

Diversity Plan

School of Communications, Elon University

initial plan, March 2004; revised in November 2010 and August 2016; recent milestones are bolded

The School of Communications at Elon University is committed to having a diverse and inclusive program that reflects domestic and global diversity. The school believes that those entrusted to communicate news, information, persuasion and entertainment in society should reflect the diverse audiences and participants they seek to reach in order to best serve the public good.

The university states it this way: “Diversity is an essential component of the educational experience of our students, a key aspect of academic excellence, and a crucial part of an inclusive community. Diversity refers to the wide range of differences that exist among people. Inclusion refers to proactive behaviors that make each person feel welcome and a part of the campus. At Elon University we seek a caring and inclusive environment wherein differences are valued and integrated into every aspect of campus in order to prepare future global citizens.” Elon embraces a broad definition of diversity that includes gender, race, ethnicity, nationality, age, disability, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, socioeconomic standing and intellectual viewpoint.

The School of Communications endeavors to accomplish this commitment in the following ways:

A Diverse Faculty and Staff

- ❖ Demonstrate effective efforts to recruit faculty members from diverse and underrepresented backgrounds, using as a benchmark the university’s faculty composition and the school’s composition during the preceding accreditation review. **The School of Communications faculty remains the most diverse at Elon. The racial and ethnic composition of the school’s 52 full-time faculty is 27 percent — the same as at the 2011-12 accreditation review when the faculty size was 41.**
- ❖ Formally instruct search committee members on how to achieve best practices in building and considering a diverse applicant pool. **Each search committee is briefed on best practices by either the dean of the school, the university’s associate director of human resources for employee relations or the associate provost for inclusive community. This approach ensures the entire search committee is uniformly focused on diversity throughout the applicant process.**

- ❖ Partner with nearby historically black institutions with strong journalism and communications programs through faculty exchanges and joint endeavors.
The school is participating in planning and programming for the April 2017 Global Communication Association International Conference in Greensboro as a joint endeavor with several HBCUs, including North Carolina A&T and Winston-Salem State University.
- ❖ Host periodic faculty development sessions that promote diversity, including workshops with the Center for the Advancement of Teaching and Learning, brown bag lunch sessions, teach and learn seminars and best diversity pedagogical practices in faculty meetings.

A Diverse Student Body

- ❖ Recruit a student body reflecting the diversity of the population the university serves through school initiatives, faculty participation in multicultural weekends on campus, and working with Admissions on recruiting students from diverse backgrounds.
The school has strengthened its presence at top industry events for recruitment, including the College Media Association and Associated Collegiate Press annual conferences. Participating school staff have attended sessions on creating diverse newsrooms and diversity sourcing in news stories.
- ❖ Strengthen the school's relationship with the Elon Academy, a college-access program that helps high school students who typically are underrepresented on college campuses.
School faculty have taught in the Elon Academy, which targets select high school students in Alamance County who are academically promising with financial need and/or no family history of college. Faculty also produced an Elon Academy promotional video that won an Award of Excellence from the Broadcast Education Association.
- ❖ Increase the school's scholarship funds designated to enhance the diversity of the student body.
The School has hosted senior program officer Ligia Cravo of the Hearst Foundation. Twice, the School has applied for and received \$100,000 endowments to support student scholarships for under-represented students, often funneled through the Communications Fellows program.
- ❖ Work with Student Media Board to encourage campus media organizations to have diverse staffs and to ensure that campus media content reflects diverse opinions and perspectives.
The Student Media Board adviser is a school faculty member and associate provost. In recent years, student media organizations have been required to develop diversity plans. In addition, the Board discusses diversity issues on an ongoing basis. Student media advisers are trained to discuss diversity within their organizations and to cultivate students from underrepresented backgrounds to vie for leadership positions within student media.
- ❖ Promote student achievements in national and international programs.
A communications senior traveled to Rio de Janeiro to report on human rights issues in advance of the 2016 Summer Olympics in Rio and also presented her research at the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication Southeast Colloquium in March 2016. Another senior spent a week abroad in Ireland as part of a Pulitzer Center

Student Fellowship, collecting insights and opinions while examining the country's once devout Catholic population. The School of Communications placed two students in the highly selective American Advertising Federation Most Promising Multicultural Students program, the advertising industry's premier multicultural recruiting initiative.

An Inclusive Curriculum

- ❖ Emphasize the importance of domestic and global diversity and the historic and current contribution of diverse voices in society, as evidenced by course objectives on syllabi.
The Elon Eleven has been revised to reflect the values of both domestic and global diversity. Standardized learning outcomes across sections reflect this value, and faculty bring their own diverse perspectives into their respective class experiential learning environments.
- ❖ Encourage and support student conversations on campus climate and diversity topics, as evidenced by National Survey of Student Engagement data.
NSSE data suggests the school is actively promoting these discussions in and outside the classroom [data forthcoming]
- ❖ Promote experiential learning that exposes students to the diverse domestic and international world in which they live.
In January 2016, 19 faculty members traveled domestically or abroad with students, including a trio of domestic-travel courses in the school: Communications Fellows in Florida, Sundance in Utah, and a political caucus course in Iowa. Interactive Media master's students and faculty participated in winter term courses for the public good in Belize, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Guatemala and Ireland. Other faculty taught or co-taught study abroad courses all over the world. In fall 2015, a group of students, faculty and staff sponsored by the School of Communications covered the Internet Governance Forum in João Pessoa, Brazil, producing more than 95 interviews with global Internet leaders for the public domain. A faculty member led the Elon in Costa Rica program this spring, teaching an Elon Core Curriculum seminar.
- ❖ Invite a diverse group of professionals as guest speakers in classes to expose students to different perspectives and issues.
In the past academic year, the school has sponsored visits, speeches or events featuring Ukrainian journalists; an Istanbul-based journalist who covers the Middle East; a noted author on online harassment; and another journalist who speaks out about online harassment, gaming culture and the disproportionately high levels of animosity, sexual harassment and online stalking aimed at women.

A Supportive Environment

- ❖ Maintain a climate that is both respectful and supportive of diverse people and viewpoints and that actively supports the goals, initiatives and assessment measures outlined in this plan.
The school's diversity committee surveyed international student communication majors for suggestions to improve their experience in the School of Communications and has worked with the Isabella Cannon Global Education Center for potential collaborative

initiatives to support international students. Survey results indicate the school's international students felt welcomed and included in the community, and feel comfortable in the classroom and enjoy sharing their stories. The primary issue raised by respondents were holidays and breaks, when they felt isolated on campus.

- ❖ Consider partnerships to offer programming and discussions related to diversity. **A joint bid by Elon and UNC Chapel Hill titled "Diversity in PR: Embracing Culture and Change" was selected for a Public Relations Student Society of America (PRSSA) regional conference. The conference took place in Chapel Hill in spring 2016.**
- ❖ Participate in national organizations and events on the importance of diversity and inclusiveness in the communications discipline. **School faculty and staff attend myriad national conferences, including the National Association of Black Journalists (NABJ), the National Association of Hispanic Journalists (NAHJ) and Asian American Journalists Association (AAJA). School staff also participated in the Scripps Howard Leadership Academy, which includes diversity programming. The school hosted a Marquette University faculty member for a week in spring 2016 as part of the AEJMC leadership diversity program. In fall 2016, the dean will serve as mentor to the chair of the North Carolina Central University Department of Mass Communication through the same AEJMC program. The dean also was part of an Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communications site review team that traveled to the United Arab Emirates for the initial review of the College of Communication at the University of Sharjah.**
- ❖ Support the university's religious holiday observance policy and be sensitive to the observed and practiced holy days of different faiths. **The school follows university policy that excuses students from class due to observance of a religious holiday. Undergirding the policy are the Elon Honor Code and a Religious Observance Notification Form, to document the request. The university's policy "... embraces the mission of an academic community that influences and transforms mind, body, and spirit... [The policy] guiding procedure for the observance of recognized holy days is consistent with and complementary to the University's mission."**
- ❖ Recruit women and minority professionals to serve on the School of Communications Advisory Board. **Of the Board's 30 members, more than a third are female or minority, including African American and Asian American members.**
- ❖ Promote innovative two-way communication with faculty, staff and students on a regular basis, including end of semester faculty queries into diverse teaching practices and informal meetings with students to discuss their experiences in the School.