

THE PENDULUM

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THE WELLNESS ISSUE

“Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being, and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.”

- World Health Organization



MENTAL HEALTH

Conquering stigmas
around Elon University
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SOCIAL HEALTH

Maintaining relationships,
fighting peer pressures
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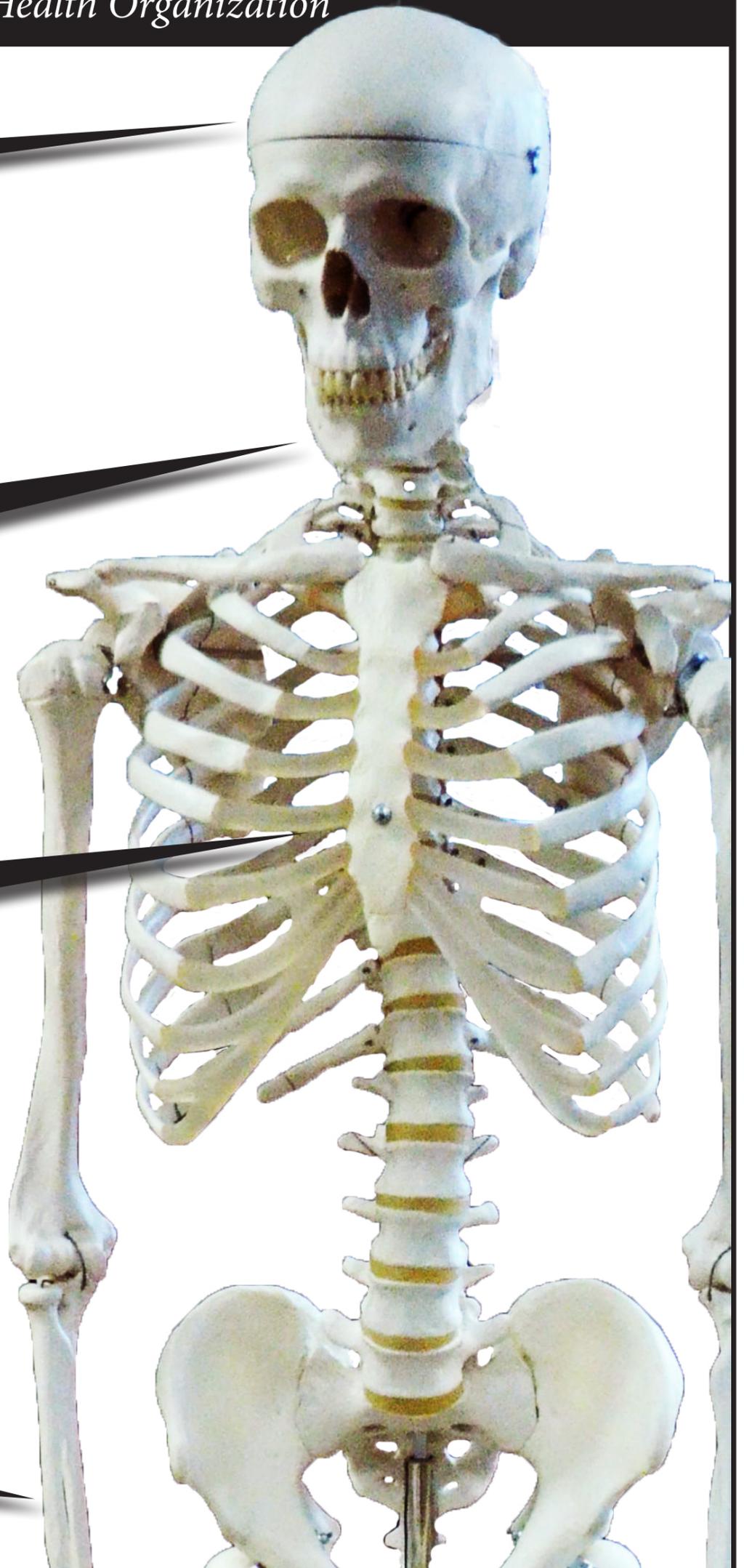
OPINIONS

Staying in shape with
meal plans, academics
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Options for exercise,
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Cheers to your health, Elon

On finding a balance and challenging misconceptions

This edition goes out to the all-nighter, the Ramen diet, the missed morning run. It's for sleeping too much, and it's for not sleeping at all. It's for the exceptional few who have the nasty sleep-social-grades cycle down pat, and it's for the rest of us floating through the time-management abyss.

From us at The Pendulum to you, dear reader, let's chat about health.

From the classroom to the extracurricular, from the playing field to the internship's hallways, Elon University loves nothing more than a good, old-fashioned dose of over-commitment (myself included, too.) You are

not alone.

When finding time to scarf down lunch can be difficult, on some days, for students, staff and faculty, it's deceptively simple to put personal health on the backburner.

We all know others – friends, classmates, peers – who have succumbed to the grindstone of burnout. Working too much, too hard, too long takes its toll on the individual in real and lasting ways. In this special edition, we explore people who have found a balance, plus a whole lot more.

In these pages, you'll find deep storytelling that goes beyond surface-level reporting to try to answer what it really means to be healthy.

You'll find accounts of what it means to identify as Muslim on a campus with very few.

You'll read about the inner turmoil and outer adjustment of students who have come out within Elon's Greek system, as well as what they've learned

Michael Bodley
Editor-in-Chief



Michael Bodley
Editor-in-Chief

Oak House Wednesday 7 p.m.

Join The Pendulum, Active Mind, EUPHS and SPARKS at the Oak House for a roundtable conversation centering around health at Elon University. Profits will support the organizations and student health initiatives on campus and beyond.

along the way.

You'll find moments that challenge you and put your problems in perspective, such

as the female freshman who combats an incurable disease without slowing her stride. You'll find, as I have, that there

is no typical Elon student.

You'll find that health doesn't mean any one thing, that it's not just what you eat or how much you sleep or who you're friends with.

In these pages, you won't find all the answers on how to lose 10 pounds and get straight A's and stop the mental freakouts over what the future holds.

What you will find is an honest assessment of the state of health on Elon's campus through the eyes of your peers.

As editor, I'm proud of the endless hours of work everyone involved in The Pendulum has put in to make this possible.

We want to hear your thoughts – we want to know what we're doing well, and what we can do better. We want to be your No. 1 news source, and we want to win you over if we haven't already. Email me at mbodley@elon.edu to chat, anytime.

In the meantime, let's talk about health.

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The ongoing pressures

Students tackle social issues of alcohol, drugs, sex

"In the social jungle of human existence, there is no feeling of being alive without a sense of identity."
- Erik Erikson

Tommy Hamzik
Managing Editor

Cassandra Tumas was already nervous going into orientation weekend last fall.

And then she saw people drinking. "I was kind of like, 'Is this normal? Should I be doing this too?'" Tumas said.

Tumas, a freshman dance and dance science major from the Philadelphia area, doesn't drink. She was shocked when she arrived at Elon University and seemingly everyone else was.

So, she struggled a bit at first to fit in. "Morally, I just don't want to get into that," Tumas said. "Legally, I don't want to get into that until I'm 21. I don't see the point to it, really — going out and getting yourself so completely drunk and wasted that you're not able to function properly. It just doesn't make sense to me why people would want to do that."

Tumas's situation is one that freshmen at Elon and across the country face when they arrive at college. Pressures to drink, try drugs and have sex become more prevalent, and students are faced with choices that challenge their values.

Tumas feels like there is a sort of divide between students who do drink or smoke and those who don't.

"You know the people who are hardcore partiers, you know the people who go out once in a while, and you know the people who don't go out at all," she said.

There are options at Elon for those who don't want to partake in the typical weekend nightlife scene, but Tumas said for some, they could be difficult to find.

Tumas is a member of the Catholic Campus Ministry executive staff, and is also a member of InterVarsity. Both of those organizations have not only given her alternative opportunities on the weekends, but also friends who share similar interests.

Additionally, Student Union Board sponsors activities each Thursday, Friday and Saturday evenings during the academic year. Free food and entertainment are offered Thursdays at Midnight Meals and Fridays at SUBlive, and a movie is screened each Saturday night either at Young Commons or Irazu Coffee Shop.

Elon also provides educational opportunities through Elon 101 classes and new student programs.

"We see that [drinking] is an issue that continues to be discussed at every level from senior administration to focus groups to various student groups," said Whitney Gregory, director of health promotion and student concerns outreach. "It will always be a piece of the conversation. I appreciate that it's not something we're looking the other way at — it continues to be an ongoing conversation."

The National College Health Assessment surveys college students across the country on their health habits and perceptions of others.

According to the latest NCHA, 66 percent of college students report using alcohol at least once during the last 30 days, whereas it's perceived that 95.4 percent of students have. The report says 20.6 percent of students have never



Tumas (top row, far right) joins a group of CCM members for ice skating in Greensboro. She serves on CCM's student executive staff.

drank, but it's perceived that just 2.9 percent of students fall into that category.

The statistics are similar for marijuana use and sexual partners. Students perceive that 85.6 percent of their peers has smoked marijuana in the last 30 days, while 80.2 percent report not having used it in the last 30 days.

More than 70 percent of students report having one or fewer sexual partners in the last 12 months.

"We know the perception is very different from the actual norm," Gregory said. "That's true across the United States. People notice the one at the party who may be appearing to drink the most, appearing to be the most intoxicated, but don't notice the majority of other people not drinking or consuming alcohol in low-risk ways."

The more important problem, then, becomes the perception.

Tumas came from a Catholic grade school and high school where alcohol and drug use along with sex weren't very discussed much. She feels it's much more prevalent in college, saying she went from somewhere where it wasn't talked about much to a place where it felt like the norm.

"I didn't know it would be this intense," Tumas said. "I didn't know so many people would be willing to basically get drunk in front of other people. It's just crazy to me, the whole idea."

Tumas described the perception of sex at Elon as "casual," even noting a time when a professor openly told the class to "be safe and use condoms."

She doesn't feel pressured by it, but wishes there were ways to promote the benefits of abstaining from sex.

I DIDN'T KNOW SO MANY PEOPLE WOULD BE WILLING TO BASICALLY GET DRUNK IN FRONT OF OTHER PEOPLE.

CASSANDRA TUMASZ
ELON FRESHMAN



Top to Bottom: Tumas (second from right) hangs out at the beach with a group of friends during CCM's beach retreat in Salter Path, N.C.. Tumas (third from right) spends an afternoon at a pumpkin patch with her InterVarsity small group.

"It's very casual here, but I guess at every college it's like that," she said. "Especially coming from a Catholic high school, if you did that, people would gossip and whisper. Now it's kind of almost the opposite. They just talk about sex like it's a normal thing, like they do it every weekend."

As a whole, Tumas hasn't had many bad experiences with people pressuring her to do anything that goes against her moral values.

She hasn't been asked about her drinking habits much, but said people on her hall were confused early in the year about why she wouldn't go out with them.

When searching for ways to clear up some of the pressures at Elon, Tumas wasn't really sure where to start.

"I don't know how we could improve that," she said. "I would like to see Elon doing something instead of just saying, 'Be safe.'"

Roommates 101: Searching for

Students discuss benefits, disadvantages

Hannah Silvers and Lauren Phillips
Copy Chief and Assistant Style Editor

Caroline Dean arrived late to a session in Elon University's McKinnon Hall during last year's Fellows Weekend and sat down in the only open seat in the crowded room.

She began a conversation with the girl next to her, Alicia Paul, and the two hit it off.

After they were both accepted into the Honors Fellows program, Dean and Paul — now freshmen — found each other on Facebook and decided to face their first year at Elon as roommates.

A year later, their hallmates in Colonnades C call them the "power couple."

But not all freshmen are so lucky.

A substantive amount of research, including an often-cited 2008 Harvard University study conducted by Dan Levy, has shown that poor roommate pairings can affect many aspects of a freshman's experience, from grades to weight fluctuation.

Dean and Paul are lucky to have found each other, and they know that roommates, when done right, can be best friends.

"They also know that their relationship is the exception, not the norm.

The close connection studies found between wellness and roommate relationships is no surprise to Dean, who has experienced first-hand the mental benefits of having a supportive roommate.

"It's been a sense of stability for me," she said, "to come home and have someone who's always going to be there for you."

Freshman Anne Fioravanti has a similar story. She found her roommate, Emma Holderread, through the Elon University Class of 2018 Facebook page.

The two originally connected over a shared love of elephants, but quickly discovered they had more in common.

"We just ended up being really similar," Fioravanti said. "We signed up [to live together], and then I went to meet her over the summer, and it went really well. I think we just kind of got lucky."

Fioravanti said having a solid relationship with her roommate made the transition to college much easier.

"It's been really great to have her around because she knows me on a personal level, not just as a roommate but as a friend," she said. "It's been really good to be able to talk to her when I'm feeling homesick, or not really wanting to go home, or not loving college on a certain day, so it made the adjustment a lot easier for both of us."

A flaw in the system

Not all freshmen have the luxury of selecting their roommates. Many, including a male freshman who requested anonymity to candidly discuss a former living situation, went through the university's random roommate assignment process, with mixed results.

Like all his new classmates — including students who had already requested roommates — he filled out the survey used to pair roommates. He was assigned a roommate, but from the beginning, the survey didn't appear to have been used in the assignment process.

"Everything that I filled out on that survey obviously did not match his lifestyle, and I have no idea how we were put together," he said.

The problems began over the summer,

when the freshman reached out to his future roommate repeatedly but received no response.

When the two moved into their Colonnades room, their differences became too much for Young to handle.

Young's roommate came and went at all hours of the day and night. He also used drugs and alcohol regularly, an activity Young chose not to participate in.

70%
(1,048 students)

of freshmen were paired through the random roommate assignment process

"We didn't really click in that sense," he said. "It affected me emotionally and health-wise in the sense that it stressed me out. It stressed me out because I never knew what was going to happen."

Young doesn't think he's the only one to have a negative freshman roommate experience.

"I think it does happen more often than people think," he said.

Cole Krajieski, a sophomore residence assistant (RA) in Colonnades A with predominantly sophomore residents, said most roommate conflicts occur between freshmen.

"As sophomores, there's less of an issue with trying to match people," he said. "With freshmen, they don't know each other, so they're coming in, and who knows if they're going to get along?"

This is disappointing to students such as the male freshman, for whom a good roommate is essential for the first year of college.

"It's hard adjusting to begin with," he said. "I was kind of hoping to have a roommate who was a good friend, and I didn't really get that in mine. It affected me in that sense — I didn't really have anyone to turn to. We didn't have anything in common."

"It's really important that you match with your roommate. I think it's important that you have that support system. If you have something wrong in your life, it's nice to have someone to connect with in your room."

Fioravanti said her first year of college would have been a very different experience if she'd had a negative roommate relationship.

"It definitely would not have been as easy transitioning to college," she said. "I like going back to my room because I get along with my roommate. If I didn't, I feel like it would be a lot harder to be here. It's nice to have that home within Elon."

Though the male freshman's story is not unusual, not all randomly assigned roommates have problems with each other.

"A lot of people did random," Fioravanti said. "Most of the people I know did random, or they lived with someone they knew in high school. Random has worked out for a lot of my friends. I think it's a good thing."

In fact, according to Residence Life, 70

“IT’S BEEN A SENSE OF STABILITY FOR ME TO COME HOME AND HAVE SOMEONE WHO’S ALWAYS GOING TO BE THERE FOR YOU.”

CAROLINE DEAN
FRESHMAN

percent of freshmen — more than 1,000 students — were paired randomly with their roommates.

Though she said random roommate pairing was a good thing, Fioravanti also thinks the process could be improved.

"I feel like they could do a better job evaluating [the survey] and then assigning people, because there weren't many questions," she said. "What time to do you go to bed?" and that kind of thing, but I think it needs more than that."

She added that her friends who attend other universities had longer, more detailed surveys that asked about extracur-



Freshmen Alicia Paul and Caroline Dean met in a session during last year's Fellows Weekend. After both were accepted into the Honors Program, they decided to room together on the Honors Living Learning Community in Colonnades C, where they've developed an excellent relationship.

healthy living situations at Elon

of on-campus residential selection

ricular activities, taste in music and other more personal details.

"Of course that takes more time, but I think it's probably worth it for the school to do," she said.

The male freshman agreed and added that more communication between potential roommates would be helpful.

"I feel like there should be some interaction with the person before they assign roommates," he said.

Making it work

The male freshman and his roommate didn't get along because they had nothing in common. According to Paul, most roommate pairs work because they have just enough in common.

She and Dean work, she said, because of what they both do and don't share.

"Our personalities mesh well because she's more of the extrovert and outgoing, and I'm pretty introverted," she said. "We have a few things in common, but not everything."

Dean agreed.

"What we have in common — as far as what we're willing and not willing to do — is very similar, which I think really helps," she said. "We have very different majors, we have very different personalities, we have very different a lot of things, but we don't butt heads in that respect. Our personalities complement one another."

Despite their similarities and close relationship, Dean and Paul had to work hard to learn to live with each other.

"When we first moved in together, people were like, 'You guys were just perfect from the start,'" Dean said. "I'm used to sharing things because I had a lot of people [around] when I was younger, and Alicia was an only child so she wasn't as used to that. So we had a lot of things that we had to mesh on and get used to, but we were very flexible with one another."

But not all roommates have easy relationships, which is why conflict resolution is so important.

In his position as an RA, Krajieski employs roommate agreements and open dialogue to keep the peace on his hall.

"At the very beginning of the year, we make all of our residents do roommate agreements," he said. "They fill those out, and I made sure they took the time and filled it out seriously, just in case there were issues."

"If there was an issue, I would have to sit down with them in a neutral space and take out the roommate agreements and say, 'OK, this is the issue you're having, let's see what the roommate agreement has to say about it.' If it's not mentioned, I kind of facilitate them working it out themselves. Hopefully that would resolve the issue."

Paul also emphasized the importance of communication.

"I've seen [that] if one roommate has a problem, they either won't tell their roommate, so then the problem is never fixed," she said. "Or they'll talk about it and be all happy on the outside and be all like, 'Oh, this is great, we can compromise,' but then it doesn't actually work for them. So then problems are never fixed."

Dean agreed, emphasizing the role of compromise in maintaining healthy roommate relationships.

"It's a lot of give and take with roommates," she said. "You have to be willing to cater to what they need, as well as vice versa."

But some problems can't be worked out.

Young tried to resolve his issues with his roommate first on his own, and then with the help of his RA, but wasn't successful. His roommate eventually moved out, and Young said he has been less stressed as a result.

As of April, Residence Life had overseen 87 room changes like Young's, a number consistent with previous years.

87

room changes this school year, on par with previous years

Krajieski said relocating students is Residence Life's last resort.

"A resolved issue would be much better than having to get the residents to leave the room," he said. "It's awkward for them if they see each other on campus."

Challenges for upperclassmen

Sometimes, though, students have to work to find appropriate housing for themselves.

Junior Claire Lockard, who will be an apartment manager in Oaks D next year, has been working with Residence Life to make the housing process more friendly for LGBTQIA students at Elon.

As president of Spectrum, Elon's LGBTQIA awareness organization, Lockard has a both a professional and a personal interest in the issue.

Lockard had hoped to work in the Station at Mill Point for the 2015-2016



Dean and Paul share common values, which they say helps them get along as roommates.

who explained and led her through the approval process.

Lockard quickly discovered that the policies in the Oaks and Mill Point were different in an important way.

"It's more actually LGBT-specific housing [in the Oaks], so it's not gender-inclusive in the way that the Station at Mill Point is, where they don't really care," Lockard said. "You could be a straight female living with your boyfriend in Station, and that's cool in the Station at Mill Point, but it's not the same in Oaks."

"The only way to get gender-inclusive housing is if you're a queer student. So it's

could have done so.

As she put it, "I had fairly easy access because I'm in Res Life, and I'm president of Spectrum and work with the GLC a lot, but not everybody is all of those things."

Because of those other students who might be in a similar situation but who don't know where to turn, Lockard stuck with the issue even after her housing was approved.

"I'm hoping that I can help other students be clearer about what the difference is between the two policies," she said, "and to maybe help Res Life understand where the students are coming from better, that it takes a lot of courage to ask for this sort of housing, especially if you're basically out-

ing yourself to Res Life in order to get the housing."

She said any students who find themselves in a tricky situation with LGBTQIA housing should feel free to contact her or Bosch, who she said will be happy to accompany students to meetings with Residence Life if they would like an extra voice.

In fact, she strongly encourages them to come forward.

As difficult as speaking up may be, Lockard said students have the right to make the housing decisions that will make them comfortable and happy.

"We don't have a huge transgender or gender-queer student population, but maybe one of the reasons is they don't feel like they necessarily have that space," Lockard said. "Like, 'Who do I live with if I don't identify as male or female? Who can my roommate possibly be? What is the university going to categorize me as? Does that make me feel unsafe in my living environment?'"

Despite the frustrations she's had, Lockard is hopeful for future LGBTQIA students who might struggle with housing.

"My sense was that Res Life really wants to promote gender inclusivity — not just LGBT stuff — and that they would love to have just approved it in general," she said. "They're trying to strike a balance between serving the students and still remaining accountable to the people that they have to be accountable to."

“WE DON’T HAVE A HUGE TRANSGENDER OR GENDER-QUEER STUDENT POPULATION, BUT MAYBE ONE OF THE REASONS IS THEY DON’T FEEL LIKE THEY NECESSARILY HAVE THAT SPACE.”

CLAIRE LOCKARD
JUNIOR

school year. Because all of Mill Point is gender-inclusive, she planned to live with a friend who identifies as male.

But when she was hired in the Oaks — a residential area without the same gender-inclusive policy — she had to dig deeper to find a way to live with whom she wanted.

"I'd heard through the grapevine," she said, "not really anything official, that if you asked for approval you could get approval to have mixed-gender housing. I was told it was called gender-inclusive housing."

Lockard met with MarQuita Barker, associate director of Residence Life for operations and information management, and Matthew Antonio Bosch, director of the Gender and LGBTQIA Center (GLC),

not gender-inclusive, it's more mixed-gender, or it's LGBT housing instead."

She eventually got her roommate request approved, but not without obstacles and frustrations.

Lockard credits the difficulty to the discreet nature of a process that is still in development.

"I think I was one of the first people to ever ask about it and try to actually go through it, rather than just hypothetically knowing it was there if I wanted it," she said. "I think it's more if you know someone who knows about it you can go through the process."

While Lockard was able to get her request approved, she knows she's one of the only people on campus who realistically

Students who come out as LGBTQIA within Greek life regulations don't discriminate, pressure to

Katy Canada
Senior Reporter

When Samantha Jones came out as a lesbian, she found comfort in her close friends but a letdown in a Greek system that was less than welcoming.

A sister of the Eta Zeta chapter of Zeta Tau Alpha at Elon University, Jones, '13, said some of her sisters offered a supportive environment when she came out in 2012, but others did just the opposite.

"I had some people who were really uncomfortable with me afterwards," she said. "I don't think I necessarily lost friends, but I think some people certainly distanced themselves from me. I had a lot of people move away from spending time with me."

Inclusivity takes priority in Elon's mission and policies, but the Greek system

hasn't necessarily kept up. Students in Greek organizations who have come out as members of the LGBTQIA community are often treated as anomalies within the system.

But advocates say it's better now than it once was.

Matthew Antonio Bosch, director of the Gender and LGBTQIA Center (GLC), said as the general conversation around sexual orientation and identity has become more common over the years, he's seen an increase in the number of people who are out in Greek organizations at Elon, though there's no concrete way to determine how many.

From 1990 through the early 2000s, Bosch said more people were openly gay in fraternities than in sororities. Then, for about 10 years the number of women

out in sororities grew. Now, he said, there are more males who openly identify as LGBTQIA in Elon's fraternities than females in sororities.

Allies emerge in Greek life

Shana Plasters, Elon's director of Greek life, said the university has no way of tracking how many LGBTQIA students are involved in sororities and fraternities, noting

feel supported by their peers, that can be concerning."

The Office of Greek Life has partnered with the GLC to provide LGBTQIA Ally Training for organizations who have requested it. Bosch guided all of the sorority Pi Chis — students from all nine of Elon's sororities who counsel potential new members through the recruitment process — through the Ally Training sessions. The Pi Chis come from all nine of Elon's so-

“PEOPLE THAT ARE DIFFERENT AREN'T ALWAYS CELEBRATED. THEY KIND OF HOLD A STANDARD OF WHITE, STRAIGHT, PRETTY, SKINNY, BLONDE, BRUNETTE. I WOULDN'T SAY IT'S REALLY CONDUCIVE TO BEING OUT OR ALTERNATIVE IN ANY WAY.”

SAMANTHA JONES
'13 ALUMNA

some members may be out in certain circles but not in others.

There are no policies in the Greek system that restrict LGBTQIA people from rushing or participating in Greek-sponsored activities. But Plasters said some organizations have rules requiring guests at Greek functions to be approved by a committee or a standards board. Though this rule exists so dates who might have had problematic behavior in the past can be barred from events, a standards board could potentially shut out dates of the same sex.

"Although these policies were not designed to be discriminatory towards LGBTQIA students, there could always be the chance that student members could use this veto power over dates to discriminate based on sexual identity," Plasters said in a statement.

But as Jones found with her sisters in Zeta Tau Alpha, subtle attitudes within individual organizations are more often the source of discrimination. She suspected some people were disturbed when she brought her girlfriend as a date to a sorority function.

"A huge part of being in a sorority and fraternity is the social aspect," she said. "Most of that social part is tied to straight interactions. You get invited to those things because guys want to have sex with you. When you're out, it kind of limits you a little bit."

Plasters said regardless of the sexual orientation of their members, all organizations have an expectation of brotherhood and sisterhood.

"Certainly we expect our fraternities and sororities to be supportive environments," Plasters wrote. "If a student doesn't

rorities.

Bosch has also provided training sessions for individual sororities and the National PanHellenic Council.

Challenging Greek norms

Many of those who are out in Greek organizations are challenged by certain conventions of Greek Life — stereotypes Jones said hold true at Elon.

"People that are different aren't always celebrated," she said. "They kind of hold a standard of white, straight, pretty, skinny, blonde, brunette. I wouldn't say that it's really a conducive environment to being out or alternative in any way."

Other social challenges LGBTQIA brothers and sisters encounter stem from the historically heteronormative activities sponsored by fraternities and sororities. Jones found that aspects of the Greek system, like date parties and formals, are traditionally geared toward straight couples.

"When people ask what the typical Elon girl looks like or acts like, people describe things that are aligned with sorority culture," Bosch said. "It's in the way people dress, the way their hair is presented and the way they see the world — both external and internal."

He said people generally know which sororities and fraternities are more affirming and progressive, and students interested in joining those specific organizations lean toward them during the recruitment process.

Jones said her sorority did not fall into that category.

"I think there are some very open, kind sororities that are known for being more accepting," Jones said. "I don't know if the

Greek system face additional challenges hide sexuality originates from within organizations

one I was in was necessarily. Zeta and Phi Mu are where most of my friends were, and in general, I think they're more of an exclusive club."

Gay visibility in Greek Life

Greek life accounts for about 40 percent of Elon's student body, but gay visibility within the system is little more than a whisper.

When she came out, Jones didn't know of any other openly gay women in her sorority, and she only knew of a handful in other Greek organizations. This lack of representation was obvious in the curiosity of her peers, which at times bordered on insensitivity.

"It made my social life a little bit more awkward," she said. "People would ask me all types of incredibly inappropriate questions."

Senior Brittany Wenner, a sister of Sigma Sigma Sigma, encountered similar questions when she came out to her sorority her sophomore year. Wenner said she welcomed some of the curiosity, but not when it was clearly rude.

One night, when she was out with friends at West End, a fraternity member she knew asked her if it was "gay night at West End."

"I don't really understand why you think you can speak to anybody like that," Wenner said. "And it was a person I was friends with."

This wasn't an isolated incident. When she came out, Wenner said she received nothing but support from her sisters. But she experienced more negativity from men in the Greek system.

"It was just people who wouldn't normally talk to me about my sex life or who wouldn't normally approach me at a party," she said. "The conversation would quickly go in that direction, just asking me questions that you wouldn't ask someone who was straight."

Wenner partially attributes this treatment to ignorance, acknowledging that not everyone has interacted with LGBTQIA people before entering college, and they might not be as accepting.

She said these are the members who keep negative stereotypes of Greek life alive.

"I think some of the preconceived notions about Greek life can be correct in situational ways," Wenner said. "Open-mindedness needs to be embraced through the university."

And for the most part, she found, it has been embraced by the other women in her sorority. When it came to taking that first step out of the closet, Wenner

“THERE'S A LEVEL OF DISCOMFORT, AND I FEEL LIKE I HAVE TO BE AS HETERO AS POSSIBLE. YOU CAN BE GAY, BUT JUST DON'T TALK ABOUT IT.”

EVAN CANDLER
ELON JUNIOR



Junior Evan Candler, an openly gay member of Zeta Beta Zau, said he joined a fraternity to redefine what the ideal brother is.

said she was no more apprehensive about giving her sorority sisters the news than she was anyone else. It was more important for her to be true to herself in her sorority than it was to hide her sexuality.

"I think that when anybody who comes out faces that fear, not just within the Greek system but at Elon in general," she said. "I do believe that, especially within my organization, it was OK to be myself. I felt like my sisters were very welcoming and supporters."

Conforming to Greek life

Junior Evan Candler, said he joined Zeta Beta Tau because he saw an opportunity to be part of a fraternity that distinguished itself from other organizations on campus by redefining traditional values of masculinity and brotherhood.

As an openly gay brother, he chose to take another man to a date party because he thinks it's important to challenge norms within his fraternity. No one openly condemned their attendance, but not everyone was en-

thused.

Candler said his experience falls in line with a larger attitude in Greek Life that fraternity brothers should conform to the standards of their organizations despite their sexual orientation.

"There's a level of discomfort, and I feel like I have to be as hetero as possible," he said. "You can be gay, but just don't talk about it."

Through conversations about inclusivity with Zeta Beta Tau's leadership, Candler has seen gradual progress in this area. But, he said, the closeted population in Greek life still outnumbers those who feel comfortable opening up about their sexuality.

For closeted freshmen and other students thinking about rushing, Greek life has a specific appeal — Candler said joining a fraternity can serve as a way to hide being gay.

"I think there are people who might want to join Greek life because they think joining a fraternity might make them more straight or something," he said. "Maybe if they do go through rush, they just know that they can never come out."

The need to conceal their sexuality is something some LGBTQIA brothers and sisters have in common, but they agree the need to do so shouldn't exist.

"In terms of a sorority, you're supposed to look at those people like they're your family," Jones, the Zeta alumna, said. "You're supposed to love them and care about them no matter what."

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KATY CANADA | Opinions Editor

Growing a religious community

Elon Muslim population small, groups working to create growth

Caroline Fernandez
News Editor

On any given day, junior Shahad Haswa can be found speaking with student groups, faculty or administrators on Islam, a faith she and just 1.7 percent of Elon University students practice.

According to the Elon Factbook, 10 students identified as Muslims for the 2014-2015 year, but Haswa is only aware of five students who are practicing and involved Muslims.

Elon students and administrators are working to address this difference in an effort towards improving diversity on campus.

As an executive intern to the office of the president, senior Carley Gaynes worked to advance the presence of Muslim students on campus.

Gaynes said she thinks an increase in support and resources would help grow the population.

"I think that there are a number of reasons why the Muslim student population isn't as well represented as others, but largely, I think that it boils down to a need for support," Gaynes said in an email. "In order for a community to thrive and succeed on their own, they must first receive the necessary support and resources from their surrounding community, and that is our job, as Elon students, faculty, staff, and community members who all proclaim our love, appreciation, and desire for diversity on campus."

Filling the gap

Since arriving on campus her freshman year, Haswa has acted as an ambassador for the religion that is significantly under-represented in comparison to Catholicism — more than 1,600 identifying students — and Judaism, a religion that has almost 400 identifying students.

"It's not like I need a Muslim right next to me," she said. "But we need to be able to recruit more people from the Muslim faith to represent on campus. It seems like every other faith is very much represented, very well funded and supported. But how can you have one of the biggest religions on Earth not represented? And that's the gap we're trying to fill."

The junior marketing and entrepreneurship double major was born and raised in Amman, Jordan, with Islam in her blood.

After she had already looked at universities in the United Kingdom and Canada, a college counselor brought Elon's liberal arts education to her attention.

The recipient of Elon's King Hussein scholarship — an Elon scholarship given to Jordanian students — Haswa took the leap and chose Elon not only for the academics



Junior Shahad Haswa is the president of Elon's Muslim Student Association and hopes to increase Muslim awareness and presence on campus.

and opportunities but because of the opportunity to experience a different country.

"If I stayed home, I wouldn't experience the abroad aspect of college," she said.

She did not take into account the university's religious life and culture, though.

"I know there are huge Muslim communities across the United States, but for me, I don't need the community for me to practice," she said. "If I believe what I believe and I have it with me, then that's enough. My faith is just with me, wherever I go."

Haswa said she was curious, though, to see what Muslim-based clubs, organizations and communities Elon had to offer.

But when Haswa got to Elon, she was surprised by the great disparity in Muslim representation compared to other religions.

"I don't like to be critical, but the thought was more like, 'OK, now what can we do about it?'" she said.

As a freshman, Haswa surrounded herself with a community of 10-15 older Muslim students who started the Muslim Student Association (MSA).

Haswa got involved with Elon's MSA chapter by joining its executive board, to increase the group's awareness and presence on campus.

When the majority of the MSA's executive group and involved members graduated at the end of Haswa's sophomore year, she said she was left with only a small handful of involved students who were practicing Islam.

"I first got to Elon and we had a little Muslim community, but by the end of my sophomore year they were gone," Haswa said. "It was me, two other girls and one guy. They try to count the Muslim community on campus, including faculty and staff, but it's almost nonexistent."

Today, Haswa is the president of MSA and acts as a Muslim student representative to the Elon community.

"I've started representing Elon's Muslim community," Haswa said. "If someone needs a Muslim to talk, interview or recite verses from the Quran, I will. There are some students who don't care, but for the ones who do, I'll be the anchor."

With a small Muslim population on campus, many Elon students are not aware of tenants of Islam. So when they do encounter people of the Muslim faith, they bring a laundry list of questions.

Some students attribute others' inquisitive nature to the lack of Islamic presence on campus.

Sophomore Soad Ibrahim, a Muslim student from Kuwait, said she sometimes receives simple and even ignorant questions regarding her faith.

"It's not students' fault because they don't know," she said. "They just ask questions because they don't know, but Elon can't do anything about it because the population isn't here."

Resources available at Elon

As a part of Gaynes' executive intern project to advance the presence of Muslims on campus, she created a website for Muslim Life at Elon, which is now live through the Truitt Center Website.

"One of the major issues that I (and others) noticed was that there was no one place that information on Muslim life at Elon could be accessed by the Elon community, or by prospective students."

The Truitt Center for Religious and Spiritual Life provides prayer rugs and prayer rooms in the Numen Lumen pavilion for daily prayer.

Elon does not have a mosque. The closest mosque is the Pakistan Islamic Foundation in Gibsonville, minutes away. But the Truitt Center does hold events throughout the year to support the community.

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Every year, the Truitt Center hosts an event that honors the Islamic holiday of Eid al-Adha, a feast holiday that celebrates Abraham's willingness to sacrifice his son. Elon's event incorporates food from different countries and cultures, as well as students who share their Eid al-Adha stories.

Looking to the future

Many students feel that a larger Muslim presence on campus is a necessary step in strengthening Elon's commitment to diversity.

Sophomore Ben Lutz, who is concentrating in the Middle East with his International Studies major, said he hopes to see more diversity on Elon's campus.

"I would like Elon to have more Muslim students to add to the richness of Elon's community, as well as have better balanced discussions about current issues with all sides better represented," Lutz said.

While support is needed to make the religious group's presence on campus grow, Haswa understands that it will not happen overnight.

"Because we don't get the attention and support we need, it's hard for us to grow," she said. "So right now, we're just trying to stabilize it and be there whenever we can."

Haswa believes breaking the stigma and stereotypes associated with Islam is a step in the right direction.

"When we talk about Islam we have to make sure we're not just associating it with the Middle East," Haswa said. "There are Muslims in Africa, Asia, Raleigh. They're everywhere. It's not like they're just not attracting one ethnicity or country. It's a whole nation."

From Fighting Christians to multifaith

Elon becoming a model campus for religious and spiritual plurality

Tanza Loudenback
Senior Reporter

Elon College was founded in 1889 by the Christian Connection to prepare students for careers as ministers and teachers during their time as a Fighting Christian. Since Elon eliminated mandatory chapel attendance in 1969, the university's ties with the United Church of Christ (UCC) have weakened as Elon began to emphasize religious diversity and the cultivation of an "academic community that transforms the mind, body and spirit."

In 2003, Elon received a seven-figure endowment gift for the establishment of the Truitt Center for Religious and Spiritual Life — a place where students can learn about their own and other faiths. Today, the Numen Lumen Pavilion stands strong as one of the most frequently scheduled buildings on campus, according to Physical Plant set-up crews.

Last year in a piece published in Trusteeship magazine, President Leo Lambert and Senior Adviser to the President Jeff Stein outlined Elon's commitment to interfaith work. According to the article, Elon's student body "is nearly 25 percent Roman Catholic and 10 percent Jewish. Every Protestant tradition is represented on campus, alongside Muslims, Hindus, and Buddhists."

But the campus' fastest growing demographic is none — those who do not iden-

tify with any single religion.

"I would consider myself to be spiritual [rather than religious] in that I meditate almost daily and focus on positive and healing energies," said senior Lauren Berk. "Spirituality allows the individual to seek their own path and determine their own values."

Elon recognizes nearly 20 groups on campus as religious or spiritual, including Young Life College, Iron Tree Blooming Meditation Society, LEAF (Lutherans, Episcopalians and Friends), Muslim Life at Elon and Elon Hillel, a home for Jewish life on campus. According to a case study in Trusteeship magazine, Jewish life at Elon has experienced a 500 percent increase in the past dozen years — about 500 Elon students and dozens of faculty and staff identify as Jewish today, up from just 76 students in 1993.

Still, according to Lambert's article, Elon's mission isn't simply to help individual religious and cultural groups become more established on campus but to help all students reach a level of religious and cultural competency that leads them to success.

A study released earlier this year by Interfaith Youth Core (IFYC) draws some critical attention to religious and spiritual climate on college campuses. A team of researchers led by professors from North Carolina State University and New York University surveyed college students' perception of campus climate in regards to interreligious and intercultural conversation. The

researchers collected data on 8,463 students attending 38 U.S. colleges and universities over three academic years and found that as students with a myriad of racial, ethnic and economic backgrounds move through college, their perceptions of religious acceptance and support seem to worsen.

In fact, results of the study revealed students who tend to perceive less structural diversity on their campus are students who have been in college longer than their first-year counterparts.

"I think Elon does promote interfaith conversations...however, there's definitely room for improvement," said Berk, who was heavily involved in InterVarsity, a non-denominational Christian fellowship, in her first year.

"I wasn't as much interested in attending services as I was interested in finding community and like-minded friends who shared my values of service and equality," she said.

The study also found that while most first-year students report a sense of support for spiritual expression, that number quickly tapers as students spend longer on campus. Researchers suggested that this trend is due to older students having more opportunities to develop realistic and more critical views of their institution. It's possible that first-year students come to college with an idealized view and become more critical over time.

By the end of her first year, Berk started

to challenge her own beliefs in Christianity. "When I started learning more about feminism and women's empowerment, I couldn't accept the judgmental, patriarchal themes within Christianity," said Berk, who now identifies as atheist.

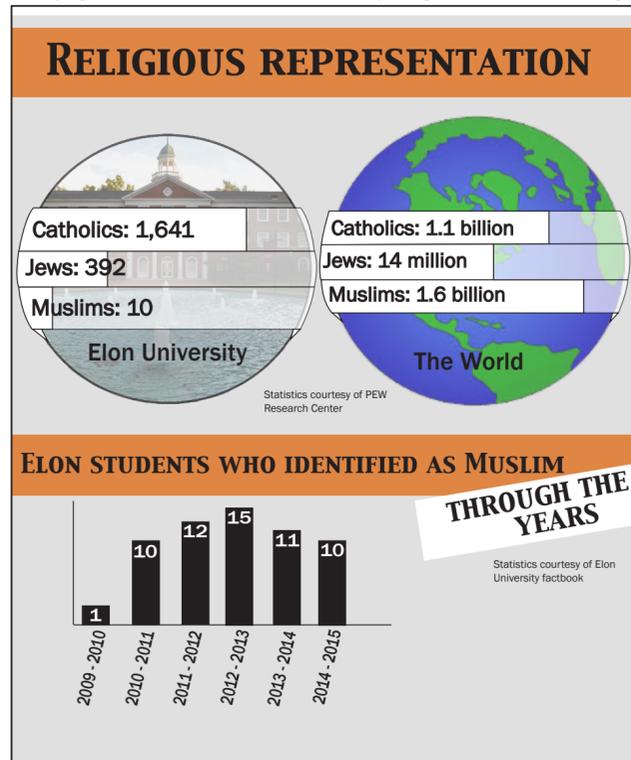
According to Lambert's article, Elon has worked closely with Eboo Patel, founder and president of Chicago-based IFYC. Elon subscribes to Patel's definition of religious pluralism as a platform for promoting interfaith understanding.

"My own definition of pluralism has three parts: respect for different identities, positive relationships between diverse communities and a collaborative commitment to the common good," Patel said.

While Berk commends the opportunities the Numen Lumen space has provided for students, she said there's more that can be done for collaborations between students of faith and non-faith based groups on campus.

"Just because I'm an atheist now doesn't mean I don't share similar values, passions and interests to many of my religious peers," Berk said. "I think there are a good number of students at Elon who probably feel similarly."

** While IFYC does not provide the names of the 38 colleges and universities observed in their study of college campuses, Elon has been explicit about their ongoing partnership with IFYC.*



THE EDGE

THE SPECIAL EDITION COMES OUT

FRIDAY APRIL 10TH

Editorial

The Pendulum seeks to inspire, entertain and inform the Elon community by providing a voice for students and faculty, as well as serve as a forum for the meaningful exchange of ideas.

Meal plans should be optional for students with kitchens

Meal plans are a waste of money for Elon University students who already have full kitchens and would rather not purchase one. But they're a source of income for the university.

Through their sophomore year, students living on campus are required to spend between \$3,129 and \$3,971 on a meal plan.

For students living in residence halls, these requirements are logical. But it doesn't make sense for students in apartments with full kitchens to spend thousands of dollars on a meal plan they won't use. The least expensive meal plan — 200 block — isn't even available to students on campus until their junior year.

Assistant Director for Auxiliary Services Carrie Ryan said these requirements allow the university to keep dining costs down.

"By requiring all students in these classes to have a meal plan, dining services can provide more food venues, more food item options and longer hours of service," she said in an email, noting that the university wouldn't be able to sustain its current level of dining service if meal plans were issued on a voluntary basis.

It's wonderful that dining services provides all that it does — it's undoubtedly appreciated by students in residence

halls — but those who aren't going to eat the food in the first place shouldn't be picking up the slack to keep costs low. Requiring them to spend an exorbitant amount on food they'll never eat is the university's way of generating revenue from unconsumed meals.

Ryan said the meal plan requirements support Elon's residential model, which includes housing freshmen and sophomores entirely on campus. She said residential environments include dining facilities and are designed to facilitate social interaction during meals. But a number of sophomores live in apartments on campus with their own kitchens. It's valid to strive for fostering community in a residential model, but a sophomore living in an apartment has likely already discovered a community and no longer needs those facilities to

create one.

These students could spend \$50 every week for a whole year and not spend as much as they would on the least expensive meal plan.

Ryan said some students may be exempt from the meal plan requirements if they have dietary restrictions or specific health needs, but she noted this doesn't guarantee an exception will be made.

At the very least, students with medical restrictions

should have the power to opt out of a meal plan that would cause them to have health problems. Under the current system, they can apply to do so but have no guarantee of success.

When it comes to purchasing meal plans, not everyone has the same needs. Ultimately, the university benefits more than the students who don't think they need a meal plan. Those students should be able to forgo purchasing one.

STUDENTS COULD SPEND \$50 PER WEEK FOR A YEAR AND SPEND LESS THAN THEY WOULD ON THE LEAST EXPENSIVE MEAL PLAN.

MEAL PLAN	PRICE	BENEFITS
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All Access +7	\$3,736	Unlimited dining hall visits and 7 weekly meal exchanges
All Access +14	\$3,971	Unlimited dining hall visits and 14 weekly meal exchanges
200 Block	\$2,830	200 meals per year
300 Block	\$3,554	300 meals per year

Birth control positives outweigh negatives

Let's be real: birth control is a great thing. If it does its job, it prevents pregnancy, alleviates horrible cramps and reduces acne.

Myths about birth control range from obscene weight gain to infertility with prolonged use and protection against sexually transmitted infections, or STIs. Put simply, these just aren't true.

Weight gain is a big reason some women choose not to go on birth control altogether — I know I was hesitant at first, too. But many studies, such as "Effect of birth control pills and patches on weight" published on the U.S. National Library of Medicine website, show no direct link between contraception and weight gain.

Some explanations as to why women feel they gain weight when taking birth control may be that the hormone progesterin may increase appetite, and the added estrogen may lead to bloating and water

retention. Focusing on a healthy lifestyle through a balanced diet and exercise will help keep weight off.

The idea that using birth control, specifically the pill, for long periods of time leads to fertility problems is also a common belief, and it makes sense if you think about it. But you can get pregnant as soon as you stop using your birth control, which is why it's vital to remember to use it exactly how it's intended, whether it's taking a pill every day or changing your intrauterine device (IUD) every month.

Hormonal birth control can help protect you from pregnancy, bad acne, cramps, period irregularity, an increased risk of cancer — the list goes on. But of all the various types of protection offered, the only way to prevent yourself from getting STIs is to use a condom or another type of barrier contraception or to abstain from sex altogether.

The positives of birth control far outweigh the negatives, and I would rather gain a little weight from the pill than gain a lot of weight from a baby.

There are many different forms of

contraception beyond the pill, and all offer similar benefits. Research can and should be done in order to figure out which type is best for each individual, but it's important to know that weight

gain and infertility aren't side effects of any birth control, and STI protection can only be offered through barrier contraceptives.



Birth control can reduce acne, alleviate cramps, prevent cramps and stop pregnancy.

JANE SEIDEL | Photo Editor

THE PENDULUM

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The Pendulum is a daily operation that includes a newspaper, website, magazine and multimedia. Letters to the editor are welcome and should be typed, signed and emailed to pendulum@elon.edu as Word documents. The Pendulum reserves the right to edit obscene and potentially libelous material. Lengthy letters may be trimmed to fit. All submissions become the property of The Pendulum and will not be returned. The Pendulum is located on the third floor of the Elon Town Center on Williamson Avenue.

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Self-care is subjective and multifaceted

Health encompasses so much more than the fifth-grade nutrition class you had to take where you learned about the



Delaney McHugo
President of EFFECT

food pyramid and your Body Mass Index. Taking care of yourself is not limited to your diet or your exercise routine. Self-care, a core word for the feminist community, means doing whatever makes you the healthiest, happiest and safest version of yourself. Self-care includes mental, spiritual and sexual health.

Self-care is subjective and individualized. One method of self-care, like binge-watching season three of "House of Cards" after a stressful week of mid-

terms, might only be helpful to certain individuals. It takes time to figure out which self-care tactics work for you and which ones are harmful. If you feel emotionally depleted, maybe a phone call home to your mom will help you recharge — for others that could only make it worse.

Even when the magazines tell you an "X" number of calories should be consumed or burned in a day, you have to realize that statistic is based on an average, and your body may need something different. It's up to you to figure that out for yourself. It's not going to be easy. You will do things in the name of self-care and learn later that you probably should have gone without that whole sleeve of Oreos or that 10-mile run. You are allowed to mess up.

Most importantly, because self-care is subjective, only you should have a say in how you take care of yourself.

Commenting on other's habits, rou-

ting or choices under the guise of "for their health benefit" is unnecessary and often cruel. Mental, spiritual and sexual health is not something you can guess by staring at someone in line for coffee.

Even the physical side of health is misleading. One person's body type might be what some people deem "unhealthy," but that person could actually be in stable health. Unless you're a medical professional or your friend asks for some advice, try to avoid making snap judgments about someone else based solely on what you think "healthy" should look like.

As long as he or she isn't harming the people around them, you shouldn't criticize or judge. If you think someone is harming themselves by their choices, then that should be a conversation both parties are willing to have.

As feminists, we try to be as open-minded as possible to different lifestyles, cultures and experiences. In

doing so, we realize that choices we would make for our own self-care are going to be vastly different than the choices of the person sitting next to us in class.

Focus on yourself, your body, your mind and the best you that you can be. Try to help others do the same. Support the people you love. Grab a spoon when your friend comes home with a pint of ice cream after a night of terrible sex, and drive them to a bar an hour away when the campus bubble starts to feel way too small. Balance responsibility with personal splurges. You'll never get it quite right, but who wants to be perfect, anyway?

Submit a letter to the editor at elonpendulum.com

DOCTORS' ORDERS

HEALTH AND WELLNESS, WEALTH AND HELLNESS



Lauryl Fischer & Frankie Campisano
Columnists

When The Pendulum decided to do an issue on health and wellness, naturally we medical un-professionals got excited. Finally, a call for our expertise. We fully prepared ourselves to receive calls from the staff, asking for our opinions and seeking our advice. And yet — nothing. So no surprise when we saw how outdated most of these articles were. With all due respect to this beautiful issue the staff compiled, you can ignore what you read in these pages, except for our column. We're bringing you everything you need to know about the health concerns of today's youth. And we're doing it in a nifty top 10 list.

1. **Netflix bingeing:** Here's how to tell if you've bingeed: Are there potato chip crumbs in your belly button? Is that a Zebra Cake you're sitting on? Do you remember the name the powerhouse of the cell? (Mitochondria.) If you answered yes, yes and no — then close your laptop and go outside. It still exists. (And yes, you can read that as an "Unbreakable Kimmy Schmidt" reference.)



2. **When you haven't seen a dog in person in more than 24 hours:** We deem this "puppy withdrawal," and the best thing you can do is find a dog immediately. Pet it. Pet it and compliment it on its life choices.

3. **Waking up for an 8 a.m.:** This is so real. Why, after all the scientific studies conducted, do we still have class this early? Rise up, Elon. Let's peacefully protest this atrocity, with punny posters and kumbaya sit-ins, while we all wear pajamas.

4. **All your parents' favorite celebrities are dying:** You do not know who most of these people are, but you keep seeing articles about their untimely passing on your parents' Facebook feeds. Be prepared — sadness, after all, is very contagious.

5. **Your boo won't text you back: (Probably because you're still using "boo" when the rest of the world has moved to "bae")** Text them incessantly. Text them entire sonnets in iambic pentameter. It's what Shakespeare would do if he were a millennial.

6. **Your ears reject garbage music quality:** This is only on the list because we needed it to add up to 10 items. You know when you want to watch a YouTube video in glorious 1080p HD, and it can only load 240p, and you want to just gouge out your eyes? This is the same thing but for sound.

Once you go FLAC, you never go back. iTunes doesn't accept FLAC audio files, as you audiophiles already know. You can survive off 320kbps mp3 files, but if you're listening to Apple's 256kbps files from the iTunes store or even a 128kbps mp3 ripped from YouTube, do your ears a favor and upgrade. It will change your life and, more importantly, the way you listen to music.

7. **When your homies don't get your pop culture references:** This can lead to a sense of alienation from your peers. The best thing to do when you're left hang-

Rx PRESCRIPTION
Doctor's Orders is a weekly satirical column in which two unprofessional, definitely fake doctors offer up prescriptions for their Phoenix patients.

ing is laugh at your own references. Give yourself a knee slap.

8. **Microaggression — Racism edition:** We could call this a case of foot in mouth syndrome, but that would be micro-aggressive of us, and we want to be very aggressive with the treatment of this particular affliction because it's a doozy. We suggest Googling what microaggression is and going from there. We'll only judge you if you don't.

9. **Existential crises over BuzzFeed quiz results:** In a quiz titled "What 90s sitcom are you?" BuzzFeed said you were "Full House" when you know you're more "Fresh Prince of Bell Air", and now you're spiraling out of control. You're staring into the abyss. You're reading Albert Camus' "The Stranger." What are you going to do? Philosophers have been asking that for centuries, so how the heck are we supposed to provide you with any advice? Take the BuzzFeed quiz again.



10. **You're still reading newspapers:** Don't you know that you can have your news digitally transmitted to the computer you carry around in your pocket? Unless you're reading this online, in which case you're still kind of 90s', but that's cool with us.

Balancing physical and mental health

College is demanding of its students academically, socially and emotionally. But the most difficult balancing act is between their physical fitness and academic success. The fact that one can easily take precedence over the other is a problem that

Elon should solve by requiring students to take at least one course in physical education as a general education requirement.

Long before I started college life, I heard rumors of the dreaded "freshman 15," the notion that incoming students often become so lazy and irresponsible that they gain 15 pounds.

Even though the term carried a sense of inevitability back then, I promised myself I wouldn't be subject to poor nutrition, and that I would live a healthier lifestyle by myself. But there are some promises that just can't be kept.

The point is not necessarily to tell students how they should live their lives, but to inform them on what exactly healthy living is. Even a single class can help students decide what they want to value in their lifestyles,

instead of being left to figure it out for themselves.

While 15 pounds is likely an exaggeration of the average weight gained by freshmen, the message behind the term "freshman 15" is quite clear — many incoming students lack the drive and ability to make quality decisions in the face of the radical freedom provided by college life, especially concerning health.

In my case, though, what kept me from maintaining my physical health was the focus I placed on my studies and maintaining high grades. In the debate between physical health and academic success, I had chosen my side since my first day at Elon.

The fact that there are students who either choose to live an unhealthy lifestyle or don't know how to live otherwise is problems worth considering for the university. The main issue is that with freedom comes great temptation — temptation to make irresponsible choices.

To be sure, college life is about finding balance between all different kinds of pressure, and this is an issue that affects Elon within both personal and social spheres. But we can find the balance between physical and mental health if we stop dismissing health and fitness as optional. Until then, for better or worse, we are left with whatever choices we make, healthy or not.



Tim Melton
Columnist



Senior Jordan Cottle multitasks by doing cardio on a treadmill and studying for his classes at the same time.

Living Learning Communities matter

Then-freshman Nathan Smith was placed in the Communications Learning Community as a second semester transfer student. His housing assignment came by surprise, but Smith was optimistic about living with that community.



Sophie Pearson
Columnist

Located in Sloan, the closest residence hall in relation to McEwen School of Communications and McEwen Dining Hall, the CLC is in a prime location for communications majors like Smith.

Smith chose to stay housed in the CLC for two years partly because of its prime location. But the support system he gained by living there was another key factor in his decision to stay.

Learning communities fill a void that may go unnoticed in other on-campus housing. On move-in day, bonds are instantly formed among residents because each holds at least one common interest — a passion for the specific topic toward which each learning community is geared. Additionally, residents may share similar professional and personal goals, like aspirations to produce movies or meeting others who share similar backgrounds.

On Elon's campus, there are more than 20 learning communities. Each has a different focus and a faculty member who supervises semester goals and related events.

For Smith, living in a learning community his freshman year was the best decision he made. He created lasting friendships with the other CLC residents and began to view the learning community as his home.

When Smith's roommate began dating in his sophomore year, Smith's experience took a turn. He began feeling anxious and nervous, and he dreaded spending time in his room.

Then, his relationships began to struggle. Friends who used to hang out in his dorm stopped coming over.

Learning communities lend students a network similar to an extended family because some residents will be your worst nightmare and others will be your favorite people around.



Freshmen Coreena Boothroyd and Rachel Tinker socialize in the hallway of the Communications Living Learning Community.

Growth happens in college. Personally, physically and emotionally, learning communities facilitate internal change and give students a reason to do what they love and make indispensable friends along the way.

Return to court takes willpower

Basketball player watches from sidelines during recovery

"Physical fitness is not only one of the most important keys to a healthy body, it is the basis of dynamic and creative intellectual activity,"
- John F. Kennedy

Brett Gubitosi
Senior Reporter

As class periods ended, students shuffled about campus and walked to their next class, but a few lagged behind. These students can be seen wearing braces or casts accompanied by a pair of crutches and have a few difficulties moving about. Varsity basketball player Nicole Razor is one of those students.

The junior point guard played 17 games as a freshman in 2012-2013, receiving the team's Most Improved Player Award.

"I take pride when players are not able to score on me," Razor said. "I like the challenge."

Razor had her third hip surgery in August after experiencing a lingering pain during preseason. Because of it, she missed the entire season and is still working to overcome her injury. She has had two other surgeries, the first after the 2013 season and the second last June.

Watching from the sidelines has been challenging, but Razor still supports the team and attends all of their games, cheering them on from the sidelines.

"This has been my hardest year," she said. "I think I'm still a great teammate, and, as much as

I support them, I want to be out there playing and fighting with my team."

While she supports the team from the bench, her teammates have supported her recovery. She received words of encouragement via text from some of them on the day of her most recent surgery.

"The hardest part is trying to stay positive, especially since I previously went through this injury. It was discouraging in the beginning," Razor said. "But my teammates are always there for me, so they've made the process easier."

This is Razor's first serious injury and there is no diagnosis. All she knows is the pain came from her hip but is unsure of the cause. This uncertainty will make adjusting to the game a challenge when she returns, but she hopes to be ready for the 2015-2016 preseason.

"It's difficult to pinpoint a certain muscle or part of the body," Razor said. "You don't know exactly what you did to get this way."

Since her surgery, physical therapy has changed Razor's schedule immensely. She meets with Laura Cobb, assistant athletic trainer, four to five times a week to help the recovery process.

Throughout rehabilitation, Cobb has noticed Razor's positive attitude and her determination to return to the court.

"Nicole's taught me a lot about the passion athletes have for sports and how much they [are willing] to go through to get back playing," Cobb said.

Cobb said Razor's case has been particularly demanding because it is long term and requires time to heal.

"I always tell the athletes recovering, 'it's not a sprint, it's a marathon,'" Cobb said. "It is going to take time and hard work, but it's worth it, as opposed to getting frustrated about injuries."

Razor said the recovery process has been 80 percent mental and 20 percent physical.

"No matter how much you prepare your body, it all goes out the door if you don't have the confidence and begin thinking about what could happen," she said.

Moving around campus has also been an adjustment because her hip brace and crutches make her normal walk through campus longer.

"It's all a little time consuming," Razor said. "But if you want to return to the court, this is something you have to do."



Nicole Razor had her third hip surgery in August. She missed the entire women's basketball season but supported the team in every game they played.

Elon students take on marathons

Gearing up the mileage, discipline for the big race

Ally Feinst
Senior Reporter

Across campus, a blonde ponytail bobbed up and down, bright Nike sneakers hit the pavement and music blasted. Freshman Helena Nicholson reached another mile on her run.

Nicholson recently began training for a half marathon in Boston this summer. With about a month and a half left before the race, her training regimen has become rigorous.

"I just started a more intense schedule of running six days a week and doing longer mileage," Nicholson said. "I try to run around 30 miles a week around campus."

While practicing running long distance is important, Nicholson added that her diet is just as significant. She now eats more protein than she used to and drinks lots of water.

Sophomore Danielle Dulchinos completed her first half marathon during spring break in Wilmington. She was apprehensive at first since she had previously only run 5Ks and a 'Color Run.' Dulchinos said the support of friends running with her made it much more worthwhile.



Sophomores Emily Harrison and Danielle Dulchinos completed their first half marathon over spring break. The duo has been training for months.

"My friend convinced me to start training because she had run lots of half and full marathons," Dulchinos said. "When she went abroad to Spain, I began training with another friend who was at the same running level as me."

Freshmen Olivia Sorbo and Olivia Vaz are training for a half marathon in June in Fairfield, Connecticut. Training together, the two agree, makes it fun and much easier.

"This is my first half marathon, so doing it with Liv is a great motivator," Vaz said.

Sorbo and Vaz are on a 16-week plan, training five days a week with three of the days specifically for running. The rest they spend on cross and strength training, and following Blogilates' YouTube videos or taking cardio classes at the gym.

Their Fitbits, Vaz added, are an important part of their training

plan, tracking their movement and running distance each day.

Sorbo decided to do another half marathon after having positive experiences running in previous races.

"I like having something to work toward," Sorbo said. "I played field hockey in high school so I was always looking to have a low mile time. Once that was over, I wanted a new something to focus on."

For Nicholson, running has been a huge part of her life since high school. She runs almost every day, a training schedule she says contributes to her positive mindset.

"When I had shin splits in the winter, I couldn't run, and I noticed a dramatic change in my mood," Nicholson said. "People say they get a 'runner's high,' but for me, it's an overall improvement of happiness."

Dulchinos said the running community has given her a greater appreciation and love for running.

"They are a really cool group of people that are supportive and friendly," Dulchinos said. "I love racing because it's an amazing feeling to have people cheering you on in the sidelines."

A half marathon is no easy feat — 13.1 miles is quite daunting, especially for new runners. Sorbo said

that beginner runners should not be afraid of half marathons because of the length.

"People always say, '13 miles, that's impossible,'" Sorbo said. "Freshman year of high school, I couldn't even run a mile. I am not a natural runner, so I feel like if I can do it, anyone can."

Nicholson added that running in general is a great stress reliever and also a convenient way to work out.

"Running gets you into great shape because it works every muscle group," Nicholson said. "I am fairly lazy in regard to working out, so it's nice that I don't have to go to the gym and do several different exercises to work each specific muscle."

After finishing her half marathon, Dulchinos got hooked. Running with 3,000 people was an incredible experience that made her consider signing up for a full marathon. This was different from her original plan, which was to simply finish the whole race.

"I was running three miles before I started training," Dulchinos said. "For anyone who is hesitant to do a half marathon, all you need to do is find a great plan, commit yourself and just do it."

Lifting legs for awareness, First-year student, Maddy Gross, garners community

Leena Dahal
Assistant News Editor

Like any freshman, Maddy Gross began her school year in the fall filled with flurries of nervous, eager anticipation. The only difference was her heart beat three times faster than everyone else — literally.

While her peers were adjusting to college life and preparing for classes early in the semester, Gross had to add another task to her to-do list: managing her Postural Orthostatic Tachycardia Syndrome (POTS), a diagnosis she received just three months after she started at Elon.

POTS, a disorder of the autonomic nervous system, affects the heart's ability to circulate blood throughout the body while in an upright position.

As the syndrome causes blood to pull to the extremities, the heart rate to double or triple and the body to work twice as hard to remain in the upright position, people diagnosed with POTS often have to raise their feet to allow blood to circulate.

It was while she was in this "semi-upside down" position when Gross decided she would respond to her diagnosis in a positive and public way: a social media awareness campaign, Legs Up For POTS, that would allow POTS patients to gain visibility and support.

The journey to a diagnosis

Around the time when high school students receive college acceptances in March 2014, Gross, a Maryland native, began showing stroke-like symptoms, which eventually led to fainting and twitching.

After receiving every possible diagnosis — from epilepsy to brain cancer — she was prescribed seizure medicine.

But its efforts to normalize her condition failed as her blackouts continued and her symptoms worsened.

During the summer, Gross would face a series of high fevers.

"They threw a Lyme disease diagnosis at me just based on my symptoms," Gross noted. "The antibiotics they put me on actually made everything way worse."

But it was at Elon where her ever-growing list of possible diagnoses would end.

Her roommate, freshman Darby Campbell, recalled the effects Gross's symptoms had on her early start at Elon.

"She was not able to do much really because she was so sick," she said. "She had to stay in our room most of the time, and it was really heartbreaking to see."

After sustaining head injuries from fainting in her dorm and hitting her head on a desk, Gross spent several days at Alamance Regional Medical Center and

Duke Raleigh Hospital. The nurse overseeing Gross' heart monitor at Duke Raleigh noticed that her heart would shoot up at alarming rates and shared her concerns with Gross' parents.

After consulting a family friend who recognized the symptoms from her son's diagnosis of POTS, Gross' family returned to Maryland to visit a different cardiologist who officially diagnosed her with the syndrome after administering a tilt table test.

Her journey to that official declaration, which was riddled with complications and misdiagnoses, is not uncommon to many POTS patients.

The general public's and health professionals' lack of knowledge on POTS coupled with the variation of symptoms among patients make it one of the hardest illnesses to diagnose.

According to Dysautonomia International, the average diagnosis period is five to six years. Alarming, 85 percent of POTS patients are also told at some point in their journey that it's "all in their heads" or given psychiatric labels.

Finally under the supervision of health professionals who fully understood POTS, Gross' mystery was solved and she could receive the appropriate medication and support she had waited for.

Living with POTS

But her story consists of more than just the diagnosis. As POTS is a chronic illness, the medication she receives only temporarily relieves her symptoms.

POTS is also invisible to the outside observer, meaning Gross navigates through Elon with only

ing sensations before she raises her legs to getting blood drawn.

"Can't you sometimes feel the blood moving around? I start feeling that in my legs and feet," she said. "It's super weird."

The sensations will heighten, causing her to feel more light-headed. And then, the stroke-like symptoms occur — her face becomes droopy, her words begin slurring, and she experiences difficulty speaking, moving and talking in coordination.

"It feels like my words are stuck in my feet where the blood is," she explained. "And to connect them to my mouth takes forever."

In these situations, if Gross does not raise her legs to circulate her blood, within a matter of minutes, she will faint — a situation she has faced multiple times during class.

"Somehow nobody notices," she said. "I come back to consciousness really quick, but still, not fun."

The campaign begins

During one of her visits to the gym — an activity Gross refuses to allow POTS to dictate — she decided to use the elliptical instead of the bike, even though she had been told not to exercise standing up.

"I don't know what I expected, really," she said. "But unsurprisingly, I started feeling my legs fill up with blood and had to go drain them."

In a room filled with strangers, many who directed confused glances at her — clearly unaware of what Gross was going through — this would prove to be a challenging feat.

"Not my finest moment," she said, laughing.

With her feet in the air, her

THE MORE EDUCATED [MADDY] BECOMES ON POTS, THE MORE FIRED UP SHE GETS TO SOLVE PROBLEMS SHE UNCOVERS.

MEREDITH GROSS
MADDY'S MOTHER

a few people aware of what she experiences on a day-to-day basis.

"Even though Maddy is better, she still passes out at least once a week and has to frequently leave class to put her legs up," Campbell said.

According to Gross, POTS is beyond exhausting. With her heart rate spiking to unimaginable rates, she said she feels as though she is running even while standing perfectly still.

She compares the overwhelm-

body semi-upside down, and her mind fixated on what it would be like if everyone understood — without explanation — that she was compelled to do this out of medical necessity, an idea began to flourish.

Rather than letting her idea slip when her blood finally pulled away from her extremities and the light-headedness began to fade, Gross immediately rushed home to execute it.

Envisioning a social media



After Maddy Gross was diagnosed with Postural Orthostatic Tachycardia Syndrome (POTS), she decided to use social media to raise awareness.

awareness campaign that called upon the community to post pictures of themselves with their legs up, just the way she and many other POTS patients do or whatever else you have to do to manage your illness to me," she said. "It tells me that they care."

Gross' mother, Meredith Gross, said the fact that Maddy initially felt self-conscious about putting her legs up — which often kept her from attending class or going out as much socially — inspired her to take her own legs-up photo while out in public.

"I felt a little awkward for sure," Meredith Gross said. "But if Maddy endures some funny looks, surely I can do the same to increase awareness."

She stressed the significance of Maddy's campaign by highlighting that without awareness and obvious signs of disability, it is easy for the community to dismiss someone's challenges and needs.

"The more educated [Maddy] becomes on POTS, the more fired up she gets to solve problems she uncovers," she said. "She has become much stronger, more patient, compassionate and self-sufficient in the face of her health challenges."

Responses and Impacts

Within a week, the page gained more than 150 likes as people from all over the country sent in pictures with #LegsUpForPOTS.

From ballet students raising their legs dressed in pink tights to a hall filled with people hanging "semi-upside down" — the immediate outpouring of support for the page was clear and powerful.

According to Gross, every legs-up picture feels like solidarity in her illness.

visibility and acceptance support through #LegsUpForPOTS campaign

Already, her efforts have made a direct impact on lives. Multiple people have contacted Gross to ask about POTS — questioning whether they or their friend may have it.

"I hope I've made people feel a little less self-conscious about having to advocate for their own needs," she said, "Even if they seem odd from an outsider's perspective."

Gross hopes to sustain the campaign as long as people continue sharing photos, stories and comments. She added, though, that even if nobody did, she would find another way to raise awareness — another reflection of her relentless passion and desire to make an impact on social discourse surrounding POTS.

Her self-advocacy and determination to make a universal difference while battling her own illness has inspired many of her peers.

"Maddy once told me that she wished Dr. House from the show 'House' was real life so that he could figure out what was wrong with her," Campbell said. "With Maddy's campaign, I feel like she is Dr. House for a lot of people."

Community support builds

After feeling light-headed during her Global Experience class in Colonnades, Gross frantically searched for a place to raise her legs.

Luckily, her classroom's attached kitchen provided her with a space to attend to the situation, away from the guises of her peers.

Beth Jennings, a program assistant in Colonnades, saw her lying

down and approached her, asking her to move in order to avoid a situation where she would get stepped on.

Gross attempted to explain to her that she wouldn't be able to move without fainting but Jennings insisted, concerned for her safety.

"We both wanted me to be safe, but she couldn't understand my way of getting to that," Gross said. "As someone who is chronically ill, I have a different view and knowledge of how I have to get to safety and health, so I knew I couldn't move."

Gross said she hopes to give other people a different lens through which to look at health and to see that the ways people define "healthy" and "safe" vary.

Citing the incident, Campbell added that the community could improve in its support for chronic illnesses such as POTS.

"I do not think the Elon community is that accepting of POTS simply because they are not educated enough," she said. "This situation made me really annoyed and pissed off for Maddy. When she has to put her legs up, she has to put her legs up and the Elon community needs to be more understanding and educated about her illness."

Gross stressed that no hard feelings were directed towards Jennings or the situation. The event, to her, only represents the need to spread further awareness within the general public.

Gross said by and large, Elon, especially its professors, have been incredibly accepting of her. Whether it be on her way to



#LegsUpForPOTS, calls the community to send pictures of themselves raising their legs, as many POTS patients are compelled to do out of medical necessity.

POTS: A SNAPSHOT

- ❖ POTS is estimated to impact 1 in every 100 teens before they reach adulthood.
- ❖ There are an estimated 500,000 to 1,000,000 people living with POTS in the United States alone, and most of them are young women.
- ❖ While some POTS patients can continue with work, school, and social activities, experts estimate that about 25 percent of POTS patients are so disabled that they cannot work or attend school.

All statistics by Dysautonomia International

GRAPHIC BY VICTORIA LABENBERG | Design Editor

class or during a Global Neighborhood House dinner in front of more than 100 people, Gross has had to "drain her legs" around large groups of people on countless occasions.

"I've even put my legs up on the grass right next to Inman with a friend holding my legs up for me, and no one walking to class really gave it a second look," she added. "If people walk by and I catch them looking, I usually just give them a thumbs up so they know I'm okay."

The university is also the first place she ever met other people with POTS. Her multiple friends and Kappa Delta sorority sisters with the same diagnosis, serve as constant motivators and sources of support.

Reaching for the skies

Though there were many moments during her first semester when she was close to withdrawing for medical reasons, Gross is determined to continue searching for more ways to help others in similar positions.

Turning every sacrifice into an opportunity, she is motivated to create a foundation at Elon to support the continuation of her work with spreading awareness.

She changed her major from music production, as her illness impacted her ability to sing, to undecided — hoping to find a major that would allow her to further her POTS advocacy.

"I wouldn't want to be any place except Elon," Gross said, "and I'll jump through any health obstacles to stay here."

While she is uncertain on whether she will choose POTS advocacy as her primary career path, she is sure that helping the cause is already an ingrained passion that she plans to continue to nurture.

In the future, she hopes to also advocate for those belonging to other chronic illnesses, particularly "invisible ones" or diagnoses

that are less heard of in medical discourse and whose patients feel alienated.

Gross urges the Elon community to realize that it's harder to live with POTS than a quick Google search of it might suggest.

"Everyone's symptoms [and experiences] are a little different," she said. "All you can find on the In-

a driver's license, graduate high school, or attend college," she wrote. "I know I'll never be cured, but having people like Maddy and Tessa make this journey a lot easier."

To Gross, these instances of community outreach and discourse represent one of the major reasons why she pursued the campaign in

I WOULDN'T WANT TO BE ANY PLACE EXCEPT ELON AND I'LL JUMP THROUGH ANY HEALTH OBSTACLES TO STAY HERE.

MADDY GROSS
ELON FRESHMAN

ternet is stuff about how our heart rate increases too much when we change positions — which is true, and is the defining symptom — but we deal with much more than that."

The isolation and stigma of being constantly sick can also lead to depression and anxiety among POTS patients — making a supportive network increasingly important.

Just last week, Clara Ballou, a sophomore at Elon, posted on the Facebook page, sharing her own journey towards a POTS diagnosis.

Ballou learned of POTS after hearing senior Tessa Kroninger speak about her own experience with the syndrome during ELON THON last year.

Realizing Kroninger's story mirrored her symptoms, she approached a doctor and after five-and-a-half-years of remaining undiagnosed, her symptoms could finally be treated.

"I never thought I would get

the first place.

"The best part has been having friends, acquaintances, and even strangers open up to me and tell me about their journey to diagnosis and where they plan to go from there," she said. "I support them 1,000 percent."

She also shared that many people, combatting other chronic illnesses, have approached her with ideas for their own awareness campaigns.

"Seeing Legs Up For POTS' direct impact is such a huge motivator for me to continue my work," she added. "I'm so excited for it to grow."

With her feet often stretching toward the skies and her goals reaching even further, Gross wants those dealing with chronic illnesses to know that they are never navigating through their journeys alone.

"Don't be afraid to do or ask for what you need to stay healthy," she said. "Whatever that may be."

'Group X' instructors lead tough,

Lauren Phillips
Assistant Style Editor

Junior Ben Neikirk likes to arrive at his classes 45 minutes to an hour early. He isn't there to sit behind a desk, though — he's a Group X instructor, and he's there to teach.

Before his students arrive, Neikirk writes a new class plan and builds the perfect playlist.

"Most of the people that do come to my classes come regularly," he said. "They'll know if they've done the workout before, so I always try to do something new, whether it's the workout or the music."

Neikirk is an instructor with Elon University's Group Exercise — or Group X — program. Group X is one of 10 such programs within Campus Rec.

The program offers a variety of student-taught classes that change every semester. This semester, Group X offers 19 different classes, including "Zumba," "Kickboxing" and "Power Yoga."

Classes are held six days a week, Sunday through Friday, at a wide range of times that suit many schedules. Most classes last one hour, though there are 30- and 45-minute classes, as well.

Group X also offers select classes exclusively for faculty and staff such as "Phoenix Fit" and "Gentle Yoga." Some "Yoga" and "TRX" (total body resistance exercise) classes are open to faculty and staff only. All other classes are open to all Phoenix Card holders who have purchased a Group X sticker.

The schedule and class offerings are determined the previous semester, said current Group X team leader and senior Katie Perez.

The team leaders are in charge of preparing the next semester's schedule, among other responsibilities.

Instructors submit their class preferences, academic schedule and a list of any

other commitments that affect their availability. The team leaders then use that information to build the schedule, striking a balance between cardio, low-intensity and strength classes each day.

"We try to give what students want," said Debbie Norris, associate director of Campus Rec.

To do this, the Group X team takes notice of what classes are popular and makes an effort to balance out class offerings each day. Campus Rec also gathers feedback from students on the classes they most enjoy or want.

The Group X team leader, with the help of his or her team, creates the schedule. Norris, as the Group X supervisor, reviews the schedule and gives the final OK.

"We try to make it as student-run as possible," she said.

Currently, Group X has 12 instructors. Typically, Perez said, they try to maintain a 10-person staff to ensure instructors are getting a sufficient number of hours without teaching too many classes a week.

Most classes are taught by one instructor, though in the past some classes — including "Cardio Partio" and "Cardio Fusion," neither of which are offered this semester — have had two.

"It depends if instructors have ideas that would take two instructors," Perez said.

Instructors usually teach three one-hour classes a week, though this number varies. Senior Bridget Creel teaches four — two "Sunrise" yoga classes, "Cycle" and "Yoga" — as does Neikirk. He teaches "Bootcamp," "Power Pilates," "Pilates" and "Awesome Abs."

Neikirk said he can teach four classes because "Awesome Abs" is lighter — only 30 minutes long — and focuses on a certain body area.

"I just liked the sound of that class because it is more focused and specific," he said. "I also just like being in the studio,



A Group X instructor leads her afternoon 'Zumba' class through an upbeat, high-energy workout.

in that kind of environment, so it was just kind of an easy decision to take on four [classes] as opposed to three."

Perez said classes tend to be more full during the fall semester, but that some classes still fill up in the spring. A limited number of passes are distributed for each class, the sizes of which are determined by the studio size — Studio 6 can hold 25 participants, and Studio 5 can hold 20.

"We're limited to the space that we have," Perez said.

Neikirk sees smaller class sizes, but he said that wasn't a bad thing.

"[Class size] kind of depends," he said. "Bootcamp," in the spring, now that it's nicer out and people are getting ready for all those banquets and beach weekends and Spring Break, they're a little bit busier now. I've had class sell out before, but it's not a common thing. I'd say on average that I have 10-12 in a class, which for me is nice because any more than that and it

gets a little bit hectic, especially in a class like 'Bootcamp.'"

A good deal

Passes to Group X classes can be purchased at Campus Rec's front desk. The pass — a sticker placed on the back of the Phoenix Card — costs \$20 a year and allows students unlimited access to classes.

"We realize that the institution is trying to be a best-value institution," she said. "The lower the cost that we can provide for the students, the better."

According to Perez, at other universities, group exercise classes can cost \$10 per class.

"\$20 a year for unlimited classes is a great thing that Elon provides to students," Perez said. "It's part of their best value policy. Campus Rec doesn't want to nickel and dime students for the services that we provide."

This deal is a part of Campus Rec's mission, Norris said.

"Campus Recreation strives to provide quality recreational experiences for the campus community in an effort to promote the wise, lifelong use of leisure opportunities," the Campus Rec website reads. "Our student leadership and teamwork models allow students a forum for the practical application of classroom theories, as well as the opportunity to develop professional competencies."

Sophomore Sarah Alger, Group X's current team leader-in-training, appreciates this mission and Campus Rec's dedication to promoting the physical health of students and instructors.

"Getting to work out as your job is so rewarding," she said. "You put in the hard work to learn how to do that, how to be an instructor, how to lead and teach a class, how to make up an outline for a class. ... You put all that hard work in, but when you're actually in front of a class and leading and getting paid to do it, it's just like an added bonus. I get so much energy from being in front of a class and getting to share my passion for exercise with other people."

Neikirk enjoys working with Group X, as well.

"I like being able to take a bunch of people's fitness goals and condense them into one class and take them through whatever kind of class it is to help them feel better that day or feel better for a semester," he said. "A lot of people come back, and there's regulars and a lot of familiar faces, and it's just cool to help them with that."

student-focused exercise classes

Perez said she was surprised by the connections she's made as an instructor.

"I wasn't expecting to build relationships with participants like I have," she said. "It's exciting to see those familiar faces. It's exciting to hear their feedback and hear that they appreciate the classes and they feel motivated to live a healthier lifestyle."

with Elon Outdoors to host an outdoors paddleboard yoga trip. Registration is April 7-8, and there will be an interest meeting in Koury Commons at 4:15 p.m. April 7.

Private class requests are also available. Groups such as sororities and fraternities, sports teams or other organizations can fill out request forms online or pick them up

Power Yoga."

The instructors pitch and teach FAS classes themselves.

"At the beginning of the semester, or the previous semester, we'll all submit ideas for what might be a fun class to teach on a Friday afternoon," Neikirk said. "We'll kind of rotate through. Usually the class idea you come up with is the class you end up teaching for that Friday."

Neikirk enjoys teaching FAS and seeing participants' commitment.

"Most people on Fridays don't have that motivation," he said. "They want to go to class and get out and get ready for the weekend, but I think that the fact that there are people who are still dedicated to come sweat and have fun, I think that's cool."

The Group X team is constantly trying to improve its program and attract more participants by expanding its offerings.

"We're trying to increase the diversity in the people that we see," Perez said. "We see a lot of female students. We'd love to see more faculty, we'd love to see more male participants."

Neikirk mentioned that Group X would also like to bring students back to campus for group exercise classes.

"We're always trying to bring new things to the program," he said. "It would be cool to branch out and get a class like ['Pure Barre'] because I know people go off-campus for classes, and that's one of the classes they go to, so it would be cool to maybe bring them back."

Overall, Alger said Group X brings a different perspective on working out to Elon.

"I didn't attend a Group X class before I came to Elon," she said. "It's like a whole new world of exercise that I had never

"I GET SO MUCH ENERGY FROM BEING IN FRONT OF A CLASS AND GETTING TO SHARE MY PASSION FOR EXERCISE WITH OTHER PEOPLE."

SARAH ALGER
GROUP X TEAM LEADER-IN-TRAINING

The Group X team prioritizes their students' workouts over their own. Neikirk said his focus during classes is on teaching, not working out.

"Depending on the class style, of course, sometimes I'm not even doing the exercise with the participants," he said. "I'm just kind of walking around, checking form, seeing if they're uncomfortable with what we're doing, if they need to modify it to make it easier for themselves."

"In a class like 'Bootcamp,' it's more circuit stuff and agility stuff, so different people are doing different things at the same time, so it's easier if I'm not fully participating in the exercise."

Instructors are internally certified by Elon to lead group exercise classes. Some, like Neikirk, only have this certification, but Norris said others get outside certifications to teach at other locations.

Some of the instructors are Zumba-certified, and Alger was just nationally certified.

While training for this certification, she learned how to structure a class, about different muscle groups, and what music to use during classes.

Alger, who teaches "HABIT" and "TRX," makes an outline for each class she teaches. She bases these outlines off those of the instructors who mentored her during her initial training, but she also researches new moves on YouTube or discusses them with other instructors.

Alger's outlines begin with warm-up exercises before moving on to the body of the workout.

"You can use any of the equipment that we have as long as you hit the muscles that your class entails," she said. "You put together moves and exercises that you can teach and that you can portray well and help other people do well."

Alger ends her classes with ab work and stretching as a cool down. She enjoys planning and outlining her classes and said it comes naturally to her.

More than just yoga

In addition to its regular classes, Group X offers special events for Elon students.

The past few semesters, they have worked with SPARKS to put on "Glowga," a glow-in-the-dark yoga class.

This semester, they are collaborating

from the Campus Rec front desk.

Classes are \$20 for an hour, and the cost can be split among participants.

"A lot of sports teams want to do a 'Yoga' class, or they want to do a 'Zumba' class," Neikirk said.

Group X also does a weekly Friday Afternoon Special (FAS) class.

These classes, held 3-4 p.m. Fridays, have a different theme each week. This semester's themes have included "Beyonce Bootcamp," "Club Cycle" and "Beach Bums."

This Friday's class' theme is "Advanced

been introduced to before, and I think it's key to have that in college because you can continue it after college."

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Senior Bridget Creel leads a Group X "Sunrise" yoga class in the Rec Center's Studio 5. Classes are offered throughout the day, six days a week.

SOPHIA ASMUTH | Multimedia Editor

“Mental health is not a destination it’s a process. It’s about how you drive, not where you’re going.”
- Noam Schpancer

Mental health stigmas

Counseling Services and Active Minds

Courtney Campbell
Style Editor

She began missing classes, sleeping through planned meetings and missing appointments during her sophomore year. The more assignments piled up, the more she avoided them and ended up spending that time in her bed, unable to bring herself to do anything.

“It was easy to focus on other things and rationalize that I would just have a ‘power weekend’ soon or accomplish a lot of accumulated late class work in a short period of time,” a female student who requesting anonymity to candidly discuss her mental illness said. “I was so overstressed that I started to ignore what was happening because I couldn’t deal with it.”

On the verge of failing, the senior realized she needed to get help and get into a better state of mind. Her primary care physician diagnosed her with a treatable anxiety disorder, which later developed into depression.

Now more aware of her situation, she knows she needs to ask for help, though it can still be hard at times.

“I think that the biggest obstacle was getting myself to accept help,” Davis said. “After I saw my doctor for my anxiety, I realized that I could tell people when I wasn’t doing well and they could show me how to make my situation better.”

Finding help on campus

As colleges across the country experience an increase in enrollment, the prevalence and severity of mental health issues in students and the number of students taking psychotropic medications have also increased.

An assessment by the American College Health Association found that more than 80 percent of college students felt overwhelmed by all they had to do in the past year and that 45 percent have felt things

were hopeless. Additionally, more than 25 percent of college students have been diagnosed or treated by a professional for a mental health condition within the past year.

According to Bruce Nelson, director of counseling at Elon, many colleges are reporting a range of mental health issues on the rise, and Elon’s Counseling Services sees 10 to 15 percent of the student body each year, but he believes there are more students out there that could use their resources.

“There’s 85 percent of the school that we wouldn’t know,” he said. “I’m always open to feedback to what would help encourage

resource,” Nelson said. “We don’t abandon people. We work until there is a resolution.”

In every meeting Nelson has with students, he asks them what they want to get out of it. His main goal is to meet the needs of the students and get them to a point where they can function. Many students describe their feelings as “stressed” and “overwhelmed,” and the counselors try to find the root cause of these feelings.

The counselors also look to see if these students have a quality support group outside of Counseling Services. Without it, there is a cycle of loneliness, which makes it difficult to overcome issues.

Although her symptoms aren’t as severe

and know what resources Elon has before offering them.

In addition to the Counseling Services, a substance abuse counselor and psychiatrist come in once a week as another resource for students, but with an out-of-pocket expense. The counselors also offer other quality, local resources for students to go to if they are uncomfortable attending sessions at Elon, but these resources don’t come free of charge either.

Getting beyond the stigmas

The stigmas surrounding mental health can make students fear seeking help — many do not want to be seen as “crazy” or “weak.”

On campus, there are groups making an effort to combat these kinds of harmful stereotypes. Active Minds, founded last Fall, seeks to raise awareness on mental illness and get rid of the associated stigmas.

“The first step in combating the stigma around mental health is starting a dialogue on campus,” said senior Rebecca Teague, co-president of Active Minds. “By putting the issue out there in the open we’re empowering others to speak out about mental health as well. It is so important to get the word out that mental health affects everyone, and it shouldn’t be stigmatized or scary to talk about.”

Teague developed bulimia her sophomore year of college. She kept her disorder a secret for two years, fearing how people would view her if they knew. Lying was her way of avoiding the issue and made telling someone not an option in her mind. But, when she finally opened up, she was able to acknowledge what was happening and make a change.

Now in recovery, she knows how important it is to talk honestly about struggles and to be open to treatment. Teague also knows that more awareness is necessary to pave the way for fewer judgments and open conversations.

“When people think of eating disorders,

BY PUTTING THE ISSUE OUT THERE IN THE OPEN, WE’RE EMPOWERING OTHERS TO SPEAK OUT ABOUT MENTAL HEALTH AS WELL.

REBECCA TEAGUE
CO-PRESIDENT, ACTIVE MINDS

students to come and make us known.”

Counseling Services provides brief, strength-based psychological support and crisis intervention to address the emotional, social and academic needs of Elon students. The service is located at the Ellington Center for Health and Wellness on South Campus.

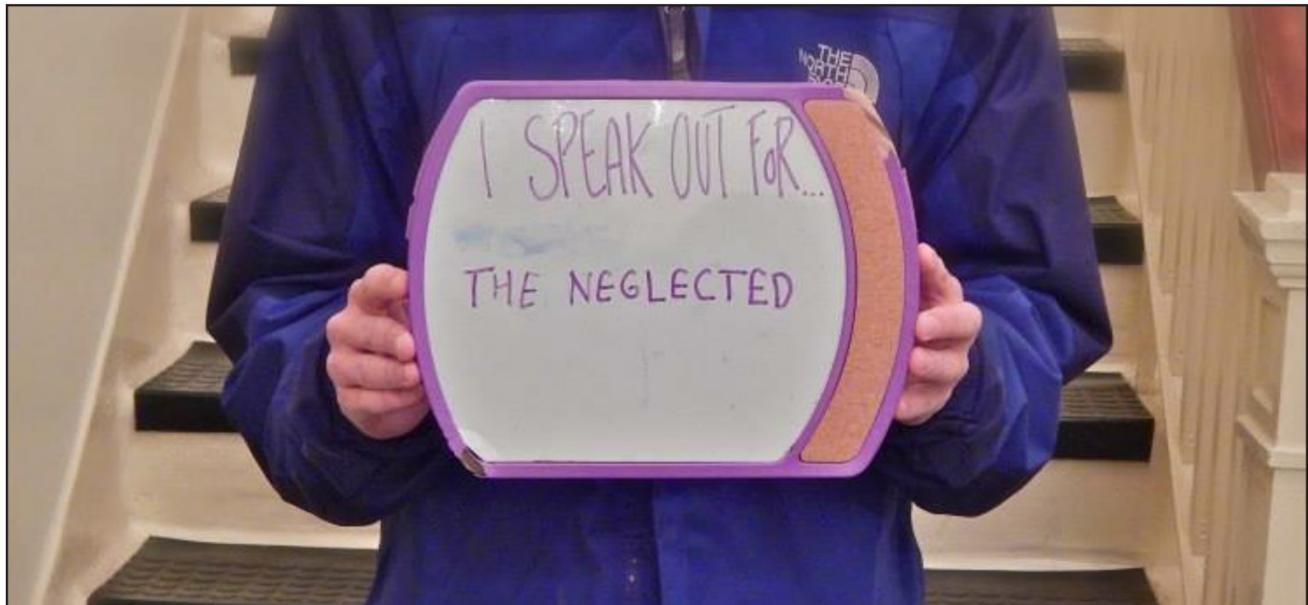
Elon employs five counselors who are fully licensed and trained with experience specifically with college students. Nelson takes pride in the fact that the Counseling Services doesn’t have a waiting list or use interns so students can get immediate help.

“All first sessions are consultations, just to see can we help and if we are the right

now, Davis still takes advantage of these resources.

“Sophomore spring semester, I made my first appointment at counseling services and I’ve revisited sporadically since then,” Davis said. “I had a good experience with them overall and I always felt more collected and in control with my issues after I met with a counselor.”

Students can’t be forced to go to Counseling Services or receive help, but friends and faculty can make recommendations by talking to the student. When approaching a fellow student about concerns for his or her mental health, Nelson advises to not accuse the person, state his or her concerns



Students wrote who they speak out for and why they break the stigma for Active Minds after author Ross Szabo presented his book “Behind Happy Faces: Taking Charge of Your Mental Health.”

stop students from getting help

work to raise awareness and education

they think of people who are emaciated and have to be committed or their condition will kill them,” Teague said. “That is a huge stereotype, and eating disorders come in all different shapes and sizes and affect people differently. Opening up to people was the first step of my individual journey.”

Active Minds works to fulfill this education gap by hosting events and bringing speakers that spread awareness and promote positive practices. Although it’s a fairly new organization, Active Minds has already taken steps to benefit the community and will be hosting Elon’s first Mental Health Awareness Month this May.

According to Teague, college is one of the most stressful times in an individual’s life, and serious psychiatric issues normally present themselves by the age of 25 — which is why a group like Active Minds is important on campus.

“It’s a very large transition,” Nelson said. “Coming to a college campus for the most part brings on a lot of stressors. A lot of balances come into play. You’re freer in a sense and finding identity is big.”

Although Active Minds is not a support group and focuses more on advocacy and education, they do serve as a liaison between students and Counseling Services.

“Some people suffering with mental health issues may be hesitant to seek professional help, and it is important to not push too hard,” Teague said. “Be there for them, support them in their journey and encourage them to get the help that they need.”

Nelson notes it is not the easiest thing to talk to a stranger, and with support and awareness some of these stigmas will go away and students would feel more comfortable about talking about their issues.

“There’s enough stigma in the word ‘mental,’” Nelson said. “I like to focus on resiliency, strength and relationships. If we get into a mindset that we are accessing their strengths rather than treating someone, we can destigmatize it.”

Since Counseling Services moved to South Campus from Moseley in 2013, Nelson said that some students feel more comfortable coming into the building because it is far away and fewer people are less likely to see them.

Ideally, Nelson would like a building where Counseling Services, the Health Center, Campus Recreation and student prevention programs are all under one roof, keeping mind, body and spirit together. He said this would add comfort for students going for counseling as no one would know why they are walking into the building, but this is not possible for Elon at this time.

Making resources known

Counseling Services is making an effort for students to know what they offer and how they can be reached.

According to Nelson, they are working toward broadening their relationships with different student groups so that they are known around campus. By educating dif-

ferent groups on mental health, students can help one another — an important step since students relate to one another better than they do to faculty.

“It’s linking with existing groups or viable groups to break down stigmas,” Nelson said.

Counseling Services is actively researching ways to encourage students to visit.

Recently, Counseling Services partnered with the Truitt Center to create mindfulness groups, sessions in which 10-12 people talk about targeting stress and finding mindfulness. This is the second year the program has been implemented and about 80 students and faculty have been involved.

“No one wants to go to a self esteem group, but promoting mindfulness doesn’t have a pathological tone to it,” Nelson said.

He also believes that if a student has a positive experience at Counseling Services, it will filter out into the community through word of mouth.

Students can also use an online mental health screening tool to determine if they or a friend may need to reach out to a doctor or mental health professional for an evaluation. Each screening only takes a few minutes and provides valuable information about mental health to the student. It can be reached at www.screening.mental-healthscreening.org/elon.

To make these services known, Nelson tries to get out of the office when he can, but knows it’s not always possible.

“I’d rather be here with a student than cruising around College Coffee,” Nelson said. “But I take every opportunity to build relationships with the community.”

In times of distress, Elon’s counselors make an extra effort to make students

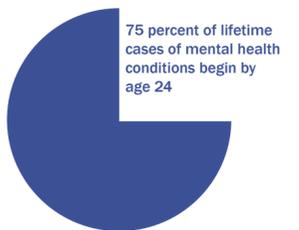
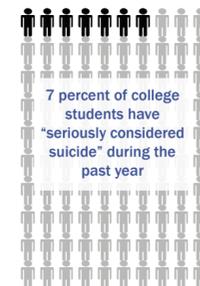
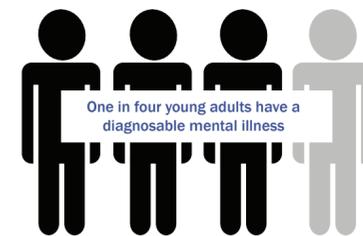


Seniors Catherine Falvey and Emilia Azar raise awareness on World Suicide Prevention Day.

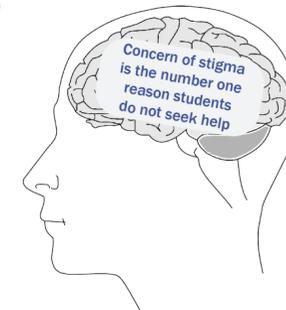
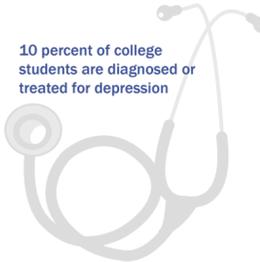
aware. For example, three counselors went to the gathering for Trent Stetler, the junior who committed suicide in January — not to ask students how they were doing, but to be a presence for students to know where resources lie.

For Nelson, if students know they are not alone and help is available, it can make a huge difference in their lives and in the community.

“I think that the hardest thing for people to accept is that they can’t handle all their problems alone,” the female student said. “I know that for me, it was difficult to realize that, although it was going on in my own head, I didn’t have the right perspective to deal with it. If more people accepted help with the issues they had to deal with then we would have a much happier and more balanced society.”



10 percent of college students are diagnosed or treated for depression



40 percent of students with diagnosable mental health conditions did not seek help



JANE SEIDEL | Photo Editor
Neil deGrasse Tyson, world famous astrophysicist and Internet meme, spoke at Spring Convocation April 2.



NICOLE OSGOOD | Staff Photographer
Elon senior Stefan Fortmann crashes the net for a volley during his last home game as a Phoenix April 4.



JANE SEIDEL | Photo Editor
Dr. Danieley flashes a smile during Spring Convocation.

Top Tweets



Matt Mallian
@mattmallian - April 2
@neiltyson just tweeted in the middle of his speech. He's just like us!
#TysonAt Elon



Neil Tyson
@neiltyson - April 3
FYI: Easter barely lands on April 5th. RULE: First Sunday after first Full Moon after March Equinox. Full Moon is Saturday.



Jonathan Black
@J_Black13 - April 4
My friend's little brother is in a band called Taft's Bathtub. Glad America's #teens are so historically engaged.



Only At Elon
@OnlyAtElon - April 2
I've got a test tomorrow, but @neiltyson just told me my grades don't matter. Sooo Happy Thursday?
#NdGT



West End Terrace
@WestEndTerrace - April 1
#WineDownWednesday supports healthy exercise!!! Keep up your routine even after Spring Break!!