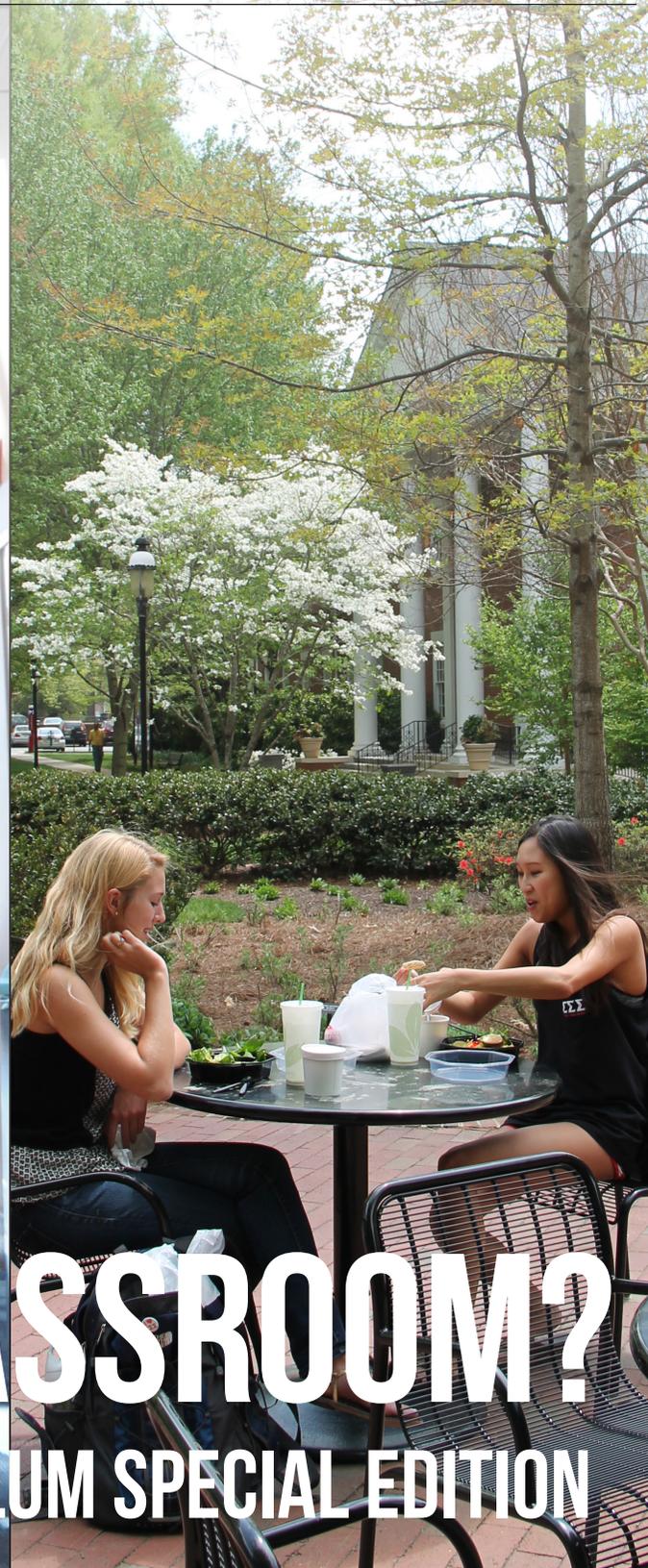


THE PENDULUM

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WHERE IS YOUR CLASSROOM?
INTELLECTUAL CLIMATE AT ELON: A PENDULUM SPECIAL EDITION

Students work to improve intellectual climate

Lindsey Lanquist
Features Editor

Throughout their college careers, Elon University students Greg Honan and Cara McClain often discussed the “lacking” intellectual climate on campus.

It wasn't until last spring, however, that the two decided to take action and shape the intellectual climate themselves.

Now seniors, Honan and McClain have spent the last year speaking with teachers, working with the Student Government Association (SGA) and surveying Elon students to figure out where Elon's intellectual climate currently stands and how to improve it.

What is “intellectual climate?”

SGA defines “intellectual climate” as “the combination of your academic and your social life,” according to Sarah Paille-Jansa, President of the Class of 2015.

But Tom Mould, director of the Honors Fellows program, Elon professor and member of Elon's intellectual climate working group, defined it more broadly.

“Intellectual climate to me is the life of the mind,” he said. “It's not the casual conversations we have on the pathways. It's the conversations on the pathways that make [us] late for class.”

Mould also said it's important to remember that intellectual conversations aren't limited to certain realms of academia. Conversations can be prompted by film, dance, political science, biology or whatever else a student is passionate about.

“This is not some sort of canonical view of higher education that if you're not discussing some deep philosophical thought, it's not intellectual climate,” he said. “It's that self-motivated excitement about discussing ideas. It can happen anywhere. I think our big challenge with this initiative is to define intellectual climate in a way that doesn't [rule] anybody at Elon out.”

The movement

The intellectual climate movement be-

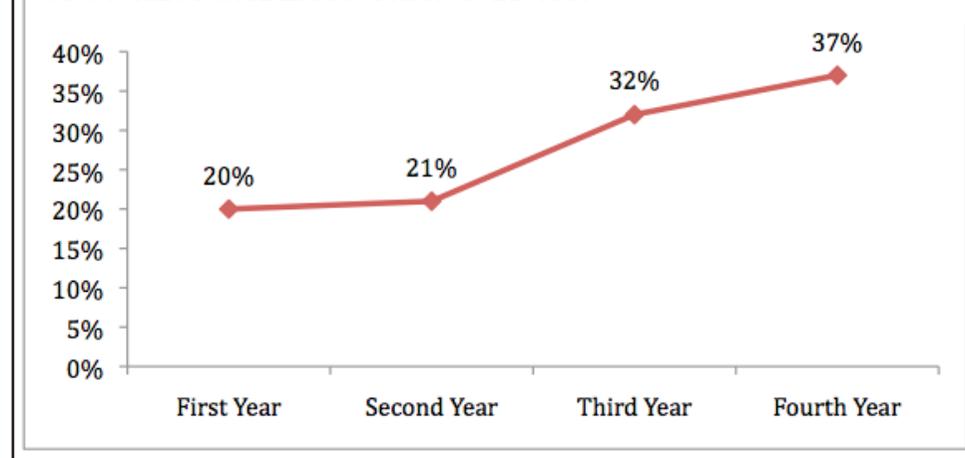
gan in the spring of last year when Honan and McClain reached out to a number of faculty members about the dissatisfying state of the intellectual climate on campus.

They then formed a working group comprised of students, faculty and staff members and talked through possible solutions to the issue.

Welsford Bishopric, SGA president at the time, caught wind of the initiative and established an ad hoc committee (a committee formed for a specific task) to help tackle the intellectual climate problem.

HAS YOUR INTELLECTUAL EXPERIENCE AT ELON BEEN WHAT YOU HAD HOPED FOR?

(% OF RESPONDENTS THAT SAID NO)



GRAPHIC COURTESY OF STUDENT GOVERNMENT ASSOCIATION

Paille-Jansa was elected chair of the committee.

The committee met regularly to discuss intellectual climate and how SGA could approach the issue in a way that didn't interfere with the already-established working group.

They decided that SGA should release a survey that polled students about their perceptions of intellectual climate and what factors affected those perceptions.

The committee sent out the survey in the fall, and 2,016 students of the 5,599 who make up the undergraduate population took the survey overall.

After that, Honan worked with Jason Husser of the Elon Poll to organize the data and give it meaning.

Survey results

The survey found that 36 percent of students — more than one third of the student body — reported being less than happy with the current intellectual climate.

Twenty percent of freshmen said their intellectual experience has not been what they hoped for, and that number nearly

assigned work and the culture of merely doing the bare minimum to achieve an acceptable grade on the part of the students.”

Progress made so far

McClain, Honan and other supporters have already begun making progress.

The working group developed two programs — the Coffee Klatch and a book club — in an attempt to give interested students opportunities to engage in intellectual conversations outside the classroom.

The Coffee Klatch allows interested students to gather in a designated location after speeches and other campus events to discuss what they just learned. A complete schedule of Coffee Klatch events can be found on the “Honors Events” page on the Elon website.

“A number of students go to these various speakers on campus. But then the speaker's finished, everybody leaves, and often, there's no continued discussion afterward,” Mould said. “If you don't discuss it afterwards, you don't hone that knowledge, and it's forgotten.”

Another program the working group put into place is a book club. A different book is selected each month, and some free copies are provided to book club members. Students then meet to discuss what they've been reading together.

Mould also said the group is trying to find a place where students and faculty can meet up and socialize, all the while engaging in intellectual conversation.

“We're trying to create these kind of social spaces that lend themselves toward continued conversations,” he said. “It doesn't all have to be onerous and class-heavy.”

Plus, Paille-Jansa said she believes just getting people to think about it is a step in the right direction.

“The thing about intellectual climate as an idea is when you've heard about it, it kind of changes the way you think about your experience here at Elon,” Paille-Jansa said. “At least it did for me. It really changed the way I go about my life. And

doubled among seniors, at 37 percent.

Only 13 percent of students said they “very frequently” discuss intellectual topics outside the classroom, whereas 46 percent said they “rarely” or “sometimes” do that.

Honan also selected responses from an open-ended prompt that he felt were representative of the population surveyed.

“Elon has failed miserably to engage me intellectually,” a senior said.

“My expectations have not been met,” a sophomore said. “I am constantly disappointed by the standards many professors seem to have for students completing

hopefully it will spread, and more people will be aware of it and thus care about it.”

Room for improvement

Despite the strides that have been made, members and supporters of the movement said they know there’s still a long way to go.

“I think that there is a really underlying negative opinion of the word ‘intellectual’ here,” Paille-Jansa said. “It’s not socially acceptable to value intellectualism as much here. And obviously you can find pockets of that, because I think people are very happy in their respective social groups.”

She explained that she engages in intellectual conversations frequently with her roommates and is very satisfied with the intellectual climate within her group of friends.

“But then when you go out onto campus, you don’t have really intense conversations with people,” she said.

Both Paille-Jansa and Mould said they partially attribute the lack of these conversations on a daily basis to the busy culture at Elon.

“I’m always on my way to a meeting,” Paille-Jansa said. “I don’t have time to sit down with you and discuss whether or not we believe in the existence of a higher power every day.”

Mould agreed and took this observation a step further.

“There’s so much going on. There’s this culture of busy-ness,” he said. “So how do we use what we’ve got and do more with it?”

That question is one the working group is still trying to answer.

Mould also pointed to the lack of di-

versity on Elon’s campus as a possible contributing factor to the deficient intellectual climate.

“All the research says that if you can have more diverse voices at the table, you will have richer and deeper conversations,” he said. “If there is greater diversity just in living, that is going to inherently prompt more interesting and different kinds of conversations than if there’s such a degree of homogeneity. It’s those points where we don’t agree, that’s where you can open up the doors for some really interesting conversations.”

The solution

Mould said he sees two potential ways to strengthen Elon’s intellectual climate.

On one side, people argue that the key is to recruit students who already care about engaging in intellectual conversations. Others say that with the right culture, Elon should be able to orient students toward intellectualism.

“It’s got to be both,” Mould said. “Fellows programs do a nice job, I think, of recruiting students who may or may not have normally come to Elon University, but how do we sup-

port [them] once they’re here? [Another] question [is] how can we identify students who are not in Fellows programs but are interested in these continued conversations?”

He said the Coffee Klatch is one way of giving opportunities to these other students, but the working group is still trying to figure out more.

“I think [the solution] starts with spreading the word and getting students to think about what an intellectual climate is, how colleges are supposed to be intellectual climates and how their experience at Elon could be improved,” McClain

said. “I think many students have never thought about it until someone brings it up to them.”

Paille-Jansa expressed the same sentiment in regards to herself.

“It’s not something that I understood until someone said, ‘Sarah, how many times do you talk about childbirth during recruitment?’” she said. “I’m doing research on childbirth, and I’m really invested and very passionate about my research, and I never talked about childbirth. It’s something that I care about more than most things, and it’s not something that I mentioned during a Greek recruitment.”

The future of Elon’s intellectual climate

Mould said he feels good about the progress that has been made so far in the

intellectual climate movement.

“In terms of a time frame for results emerging from some of the work on the intellectual climate group, we’ve already seen some. So I hope people feel fairly buoyed and optimistic about the potential for change,” he said. “My sense is that we’ve made some good progress, but we’ve got a lot ahead of us.”

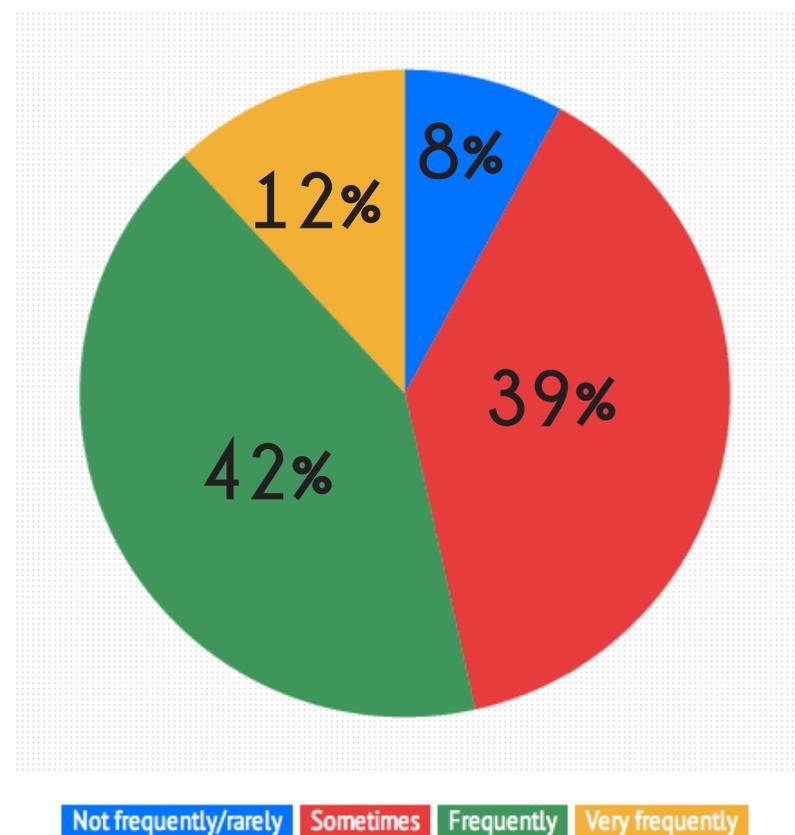
McClain said she’s also hopeful about the future of intellectualism on campus.

“We’ve had a lot of administrative support thus far, and we have amazing students who will continue to work on this next year, so I’m very hopeful,” she said. “When people think of Elon, I want them to think of us as an intellectually rigorous and deeply engaged group of students who care a lot about what we are learning.”

“I THINK THERE IS A REALLY UNDERLYING NEGATIVE OPINION OF THE WORD ‘INTELLECTUAL’ HERE.”

**SARAH PAILLE-JANSA
JUNIOR**

Frequency of intellectual discussion (reported by students)



Study: Elon students upset by lack of intellectual climate

Stephanie Lamm
Assistant News Editor

In a recently published SGA study, more than one-third of the students surveyed reported that they were less than happy about the intellectual environment at Elon. Among freshmen, one-in-five said the intellectual climate has not met their expectations.

A lack of rigor in introductory-level courses may be playing a role.

Laura Roselle, professor of political science, said many freshmen come to Elon ready to work hard but don't feel challenged in intro level courses.

"First year students are very motivated and academically focused when they get here, and they expect Elon to be challenging. However, I've had many students talk to me about not being challenged in their classes," Roselle said. "I've set high expectations, especially in my introductory courses, and I've found students rose to the occasion. They can do the work. We just have to push them."

However, the majority of students in the SGA survey reported they were happy with the intellectual climate at Elon.

The Class of 2017's average weighted high school GPA is 3.96, and one-third of admitted students were in the top 10 percent of their high school class. Many come in with course credit from Advanced Placement exams or International Baccalaureate classes.

The admissions standards at Elon are competitive for a school of its size. Wofford College has a 68 percent acceptance rate, and Emerson College accepts 48 percent of applicants according to their class of 2017 profiles.

Last year, the admissions office received approximately 10,000 applications for 1,500 slots in the class of 2017. Out of the 10,000 applicants, 54 percent were accepted.

While admissions standards have increased dramatically since the 1990s, over the past five years the standards

have remained fairly consistent. The average SAT (math and verbal) score has stayed within a few points of 1220 and the average GPA is about 3.9 for most years.

By comparison, in 2009, the average high school student graduated with a 3.0 GPA and the average SAT score in 2013 was 1010.

Admissions standards have risen, some wonder if academic rigor has kept up. Elon is in a transition period from a small private college to a well-known university. It has added several study abroad programs and enrichment opportunities to try to earn this reputation, but academic standards, especially in introductory courses, have come under fire by students and faculty for being too lenient.

The Global Experience Seminar, which all freshmen are required to take, acts like an introduction to what is expected of Elon students. Jason Kirk, associate professor of political science, calls it the front porch of Elon academics.

"It's really a mixed bag," he said. "It can either be really good, and students can engage with different texts, or it can fall flat, and it becomes busywork. One of the problems is the Global Seminar doesn't always fit with a professors' research specialty. Some can apply global themes to their research, but if professors don't buy into it the course they're teaching, students aren't going to be engaged."

Kirk said that students who like to be challenged are often put off by the ease of many intro-level courses. He said many get caught up in other things outside the classroom or leave the university, contributing to the 10 percent turnover rate.

"The intro classes were too easy, which sets the wrong tone off the bat for the depth of classes at Elon," senior Cara McClain said.

Cara said that many students try to fill their time with non-academic activities. Before graduation, students join organi-

zations, get a job on campus, complete an internship or study abroad.

"I most definitely overcommitted myself, which I would have been less likely to do if my classes took up more time, but I would still have become involved regardless."

With more than 200 student organizations and most students in at least one organization, the involvement rate is high. Elon offers 24 Greek chapters, 15 service organizations, 25 athletic organizations and 70 cultural, professional, religious and academic societies.

Extracurricular organizations allow students to engage with each other outside the classroom, but Roselle warned that freshman sometimes underestimate how much time they should carve out for academic work.

Roselle said when students are not expected to do much academic reading or writing in their first year, they go into upper level courses unprepared for the workload.

"First year students look outward because they have all this free time, so they get overcommitted to all sorts of organizations and don't have the time to engage with challenging course materials when they reach the upper levels," she said.

While there are undisputed merits to campus involvement, some students are worried that without a solid academic foundation, those activities lose meaning.

"The out-of-class noise gets very loud to first years," junior Mary Rouse said. "There's a lot of emphasis on the extra stuff, but not as much on the classroom aspect. What's the point of taking time to do an internship or studying abroad if you don't have the academic foundation to make the most of that experience?"

Starting with the Class of 2017, students must complete two experiential learning requirements (ELR) — an internship, studying abroad, volunteer hours or undergraduate research. Since this program is unique to Elon, the

admissions office promotes these opportunities to freshmen. Roselle said she worries that academics are not promoted in the same way, leading students to prioritize these experiences over classroom learning.

"I think Elon students are very happy with this environment," she said. "It's one thing to be happy at Elon because you're involved, but it's another to graduate with substantial knowledge, discipline and the resilience to be competitive in the world. Discipline and resilience are only achieved through deep intellectual engagement, and that takes time. You have to be devoted to that before all other pursuits."

Are you doing an
internship
this summer?

You are cordially invited to the
**Student Alumni Council's
Internship Send-Off**
Monday, May 12th
6:00-8:00 p.m.
McKinnon Hall

Young alumni will share how to get the most of your internship. There will be opportunities to network with the alumni panelists as part of the program.

Alumni panelists with career experience at Credo, RedHat, the North Carolina Chamber of Commerce, IBM, the Georgia Dome, The Carolina Inn and more.



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Engaged learning inside and outside the classroom

Meghan Mahoney
Arts & Entertainment Editor

The Experiential Learning Requirement (ELR) at Elon University allows students to combine knowledge learned in class with experiences outside the classroom. Students may satisfy this requirement by completing an internship, studying abroad, conducting independent research, participating in service learning or holding a leadership position. By the time graduation rolls around, most students have completed multiple ELRs.

Paul Miller, director of undergraduate research, said students don't just do this to satisfy a requirement or complete a checklist.

"I don't think people conceptualize it that way," Miller said. "I think their motivation is something else that they want to get out of undergraduate research. It happens to satisfy an ELR. I don't think they're driven to satisfy their ELR by doing undergraduate research."

Senior Jeffrey Flitter agreed, saying he unofficially completed all the ELRs.

"The two areas I have been most involved with at Elon have been service and leadership positions, but I haven't done either of the workbooks because I just didn't see the purpose," Flitter said.

Miller said ELRs are "strong learning experiences" that set Elon apart from other universities, especially when incoming students are looking into Elon's programs.

"It's not just a checklist," Miller said. "It's very intentional. What are you getting out of this experience? What's a reflective component?"

Beyond the classroom

Study abroad is another reason potential students find Elon attractive.

Kevin Morrison, director of study abroad and assistant dean of global studies, said the school is fortunate because study abroad is a prominent feature of the Elon education.

"Students come knowing it's something they want to do," he said. "So I

think we've got self-selected students coming. Students choose to study abroad because it is an opportunity to gain a new perspective on the world and to go someplace different. Sometimes it's nice to get off the Elon bubble."

While the research ELR can allow students to research something they're passionate about, study abroad offers "an excitement factor," according to Kevin Morrison. He said there's a "spirit of adventure that's being satisfied."

Miller explained that, for some people, research seems like a daunting task. It's the faculty's job to support students to take that risk. He said the only thing

**"WE'RE
ALL ABOUT
EXPERIENTIAL
EDUCATION."**

**MARY MORRISON
DIRECTOR OF THE KERNODLE
CENTER FOR SERVICE LEARNING
AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

the faculty can do is keep mentoring and supporting students to do research and be visible on campus.

"You can't sit down and do a research project all at once in an afternoon," Miller said. "I think once students start to engage the process they realize, 'I'm going to do this a bit at a time, and it's a developmental progression.' It becomes a really meaningful and enjoyable learning experience."

Mary Morrison, assistant dean of students and director of the Kernodle Center for Service Learning and Community Engagement, agreed with Miller, saying ELRs are "the hallmark of an Elon education."

"We're all about experiential educa-

tion," Mary Morrison said. "We believe, and there's plenty of research to show, that it's one of the most effective strategies for student learning."

Elon's statistics show that service learning is the second-highest way students satisfy their Elon experience. Eighty-five percent of students complete volunteer service, a close second to the 87 percent of students who complete internships.

"Of all the ELR experiences, first-year students have the most engagement in service, either through academic service-learning courses or through the ELR service workbook," Mary Morrison said.

Because students become involved in service at the beginning of their college careers, Mary Morrison said they're more likely to continue throughout their time at Elon, but she would like to see more of it.

"We would very much like to encourage faculty members to use academic service learning as part of the pedagogy in their classroom, and we think there's opportunity in all kinds of disciplines for that," she said.

Study abroad comes in third in the ranking of Elon experiences. Seventy-two percent of students study abroad during their four years, and that percentage continues to grow.

"We have a goal of 100 percent access," Kevin Morrison said.

He said Elon intentionally presents experiential learning, and it is explicit about the fact that experiential learning is valued in addition to classroom work.

Mary Morrison said the students who volunteer in the Kernodle Center office express that ELRs are the reasons they chose Elon.

"One of the reasons they chose Elon was because it was clear that there was a strong value and emphasis on community engagement and service learning," she said. "I think it is one of the reasons students choose this university. I think many other universities are looking more closely at experiential education because they see how impactful it could be."

Continuing to grow

Incoming students and freshman are now required to complete two ELRs, instead of one, to support further development across the floor.

"The eight percent of students who were not completing two were less likely to be employed or not get into grad school," said Connie Book, associate provost for academic affairs and professor of communications.

Miller said this growth aligns with Elon as an institution.

"We're always looking to grow, we're always looking to be better and offer the best educational program we can possibly have," he said.

Kevin Morrison said the ELRs are beneficial because they display Elon's commitment to engaged learning in a way other schools don't explicitly do.

"I think it shows that Elon values that learning is a holistic process and not just something that is done in a classroom," he said. "We really do recognize that learning happens outside of the classroom, and that learning can be incorporated into what is inside the classroom."

ELON EXPERIENCES FOR UNDERGRADS

5 total ELR's available

85 percent complete volunteer service

87 percent complete internships

72 percent study abroad

47 percent complete leadership

25 percent perform research

2 ELR's required for current first-years and future students

Elon's intellectual climate

given some thought to a specific topic. But when comparing the end results, there's no disparity.

"When students come to me, they're interested in research," Miller said. "On an individual level, I don't know if I notice that much of a difference. If you're in a Fellows program, you know that others in your class are going through this process at the same time, as opposed to a non-Fellow who may not be going through the same process."

This overlap, Miller said, serves to enhance the intellectual climate at Elon because discussion is generated both inside and outside the Fellows programs. Having solid intellect, he argues, stems from the ability to ask appropriate questions — a skill that research serves to impart.

"It comes from research," Miller said. "People get excited because they put a lot of work and energy into their research. That's the way we engage the community."

Engagement among students in Fellows programs and those who are not is a crucial portion of Elon's intellectual climate, according to Honors Program Director Tom Mould. Fellows students are selected to be models across campus, hoping they'll lead the charge toward a robust intellectual climate — not comprise it wholly.

While Fellows programs aim to recruit stronger students, they comprise but a small portion of Elon's intellectual sphere.

There are approximately 800 Fellows total. They make up about 14 percent of Elon's student body.

"There's space for everyone," Mould said. "It's not just the Fellows students who are going to be leaders in the intellectual climate."

Fellows falling short

But the Fellows programs at Elon have not supported all recipients equally. Senior College Fellow Julie Crothers felt neglected as a dance major. She benefitted from her scholarship, she said, but was uninspired by the other aspects of the Fellows protocol.

In her freshman year, the prospect of dance research was unfamiliar and intimidat-



Julie Crothers, a senior College Fellow and dance major, said some of the requirements for Fellows are not geared toward majors in the arts.

CAROLINE OLNEY | Photo Editor

ing. Academic requirements, like the mandatory structural analysis, literature review and poster session, seemed irrelevant to her field of study.

"For all the artsy folks, it's more difficult to make sense of things you do," she said. "They teach you how to ask good research questions. As a dancer, I didn't know how it made any sense at all, and I didn't have much help with that for a while."

The unanswered questions and frustration Crothers initially experienced were answered eventually. She said she's grateful, ultimately, for the opportunity to complete a large-scale project independently.

But Crothers admitted she doesn't consider herself a typical Fellow. Opting out of the College Fellows shared housing, Crothers aspired toward a more generic college experience — only interacting with the other Fellows in her Fellows-only classes.

"I considered dropping right after my

sophomore year," Crothers said. "For two whole years I thought it was stupid. But it was worth it to stay. They were paying me a little bit of money, and I didn't want to lose that."

For other students in the Fellows programs, the academic rigor was a tall order, especially on top of the other requirements. Former Leadership Fellow Will Stirn placed an enormous value on his time in the Fellows program. But, he said, he felt that in a program that emphasized leadership, academics were placed on a pedestal. Unable to meet the 3.0 grade point average benchmark, Stirn was cut from the program.

According to Stirn, the homogenized nature of all the Fellows compromised his experience. Being held to a specific academic standard was not constructive for Stirn.

"My biggest confusion with the academia of the program is where they have this standard, even if someone is excelling in every

other aspect of the program," he said. "I didn't think that standard was fair for Leadership Fellows because leadership is such a gray matter issue."

Knowing that each student has a different background with leadership and learns differently, Stirn said leadership education is a process that requires practice and failure, unlike math or science, where the answers consistently rely on formulas and precise calculations.

Eager about pursuing a career in outdoor education, Stirn's leadership education will play a defining role in his life after college. Learning alongside the Leadership Fellows, he said, could have been instrumental.

"There are some people who do the minimum requirements to get by in Fellows," Stirn said. "It makes for a weird situation because some of us were dropped because of standardized policies but were super involved in the program."

Common reading provides common bond

The Common Reading program at Elon University has come a long way since its inception in 1992. Starting with the simple goal of nurturing a richer intellectual community, the program has become much more than students' first official college reading assignment.

College is a major transition for freshmen. Although the entire freshman class shares the common bond of being part of the Elon community, the Common Reading Program brings the class together through the shared experience of having read the same book.

The bond created shows not only that there is a true community on this campus but also that the Elon community is one that cares about the world around it. Almost all the books the committee chooses are set in a place far different from Elon. This opens students' minds to the world around them and stimulates critical thinking about their places in the world.

The Common Reading Committee is entrusted with the task of selecting the book for the coming year. Instead of having a committee of professors from one department, the committee is made up of professors, students and staff from across campus. This setup ensures the book they select will stimulate meaningful, intellectual conversation throughout Elon's campus.

The books selected by the committee are intended to encourage critical thinking that would not arise from casual on-campus interactions. As freshmen learn more about their newfound independence as college students, the chosen books seek to challenge students to consider how their individual actions affect the world around them.

The selection process starts two years before the book is assigned. Although anyone in the Elon community can submit an idea, the final decision is made by the committee. This decision is important because freshman academic programs are often based on the selected book.

The programming related to the common reading strives to stimulate a deeper intellectual discussion. The author of the book often comes to campus to speak to students. Additionally, related events consistent with the books' themes are often scheduled throughout the year. In the fall of 2013, author Conor Grennan did four different question-and-answer sessions involving more than half of the freshman class. He also led a lecture that was attended by about 1,400 people from various General Studies classes.

William Kamkwamba, the author of "The Boy Who Harnessed the Wind," will be coming to campus September 2014 with the director of a related film called "William and the Windmill." Related events are scheduled to coincide with their visit. This shows that the

common reading book itself is just the beginning of a yearlong conversation about broader global themes.

Having the author of the common reading book visit the campus in person does more than help kick-start academic programs and stimulate intellectual discussions. Adding a human aspect to the book shows students that books can be read, discussed and challenged in intellectual conversation.

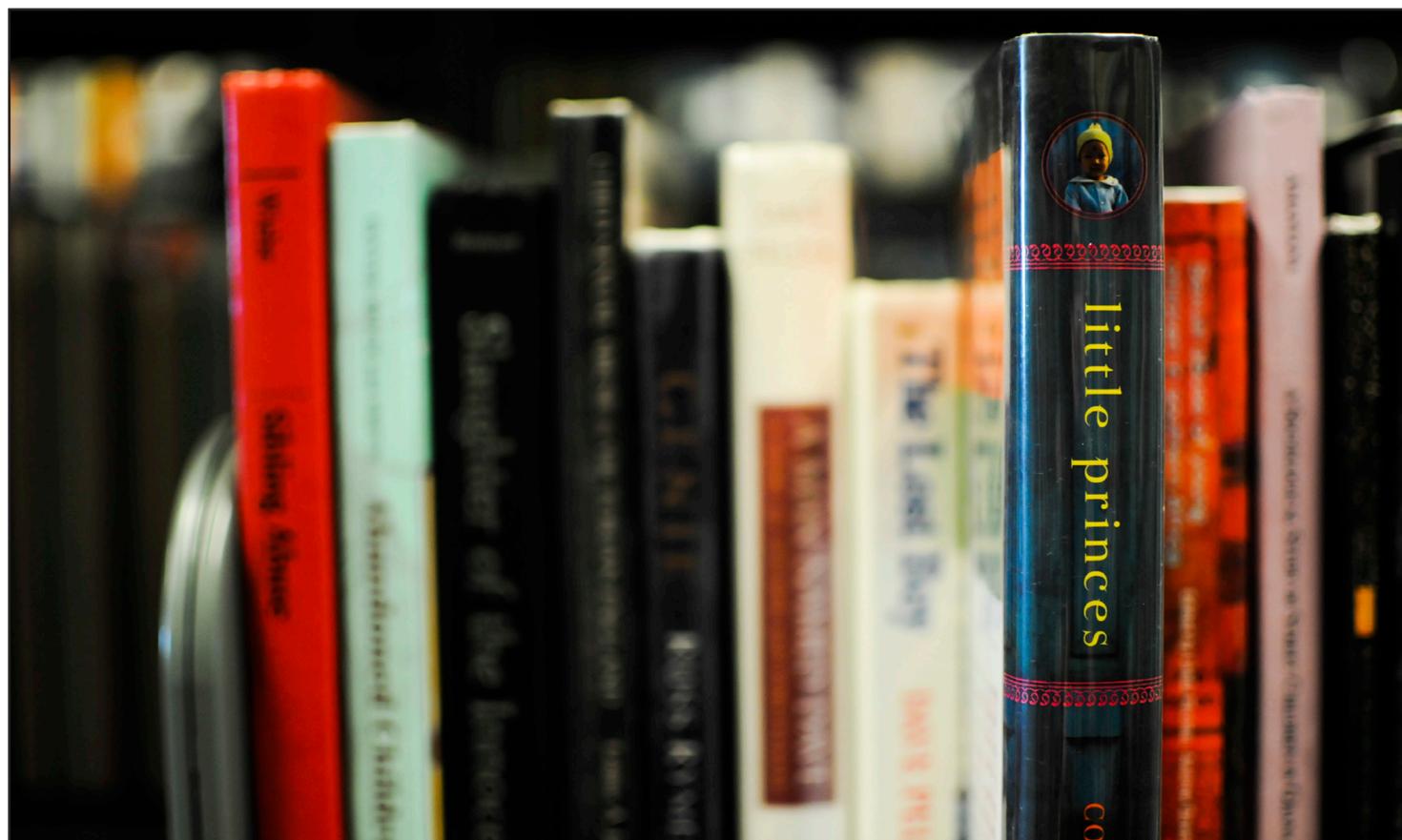
It should be mandatory that common reading selections be incorporated into the "Global Experience." As "Global" classes vary depending on the instructor of the class, the common reading should be a binding component of the first-year experience.

As a campus that seeks to foster global citizens, Elon has chosen many common reading books that have challenged

students to look at the world through someone else's eyes. This is a truly an invaluable skill for college students to have, for they will encounter many different beliefs, opinions and ideas throughout their college experiences.

The program allows Elon to create a strong platform from which many different intellectual conversations and unique academic programs can spring.

The Letter to the Editor from April 16 regarding "Lasting effects: sexual assault on college campuses" included an incorrect link. This is the current link: www.elonpendulum.com/2014/04/letter-to-the-editor-a-response-to-lasting-effects-sexual-assault-on-college-campuses/



"Little Princes" by Conor Grennan was selected as the common reading for the Class of 2017.

Living Learning Communities combine academic and residential experiences

Kaitlin Dunn
International Editor

One of the biggest changes Elon University is striving to make in the upcoming years is the push toward fusing the residential experience and the academic experience. One way the university is working towards this goal is through living learning communities (LLCs).

Currently, 420 students live in defined learning communities. The LLC program is expanding, according to Laura Arroyo, associate director of residence life for residential education.

Arroyo said there will be 22 LLCs next year, and most communities will be expanding to include more members.

Typically LLCs have been a popular choice for first-year students trying to find their niches on campus, but Arroyo said Elon is trying to get more upperclassmen to live in them.

"We had a number of upperclassmen apply this year because we've really re-

vamped our program," Arroyo said. "I think that upperclassmen have found that they fit in there too."

Freshman Riley Billman currently lives in the Communications Learning Community. She will be living there again next year as the resident assistant.

"I really love living on this floor, and I wouldn't want to live anywhere else next year," Billman said. "I have an idea of starting a mentor program on the hall. There will be several sophomores, and I think it could be really helpful for the freshmen."

Learning communities exist to help students both academically and socially.

Junior Maggie Macdonald lived in the International Learning Community for two years. She originally decided to live there to have something in common with the people she lived with.

"In a learning community, ideally, [academics and sociality] are mixed in a way so that you don't know you're learning," Macdonald said. "There were social

aspects because we hung out a lot, but we were always talking about each other's cultures and learning about different cultures. That's something you don't always get on campus."

Ryan Sienrth, a sophomore living in the Science, Technology and Mathematics (STEM) Learning Community, said he sees his hall mates helping each other with schoolwork since they are in many of the same classes.

"I often see groups of my hall mates attempting to work through physics or chemistry problems together," he said. "The learning community generally makes the resource of others in your subject readily available."

Billman also said she sees members of her community working together.

"I've helped people make videos and be in projects, and it's nice to know that there are a bunch of people right here that are willing to help me as well if I need it," she said. "And then it's really great knowing that my best friends are all right down

the hall, so I can always find someone to get breakfast with."

Each learning community has a faculty adviser who helps plan events for the hall and be a stabilizing force in the community. Several professors live in the learning community with their students.

"It made me so much more confident and comfortable around my professors, living down the hall from one," Macdonald said. "If you get an adviser who is passionate and willing to put in a lot of time, it's really beneficial to everyone."

Sienrth's advisor, Tony Crider, does not live on the hall with the students, but still plays an active role in the community.

"Crider is an excellent fit for the hall," Sienrth said. "He's concerned with issues on the hall just like we are."

The faculty adviser receives a stipend to plan activities such as bringing in speakers and going on excursions to foster group bonding and introduce students to new experiences.

Despite the benefits some students receive from LLCs, not everyone has found their niche in them.

Sophomore Joey Louis lives in the Arts and Letters learning community.

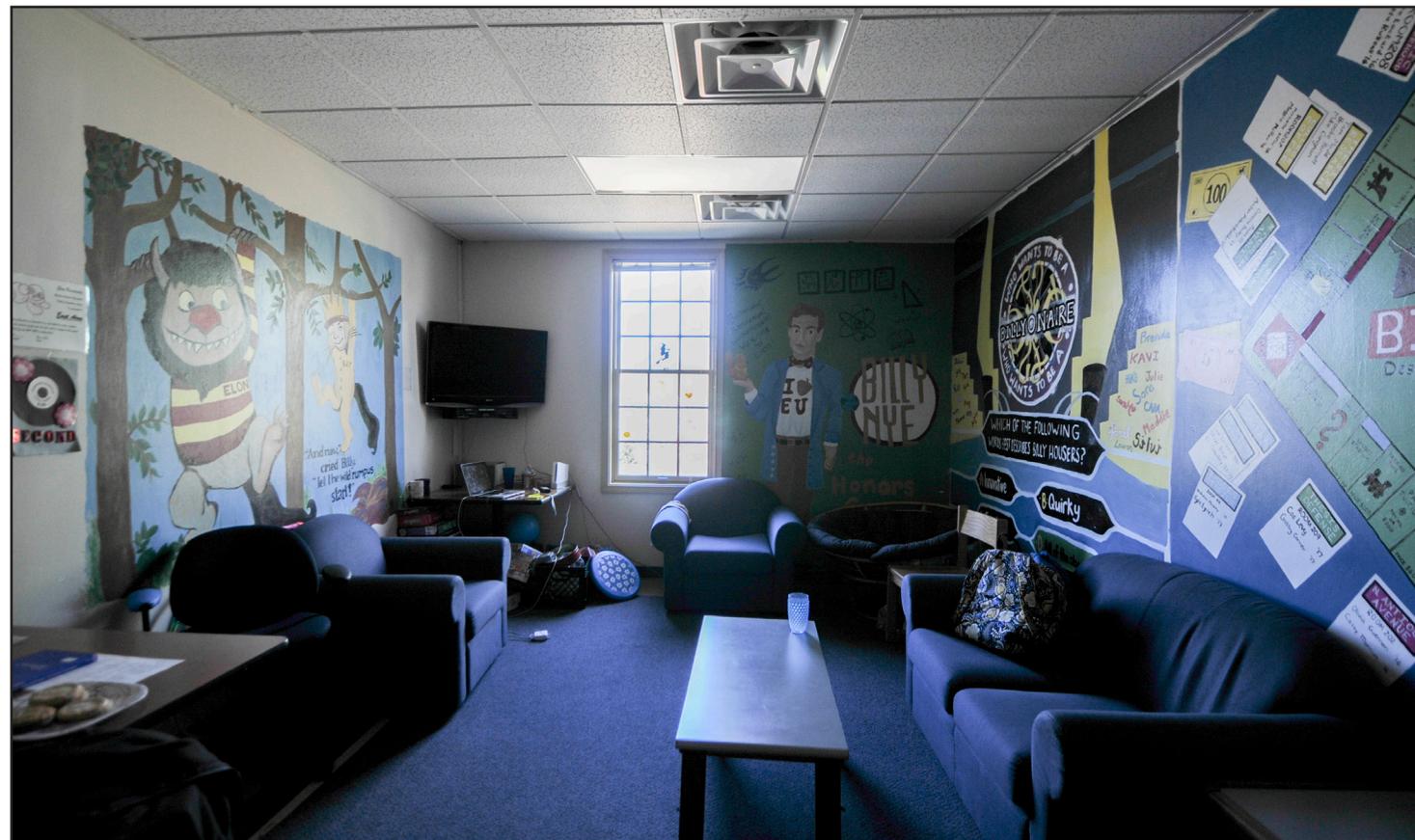
"I like living where I am, but I can't say that being in a learning community has really helped me in any way," Louis said. "I don't know about other learning communities, but we haven't really done much together as a community."

Freshman Dawson Nance considered living in a learning community but ultimately decided not to apply.

"I'm really happy with where I am now," Nance said. "I've met a great group of people on my hall, and I know a lot of people who have transferred out of their learning communities because they didn't fit in. I definitely don't regret not living in one."

LLCs are a large part of the Elon residential community and as Elon expands and changes, learning communities will change as well.

"LLCs are constantly evolving, and what works this year might not work next year," Arroyo said. "They are a student-run thing, and it's all about what students need at this time in their life."



CAROLINE OLNEY | Photo Editor

The Honors Learning Community common room boasts murals students have painted together in the past as provides a space for the residents to hang out together.

Faculty, engaged learning

Jonathan Black
Editor-in-Chief

For a majority of the residents in the William R. Kenan Jr. Honors Pavilion, there was nothing unusual about a fire drill. As everyone began to leave the building, two of its residents stayed behind.

Sameule Pardini, assistant professor of Italian, was not worried about his class being interrupted — he wasn't teaching. He was worried about the alarm waking his seven-year-old son, Dante.

"There was this incredibly loud noise, like there was an attack on the Pentagon or something," Pardini said. "Everybody was running out of the building, and

Dante was sleeping. Thankfully, he was allowed to stay in bed."

For the past three years, Pardini, his wife Tara and their son have been living in the Honors Pavilion. Pardini is one of a handful of faculty members who live with their families in residence halls across campus as a part of the Residential Campus Initiative.

The Residential Campus Initiative is a multi-year initiative aimed at "reconnecting living on campus with the core values of the university," according to the Elon University website. One of the main goals of the initiative is to build enough housing on campus for 75 percent of the student body. Nearly \$100 million will be invested

into the initiative for facilities, staffing and programs.

"The purpose of it is to make the campus a space where students are all always learning and to make it intentional that students recognize they are always learning, not just in the classroom," said Alisha Bowers, residence life fellow for the Historic Neighborhood and Class of 2013 alumna. "When you have everyone living together like that it immediately heightens the intellectual climate."

A part of that initiative is to have faculty and staff living among students — a goal that has already begun to come to fruition. Bowers, who lives in West with her husband, is one of two residence fellows

who live on campus, in addition to the assistant directors of residence life who live in each of the seven neighborhoods.

"I think it's a real neat connection to have with students for them to be able to interact with me when I go to the gym or eat dinner," she said. "We're all living in the same environment together, so I think there's something to be said for that."

Vanessa Bravo, assistant professor of communications and adviser to the International Fellows, currently lives in the Isabella Cannon Pavilion with her husband, Mussa Idris, pre-doctoral fellow and instructor of anthropology. Bravo began living there in the fall.

"I was investing a lot of time at Elon, going to many of the speakers, films and concerts," she said. "I was here a lot and about to start advising the international students. When the university offered this opportunity to me I thought, 'This would allow me to be much more aware of what is happening on campus.'"

Though Elon is just starting to increase the number of faculty living on campus, the concept isn't new.

Outside the classroom

In the fall Bravo will be joining Amy Allocco, assistant professor and Distinguished Emerging Scholar in religious studies, in the Global Neighborhood. Allocco, who serves as faculty director for the Global Neighborhood, previously lived in the apartment where Bravo currently resides. Allocco's job entails facilitating the intellectual life of the Global Neighborhood, which currently houses 233 students.

"I'm thinking about overarching structure and ways of learning the lines of academic engagement outside of the classroom and developing students as global citizens," Allocco said.

Allocco is the first person to serve as a faculty director in residence on campus. The school will be hiring three more for the Colonnades, Danieley and Historic



CAROLINE OLNEY | Photo Editor

Bravo moved into the Isabella Cannon Pavilion in the fall of 2013. She said she is rarely woken up by noise outside of her apartment.

arrive at residence halls

neighborhoods for the fall.

Every residential area will be led by a Neighborhood Association that is co-chaired by an assistant director of residence life and a faculty director or member. Each association will be programmed differently depending on the theme and population of the neighborhood.

“We have a neighborhood plan that talks about intellectual culture, personal development and community understanding and skills,” Allocco said. “These reflect the goals of Elon’s core curriculum and they’re developmentally appropriate for largely first-year students.”

The theme for the Global Neighborhood this year is “Religion and Conflict.” Allocco coordinates rotating activities every Tuesday. The first Tuesday every month is a house dinner in which all students in the neighborhood are invited to eat an international meal and engage in a lecture and discussion led by faculty members. On the second Tuesday, organizations and departments visit the residence halls to hold informal conversations about topics dealing with their entity. The third Tuesday involves events organized by student mentors such as RAs, Cultural and Linguistic Mentors and Residential Learning Assistants, and on the fourth Tuesday, the neighborhood shows an acclaimed international documentary film.

Junior Madeline Monaco, an RA in Global Building 4, said the events made faculty more relatable and, as a result, were something she wishes she’d had her freshman year.

“The Tuesday events were the most visible element of the Residential Campus Initiative. The variety of events that are offered, the different faculty who participate and the varying times of the events are all reasons for which the events have seen success this year,” she said.

Freshman Alex Vandermaas-Peeler, who lives in Global Building 4, said the neighborhood is leading the way for Residence Life programming.

“The Tuesday events are a really fantas-



This summer Bravo, who is from Costa Rica, will move to the Global Neighborhood to join her advisees, the International Fellows.

CAROLINE OLNEY | Photo Editor

tic way to connect what we are learning inside the classroom to our living situation,” she said. “It is really significant to have programming that is so enriching and challenging.”

Expanding Roles

Bravo, Pardini and Allocco all said their roles have expanded since residing on campus, and it has only helped their relationship with students.

“I’m able to have lunch and dinner with students and know them on a much more personal level,” Bravo said. “You’re walk-

ing into Moseley and a student has a quick question. Those types of interactions aren’t formal and don’t necessarily happen all the time, but they accumulate quickly.”

Pardini agreed with Bravo, saying that living in the Honors Pavilion has been an enriching experience.

“I see the students as they are outside of the classroom,” he said. “We see each other as regular people. I get to know them well and understand their problems. I get to know their fears [and] hopes and see how they grow intellectually from one semester to another.”

Allocco said doing residential campus

work improved her classroom teaching and vice versa.

“I don’t understand this as a separate role so much as a complementary role that really enables me to expand the venues in which I teach,” she said. “It gives me an opportunity to model intellectual inquiry for the students all the time.”

As for any additional benefits, Bravo said there’s always the chance she can impress her colleagues.

“Sometimes I run into professors on weekends who are on campus for certain events, and they might think I am working all the time,” she said.

Elon LGBTQ students search for

Michael Bodley
News Editor

During the spring of 2013, Elon University became one of the few institutions of higher learning nationally to allow students to use a preferred name on campus records including email address and diplomas. Additionally, the office of the Registrar has worked to clarify the documentation for students to change their gender marker in the Elon student system.

It's a move that recognizes the millions living around the world who don't identify with traditional notions of being male or female or those somewhere in the transition process.

The human brain takes two seconds to identify a person as either male or female, according to senior Jaden Wilkes, and he listens to people fumble with his identity every day. Wilkes identifies as a trans man — his biological sex is female but his gender expression is male.

"I don't pass completely as male," Wilkes said. "It takes you a little longer to think about who exactly I am, and that used to piss me off. But I've come to grips with why people stare. It's not always like, 'Oh, there's a freak.' It's just that the brain connection isn't always there."

Wilkes' appearance deceives some, with closely cropped dark hair and clothing that's a little on the baggy side.

To help students and teachers make that connection sooner, Registrar Rodney Parks, who has published LGBTQ research in national journals, oversaw the implementation of the preferred name process throughout the Elon system. The goal, he said, is to minimize the painfully awkward interactions that stem from mistaking sexual identity.

"This is something that students have expressed interest in for a while now," Parks said. "Imagine being stuck in a name you don't identify with and hearing it all day long. We wanted to let the student choose, let them make the decision, and we decided this was the best way to put that in their hands."



The new Gender and LGBTQIA Resource Room is a service for students struggling with issues of gender identity. It can be found in the Moseley Center.

Wilkes has been out for more than a year now and has accepted that teachers will use the wrong pronouns — Wilkes prefers he, his, him — and that students will stare a little too long and ask questions that are a little too pointed.

"It's not something that I've explained to anyone, really," he said. "They use the wrong pronouns all the time, and I don't really correct them because I don't want to be called out almost, and it's not any of their business, and I don't feel like I have a need to."

It's a pressure that has plagued college students across the LGBTQ spectrum for years, according to Matthew Antonio Bosch, director of the Gender and LGBTQIA Center.

"It can be so stressful, so much pressure,

for students to face every single moment of the day," Bosch said. "Elon students in particular are often overcommitted, super busy, and coming out or thinking about coming out adds a burden that can be sometimes crushing."

And, if left unchecked, it can lead to depression and a host of mental health issues as students struggle to internalize their gender identity, let alone having to explain it to others. The mounting stress levels can cause dips in GPAs and classroom performance for students coming out or considering.

When Wilkes began the coming out process, his grades dropped amidst the stress, though he has since brought them up to levels he's "happy with."

"I was super stressed and freaked out and

dealing with everything at once," he said. "School was often the furthest thing from my mind at the time."

Parks acknowledged the difficulty of keeping up with the seemingly endless stream of class assignments, group projects, tests and quizzes Elon throws at students every day, especially when a student is coming to terms with their gender identity.

"Elon is an academically rigorous institution," he said. "We set high standards here, standards students are challenged to meet. When you throw in issues of identity, of a student asking, 'Where am I right now?' that does make it even harder. It's why we strive to make every accommodation for recognizing that, no, not everyone identifies with being a traditional male or female anymore.

CAROLINE OLNEY | Photo Editor

American universities cost more, include more amenities

Lauren Phillips
Copy Chief

Elon University prides itself on its study abroad program. According to university statistics, nearly 72 percent of the class of 2012 studied abroad, and this percentage is expected to rise as more study abroad opportunities become available to students.

Many students who choose to go abroad for a semester are surprised by the differences between their universities abroad and Elon. Emma Burress, assistant director of study abroad at the Isabella Cannon Global Education Center, said both the contrasts among schools and students' surprise are common.

"There are big differences between the university experience here and in other countries," Burress, who grew up in South Africa and attended the University of Cape Town, said. "The university experience is much broader here."

The broader university experience enjoyed in the United States encompasses all areas of student life, from academics to

athletics, but universities in other countries hold their own against their American counterparts.

"There is a much greater reliance on independent study in other countries," Burress said. "This makes students independent and gives them a different way of thinking."

Janelle Papay, international programs adviser at the Global Education Center, agreed.

"It's knowing versus memorizing and regurgitating information for a test," she said.

Burress also emphasized students' reliance on university services.

"Students rely very heavily on student services here. They expect to be told what will be in exams. They have more support. They don't have the opportunity to expand their way of thinking as much," she said.

According to Burress and Papay, American university students receive far more guidance and support than students in other countries.

"There are less allowances in other countries," Burress said. "There are no separate services. I was never allowed to take an

exam on a different day or anything like that. Disability services are more comprehensive here. People are more involved in American educations."

Paying for what you get

In other countries, the majority of students handle their own finances, Papay said. Students pay for their own educations, food, books, rent and any other expenses. American students have a difficult time gaining that same independence because of universities' high costs.

According to the College Board, the average cost of tuition and fees for the 2013-2014 school year for state residents attending a public college was \$8,893. This cost is higher for students attending private colleges or out-of-state students attending public colleges.

In Europe, tuition costs vary from country to country. Many countries, such as Germany and Sweden, offer free education at public universities. Others, such as France, cost anywhere between 150 and 700 euro per year.

"There is no tuition in Sweden," said freshman Izzy Agostini, a native of Lidin-go, Sweden. "And I get a grant to study here."

Costs seem much higher when they are paid all at once, as they are in the U.S., but in other countries, people spend their whole lives paying for their educations through taxes.

"You're paying directly, through tuition, or indirectly, through taxes," Burress said of the differences in cost.

The financial obligation students bear to attend American universities engages parents.

"Parents are much more invested in their children's university experiences," Burress said. This can prevent students from gaining the same level of independence as their European peers.

As far as costs go, "You pay for what you get," Papay said.

Universities in the U.S. offer more services and facilities than their international counterparts, and students pay for those services with higher tuition and fees.

"There is an expectation in this country that universities have all these buildings and services," Burress said. "In Europe, that's not an expectation of the students."

The services American students expect — dining halls, recreational facilities, residence halls, student centers and athletic stadiums, to name a few — come with a price.

"A lot of money goes to things that are not directly associated with education," Burress said. "It's an industry of tertiary education."

The services offered by American universities attract students, American or otherwise.

"A lot of Europeans are attracted to university in America," Agostini said.

In loco parentis

In other countries, when parents send their children off to university, they're considered adults, Burress said.

"Students live at home and manage their own lives. Here, university is a very protected environment in which to bend rules," she said.

Papay said it's almost as though the law doesn't exist in American universities.

"When you attend a private school, you sign a contract to abide by campus policies. If you're underage and you've been drinking and you're caught by campus police, you don't get in serious trouble. You get a slap on the wrist," she said.

In Europe, there's no protection.

"If you break the law, you break the law," Papay said. "In the U.S., every facet is controlled, facilitated. It's 'in loco parentis': 'We are your parents while you're here.'"

Papay praised the American University System's ability to prepare students for their future careers.

"We're more concerned about fulfillment with career here," she said. "There are more resources here, more training for jobs."

Burress agreed and said there is less access to practical, hands-on education in other countries.

"The American University System is not wrong or bad," she said. "It's just very different from other countries, and it produces different types of people."



CAROLINE OLNEY | Photo Editor

Kuylain Howard works at the Global Education Center, which helps manage Elon's study abroad programs.

Academic Support helps Elon athletes balance commitments, form careers

Tommy Hamzik
Sports Editor

Cayce Crenshaw arrives at her office in the Koury Athletic Center between 6:30 and 7:30 every morning and doesn't leave until close to 10 p.m. most days.

Her job title is Assistant Director of Athletics for Academic Support Services, but it's more than just a title to her.

"This isn't my job, this is me. It's my life," Crenshaw said.

Crenshaw leads a team of four that oversees Elon University student-athletes and their commitments to both academics and athletics. Their main mission includes making sure there is balance between school and sports and coordinating things such as tutoring, study halls and class registration.

"I was speaking at a convention last summer with new practitioners in the field, and I said, 'This can't just be a job. You're not going to get paid enough, the hours are crazy. This has to be a calling. It has to be something you love doing,'" Crenshaw said.

Crenshaw and her staff split up Elon's 17 varsity sports teams so each receives the attention it needs. In addition to attending every game, the staff keeps an eye on the progress all student-athletes are making during the season and off-season.

Practice schedules are organized around class times, and study halls are mandatory for many athletes. No matter who the student is, the Academic Support staff cares.

"They have a syllabus from every guy on the team," said Ricky Brown, a rising senior on Elon's football team. "They definitely stay on you. They talk to us, check our classes, come in and make sure everyone's there that's supposed to be there."

Seventy percent of Elon athletes have a grade point average above 3.0, something Crenshaw takes pride in. One goal for Elon Athletic Director Dave Blank is for each team to have an average GPA of 3.0. For Crenshaw, the foundation is laid

when student-athletes come in as freshmen.

All freshmen have required study hall hours each week and meet with their advisers once a week to ensure the transition from high school to college is going smoothly. The focus of these meetings is mostly looking ahead, so student-athletes recognize when certain due dates are and if they'll be missing class because of travel and game schedules.

"If freshmen get off to a good start,

players on the right track in the classroom is important to him as well.

"When coach [Rich] Skrosky and his staff got here, a big thing was taking younger guys up under your wing," Brown said. "Making sure guys are held accountable for their work. If you know someone's not going to get somewhere or do their work, make sure you're there to help them."

The guidance junior John Antonelli received from the Academic Support

of your major, [Academic Support] is there to guide you in the right direction."

He said he's finally struck the right balance between school and sports, something he's been trying to do since high school. But there are still sacrifices to be made.

"Some nights, it's more difficult than others," Antonelli said. "You have to be willing, instead of going out or hanging with friends, to stay in the library and get things done. In the big picture, baseball's going to end at some point. Academics are what's going to take you on for the rest of your life."

Antonelli has an internship this summer with Credit Suisse, an investment banking company. Brown hasn't been able to complete an internship yet because of his schedule with football, but his goal down the road is to work in the front office of a professional sports franchise. He's currently taking a sports marketing class with Professor Craig Schmitt to help him prepare for the future.

"It's interesting to look at the business side of sports," Brown said. "We always only see what's on the field."

At the heart of Crenshaw's mission is guiding athletes on the right path so they're in a position to succeed when their time on the field or court is finished.

"We want to make sure all student-athletes are taking advantage of all they can at Elon," she said. "We want them looking at undergraduate research, studying abroad, doing an internship. We make sure everybody's maximizing the Elon experience."

Crenshaw said she loves seeing Elon's athletes excel both on the field and in the classroom, and that all leads up to the most fulfilling part of her job — graduation.

She stands in the back taking pictures of all the athletes with their diplomas in hand, open for the photo.

After all those long hours in the office, her work has paid off. Her lifestyle has helped shape a career and life for Elon student-athletes.



Located between Alumni Gym and Campus Rec, the Academic Support office holds study halls for athletes and the office is home to four staff members who deal with Elon's 17 varsity teams.

they can easily stay there," Crenshaw said. "If not, you're trying to dig out of that hole."

Brown said the balance of football and academics was the toughest to manage during his freshman year, and the academic support staff helped him tremendously. Building good time management and organizational skills were critical to his success in his major of Sport and Event Management. Keeping younger

staff as an underclassmen helped shape him into the Dean's List student he is today. A relief pitcher on the baseball team, Antonelli is double majoring in physics and math. But he wasn't always so sure about what he wanted to do.

"After my sophomore year, I declared [majors]. Then I changed over the summer, and when I got back in the fall, I changed back to the original," Antonelli said. "So many times when you're unsure

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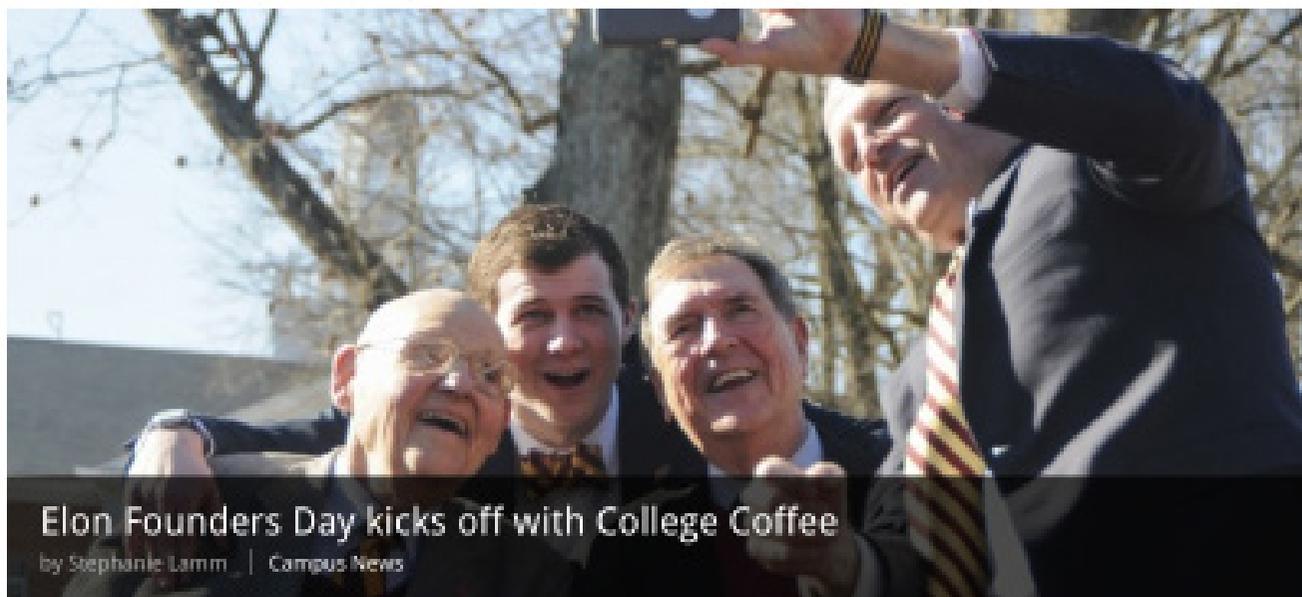
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