends with assignments. Melancon must create structure when he has too much free time. Williams protects her sleep. McCourtney has to work around football, and Young plans around her job. Each situation is different, but the solutions share a central idea. Students have to decide how they will use their time before that timer runs out.

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before small disagreements become larger ones. Freshmen should talk about issues such as whether they prefer the room clean or messy, how high they want to set the air conditioning, when they normally go to sleep, and whether the lights can stay on at night.

If roommates cannot solve a problem on their own, Simmons said they should not be afraid to ask for help. She recommends talking with an RA, who can facilitate a three-way conversation and work toward a solution.

While most freshmen adjust to sharing a room, junior Kylyn Long had a different experience. Long lived alone with her emotional support cat, Nash, and said having her own space had both benefits and downsides. "Some days I really liked it, coming home and just having time to myself," Long said. "But you also have the days when you see everyone else becoming close to their roommates and you don't get to have that experience."

Long said that being on the softball team the first year helped her find the support system she may have missed by not having a roommate. "I was able to make friends with my teammates who lived right by me, and I get to live with them now," Long said.

Pilkenton said freshmen should focus on being considerate of their roommate, even when their personalities and habits are different.

"If you wouldn't want to live with yourself," she said, "then they also won't want to live with you."

Freshmen Advice: Sights to See in Eastern North Carolina

By Lamont Taylor
Decree Staff Writer

With classes well underway, students may need to find places to explore, relax, and enjoy some fun. Members of the Wesleyan community were asked, "Where's a good place in East North Carolina to take a day or weekend trip?"

The Outer Banks, a line of islands off the North Carolina coast, is a popular tourist spot. Tony Sawyer, assistant professor of music production, recommends the Outer Banks due to the numerous sights to see. His personal favorite place is the Wright Brothers National Memorial in Kill Devil Hills.

"I like history, so everything about the Wright Brothers Memorial I enjoy," Sawyer said. When asked about his favorite part, he said, "There's a Wright Brothers runway, where I love to watch the planes." The First Flight Airport is built on the land where the Wright brothers first flew, so it symbolizes the beginning of aviation as we know it.

When asked about spots to visit, Chantoni Grant, director of the Bishop Gaming Association, recommends Raleigh for a close and rich trip. The state capital offers professional (Hurricanes) and collegiate sports (NC State), as well as art and history museums, and concerts. Grant singled out Raleigh's annual Caribbean Festival and, of course, its gaming conventions.

Grant listed events like Galaxycon, Game and Geek Expo, and the Playthrough Gaming Convention. "Video games are my hobby," he said. "There are a lot of networking opportunities, a lot of retro games, a lot of people you can meet. It gives people that play video games, watch anime, and enjoy card games an area to come together to have fun and collaborate."

Jay Quinan, emeritus professor of psychology, offered numerous suggestions before narrowing it down to one: the North Carolina Aquarium on Roanoke Island (just inland from the Outer Banks).

As one of the four main aquariums in the state, this one shifted focus onto exploring the wildlife of the Outer Banks in 2016. According to its website, the 61,000 square-foot facility is located on 16 acres and houses over 2,200 species. The facility is now observing its 50th anniversary.

Senior Anthony Conner had his heart set on Wilmington. He found it beautiful when he visited, so he recommended it to others.

Due to his interest in military history, Conner likes to tour the USS North Carolina battleship. It's nearly 200 feet tall, more than 728 feet long, 108 feet wide, and now a state memorial to the veterans of World War II. It's enshrined with the names of over 10,000 North Carolinians from all branches of military service who made the ultimate sacrifice.

Communication professor Tyana Ellis expressed enthusiasm about Beaufort (pronounced Bow-fert), a North Carolina coastal town. Established in 1709 and rich in history, it features many restored buildings and the North Carolina Maritime Museum that preserves, collects and interprets coastal life and history.

Dr. Ellis loves the beaches there. "Especially if you can find one that is not super populated, it's nice to walk and see the ocean," she said, adding that she loves to watch the sandpipers that frequent the local shores. "They are so cute."

Alex Rodriguez, a graduate assistant in the Residence Life Department, is keen on Lake Gaston. Located north of Rocky Mount on the border between North Carolina and Virginia, it includes 350 miles of shoreline. Rodriquez favors the fishing at Gaston, which is stocked with striped bass, largemouth bass as well as crappie and a variety of pan fish.

When he goes to the lake, he likes to fish for catfish and mentioned a giant specimen his grandfather caught on a recent outing. "My grandfather's like five-foot, five," he said. "When he held the fish up to his head, it went all the way down his legs."

GURGANUS from pg 2

Corrie understood her husband's goals and did not give up on him. After finishing his studies at SAE in 2012, Gurganus decided to take another big step by quitting his tile factory job. At the time he told his wife, "I'll give myself six months to start producing stuff." Having joined her husband in Nashville, Corrie supported him and the decision paid off. Gurganus found another paying job while he started interning in his field. The internship was demanding since it was for no pay, yet he took advantage of every opportunity that came his way. He always said yes to offers, asked co-workers for help, and even exchanged meals for information. Following his internship, Gurganus became a freelance audio engineer.

In 2013 he started working at the Franklin Theater just outside Nashville as a monitor engineer, a technician who mixes audio feeds for musicians, singers, and performers on stage. He was there for the next four years and still took up freelance offers whenever possible. Now homeowners, Gurganus and his wife loved engaging with the community and the local festivals. But after a while the couple felt pulled back to their native North Carolina.

After their first child was born in Franklin, the couple returned to Rocky Mount and in November 2018, Gurganus began to freelance at the Dunn Center, while commuting back to Franklin for the occasional temporary job. When Covid happened in 2020, the Dunn Center was the only place that kept him working, and eventually it offered Gurganus a permanent position that, in exchange for lower pay, allowed him to continue freelancing on the side. Two years later Wesleyan offered him a full-time gig.

At Wesleyan Gurganus' main goal is to build up the Dunn Center and encourage students to interact more. He is determined to create a better space for students and the local community to learn and create together.

And Gurganus says he relishes time with his family. Now a father of two, he wants to provide his kids with a better childhood than the one he had.

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A double major in psychology and criminal justice, Volk wants to pursue a career in federal law enforcement.

Allan Sessoms

Wesleyan graduate student Allan Sessoms believes his summer internship helped move him toward his career goals. Long-term, he hopes to use his master's degree to become a public health leader focused on addressing health disparities and improving outcomes for underserved and vulnerable populations. A particular interest is HIV/AIDS education, advocacy, stigma reduction, and community engagement.

His summer internship was completed as part of his MPH graduation requirements. While holding a full-time job, Sessoms completed 150 hours of work—both virtual and on-site--at a local community organization, Ripple Effects. According to its website, Ripple Effects (RE) is "a community collaboration hub, that offers resource counseling, life skills workshops, case management, and other services designed to address holistic wellness."

During his time with RE, Sessoms conducted research on public health issues, social determinants of health, youth wellness, and community needs and resources. He was given wide responsibilities, participating in organizational meetings, planning discussions as well as activities focused on community engagement and program development.

Among his many projects, Sessoms provided support for a summer camp. That afforded him the opportunity to converse with area youths. "Some conversations were eye-opening," he related. "What really stood out to me was hearing about some of their realities. One child shared that they didn't really have anyone they felt comfortable talking to when they were struggling. Another talked about being hungry and feeling like adults were not paying attention or taking them seriously. As adults, we sometimes assume children do not notice what is going on around them, but many of them are carrying burdens that no child should have to carry."

Sessoms said there were other chances for him to witness the support that organizations like Ripple Effects can offer to the community, whether it's single mothers trying to make ends meet, or children with special needs. He was particularly struck by a young girl with ADHD. "The questions she asked, and the way she processed information impressed me," he said. "I remember thinking that if she continues to receive the support and encouragement she needs, she could become a doctor one day. More than anything, the internship reminded me that public health is about people. It's easy to focus on statistics, reports, and data, but sitting down and talking with people gives you a different perspective. Every number represents a real person, a real family, and a real story. Those conversations and experiences taught me lessons that no textbook or classroom discussion could ever provide."

Collaborating with the Ripple Effects leaders, Sessoms received useful feedback on some of his own community health ideas. And it gave him confidence to purse his dreams.

Echoing the undergrads interviewed for this article, Sessoms urged other Wesleyan students to take advantage of internship opportunities.

"An internship provides experiences that cannot be fully replicated in the classroom," he stressed. "It allows students to apply what they have learned, explore possible career paths, gain confidence, and develop professional skills. And it offers opportunities to network with professionals and build relationships that may benefit them throughout their careers."

Having worked in leadership and management positions himself, Sessoms places great value on internship experience in making his own hiring decisions. "It demonstrates initiative, commitment, adaptability, and a willingness to learn," he said.