

The Black Oaks Newsletter

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The Elon Commitment to Diversity & Global Engagement

This issue of our newsletter looks at the role of African and African-American Studies in *The Elon Commitment*, the university's new strategic plan for the next ten years. The first goal of the plan calls for "an unprecedented commitment to diversity and global engagement. Goal 1 aims to:

- Double need-based financial aid
- Provide 100 percent study abroad access
- Triple international student enrollment and create a campus community that better reflects the world's diversity

- Be a national leader in preparing students to succeed in a multicultural world

- Build a multi-faith center and promote interfaith dialogue

- Develop the Elon Academy as a national model.

What does all this mean for the improvement of Black life and culture at Elon? At no point in its description of Goal 1 do the words "black," "race," or "African American" appear specifically; instead, the language of multiculturalism, diversity, internationalization, and multi-faith initiatives dominate. Undoubtedly, the initiative is designed to broaden the university's scope and approach to the recruitment, support, and access of students of diverse populations, but we need to be vigilant about the implications and specific approaches that will be used to address the needs

of African American students. As a result, the initiatives engender several questions:

1. How will doubling need-based scholarships affect the number of African-American students recruited and retained at the institution and how does Elon characterize the relationship between the two issues?
2. Does 100% access to study abroad mean that African American student athletes, for example, will have the time to travel, or will scheduling and other conflicts deny that possibility? In addition, do different strategies have to be used in the process of recruiting and marketing study abroad to Black students at Elon? (Read the p. 5 article)
3. What percentage of Black students will be represented in the goal of tripling the enrollment of international students attending Elon? From which countries will these students be recruited? Will they be able to afford the cost of an Elon tuition, even with some financial assistance?
4. What are the methods and how will Black students be prepared to live in a "multicultural world," one in which most already exist? Is this a goal crafted with African American students in mind?

5. How will African American faith traditions be represented in Elon's multi-faith center? How and in what shape will these faith traditions be represented and who will be the advocate

We must be careful that the interests of Black students do not become subsumed under the rhetoric of multiculturalism and diversity.

Furthermore, we also need to pay attention to the needs of Black Staff and Faculty at Elon. Several departments still need to be integrated, and the struggles of faculty of color, who are "the only ones" in their departments, must be recognized.

In its second goal of "supporting a world class faculty and staff," similar questions must also be asked of the *Elon Commitment*.

- What strategies must be employed to attract and retain "world class" African American faculty and staff to the institutions?
- How can we best support African American faculty in the classroom?
- What processes need to be put in place to ensure that African American faculty and staff are supported and protected against acts of racial intolerance?

The next decade will be dedicated to finding the answers to these difficult questions and in shaping the role of this program in relation to our shared goals.

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Ending an Era of Rare Mentorship by Trevor Wynn

During Multicultural Experience Weekend in spring 2008, I met a charismatic professor named Ocek Eke. Eke gave me, and other prospective students, a persuasive speech on his teaching style, methods, and why his class is important for life. In five minutes Eke had sold me on Elon, and at that moment I vowed I would attend Elon and take his Global Studies course. Several others in the session shared similar sentiments. Everything went according to plan, and as expected, Eke was a wonderful professor. He opens the minds of students to world issues they are oblivious to and invites students to question things they never have before. Students who consider themselves knowledgeable about the world are awakened after taking Eke's Global Studies course. Halfway through the spring semester, I found out Eke was not going to be offered tenure. The news was shocking and hurtful. I

finalized my decision to attend Elon because of Eke, and now he is not going to be a mentor and role model for future students. Eke is the type of professor who truly cares about his students' well being and is personally invested in his students. My personal experience with this faculty member leads me to believe that Elon students need professors like Eke. In the fall of 2009, during a panel discussion on the role of historically black colleges and universities, I met a charismatic assistant professor of business administration named Norris Gunby. Gunby gave the students in the panel discussion a persuasive speech on the state of historically black colleges. He noted that black students need to prepare themselves for the future. Because of his shrewd comments and incredible passion, I made him my adviser the following day. Gunby is always willing to help and guide students on academic matters and life outside

of the classroom. When I realized that Gunby was not going to be offered tenure, the news was extremely disappointing. I vowed that I would take his Business Policy class, but I won't get the chance. Gunby is an advisor and a role model on campus, and he acts as a hand-to-hand mentor advising first-year multicultural students with their transition to Elon. Gunby cares about his students' success in the classroom and outside the classroom. He would rather a student be a better person than a better student. Both of my mentors, Eke and Gunby, are black males, but they are two of a small number of racially diverse faculty on campus. Only one of the 16 recently tenured professors at Elon is black. This trend of denying Elon students the experiences of black professors cannot continue if Elon values and is dedicated to diversity.

(Continued on the back page)

African-American Faculty Apply for Promotion & Tenure in 2010

In Fall 2010, seven African-American faculty representing six departments and schools will submit their dossiers for consideration when they apply for promotion and tenure: Jean Rattigan-Rohr (Education), Rod Clare (History & Geography), Ayesha Delpish (Math & Statistics), Prudence Layne (English), Sirena Hargrove-Leak (Engineering), and Ashley Hairston (English). Lecturer in the Department of Foreign Languages, Christine Cotton, will apply for promotion.

Following Elon's hiring and attempt to diversify its faculty in

2005, this group represents the largest number of Black faculty members applying for tenure at the same time. Since the institution's founding, the number of tenured Black faculty has been few and far between. Dr. Linda Poulson, Chair of Accounting, was the first to be tenured and promoted to Associate Professor. Dr. Matt Clark, Associate Professor of Biology was tenured and promoted a few years later. Dr. George Johnson, Professor and Dean of the Elon School of Law was the third. He is the only African-American at Elon to hold the rank of full professor. Drs. Frances Ward-Johnson,

Associate Department Chair and Associate Professor in the School of Communications, and Dr. Faith Rivers, Associate Professor of Law, followed.

Hiring of a more diverse faculty is but one aspect of promotion and tenure. For any faculty member to succeed in academia, universities must make a firm and consistent commitment to nurturing and mentoring their faculty. For African-American faculty in particular, especially those whose roles involve exploring dimensions of oppression, the road is especially tough! Best of luck to the faculty.

Cedric Pulliam on his Journey to Malta

In the spring semester of 2011, I will be venturing to the Mediterranean nation of Malta to study Bachelor of Laws and European Public Policy. Malta is located south of Sicily, Italy and the nearest point of the North African mainland. I will be partaking in six undergraduate academic courses focusing on various fields such as: public policy, European law, contemporary migration issues, Maltese, and French. Throughout my semester, I will be interning with the Office of the Prime Minister, Dr. Lawrence Gonzi of Malta in the Ministry for Justice and Home Affairs as an international legal services intern. This is a non-Elon program hosted by the University Studies Abroad Consortium (USAC) of the University of Nevada at Reno. The University of Idaho at Moscow is my other host institution where To fund 100% of my semester abroad, I will be receiving monies from the Post-9/11 GI Bill from the Department of Veteran Affairs. My father, Charles G. Pulliam, Sr was active

in the US Army for 25 years. I will also receive funds from the Center for International Studies and Languages Hylton International Fellowship for my research on the contemporary issues of Northern African migration into Malta and the governmental migrant asylum and human rights practices and policies. Lastly, I will receive a scholarship from ThanksUSA, Goldman Sachs Scholars Program, the DiversityAbroad.com Scholarship, and several grants from Alamance County's civic and philanthropic organizations. Since June 2010, I have been studying the history, culture, and language of Malta to better prepare for the experience I will be studying several law-related courses that counter into my future career and goal to pursue a Masters of Public Policy and law. This also provides a gateway to apply for the Pickering and Rangel Fellowships after graduation. Also, I plan to apply for the Fulbright English Assistantships for Malta that was just created this past academic year

At Elon, I have served in the Student Government Association since fall 2008. My current position in the senate is Junior Class Senator and Special Events Chair. I will be returning to SGA upon my return from Malta. I am Elon's first member of Iota Phi Theta Fraternity, Inc. Also, I have participated in the Isabella Cannon Leadership Program as well as Model United Nations and Phi Alpha Delta Pre-Law Fraternity. I am a mentor in the S.M.A.R.T. program and will continue communication with my four mentees while studying abroad. Other experiences at Elon include service as a Multicultural Ambassador for Undergraduate Admissions, Chair of the Programming Committee of the Multicultural Student Council, and a member of the President's Council on Minority Retention. I have participated in seven internships. My major is International Studies and Political Science with minors in AAAS, Criminal Justice Studies, and Non-Violence Studies. I am also a member of several honor societies.



Cedric Pulliam

Shakinah Simeona '12 Awarded the Gilman Scholarship to Study Abroad in China

Shakinah Simeona has been named a Benjamin A. Gilman Scholarship recipient. The award will allow Shakinah to spend Spring 2011 studying abroad in China. When asked about her selection for the award, Shakinah responds, "I am ecstatic to be a part of such an amazing scholarship opportunity! The Gilman scholarship challenges its recipients to take their international education experience and influence others. I have prepared a follow-up project for the Summer and Fall of 2011 that I believe will help influence other students like myself to consider international education experiences, especially those who may have thought studying abroad was out of reach. Not only will this scholarship help fund my

experience in China, but it will challenge and offer me a platform to do my part in promoting international education among students of diverse populations. The Benjamin A. Gilman International Scholarship Program is funded through the International Academic Opportunity Act of 2000 and is sponsored by the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs at the U.S. Department of State. It was developed to foster mutual understanding between the people of the United States and the people of other countries. It accomplishes this mission through a variety of international programs. The Benjamin A. Gilman Scholarship Program offers grants for U.S. citizen undergraduate students of limited financial means to pursue

academic studies abroad. The program aims to encourage students to choose non-traditional study abroad destinations. For more information, visit the website at: <http://www.iie.org/en/Programs/Gilman-Scholarship-Program> AAASE minors interested in being mentored through the process, should visit the program's website and establish their eligibility, compile a draft application by the end of January, and consult the AAASE coordinator in February for guidance with the application materials.

Shakinah Simeona is Vice President of the Xi Omicron Chapter of Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, Inc., a S.M.A.R.T Mentor & Treasurer of the Rotary Club.

Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, Inc.— The Cinderella Project

The Cinderella Project is a program that provides free prom dresses and accessories for young women of a local Burlington, high school, Hugh M. Cummins High. Without the program, the young women might struggle to fund their prom and may be unable to attend.

Because every girl deserves to be a princess, the ladies of Zeta Phi Beta, Sorority, Inc. will be collecting and accepting donations through Spring 2011. Please remember all the young women of Hugh M. Cummings High who are unable to afford the

expenses of prom.

If you have a dress that you no longer wear and would like to donate it, please contact Samantha Simunyu at ssimunyu@elon.edu.

The group will be collecting until early spring, but the sooner they have dresses, the more successful the project will be! Your donations will ensure that each young lady will be the belle of the ball!



**Elon's Black
Student
Organizations
Demonstrate
their Leadership
through Service.**

The Sigma Delta Chapter of Alpha Phi Alpha at Elon started The Sigma Delta Scholars. This is a program in which brothers of the chapter are paired with high school students from Cummins High School in Burlington. All of the students in the program are considered "high-risk" and many of them have trouble inside and outside of the classroom. Chapter brothers serve as mentors to the students, providing guidance and support to their academic and social lives

outside of high school. Brothers visit the Scholars at Cummings, sitting in on classes, helping with assignments and projects, or just taking time to talk to them. Brothers have aided in filling out college and scholarship applications, as well as helping them with other tasks to prepare for college such as the SAT/ACT.

The Scholars have come to Elon's campus to attend events as well to expose them to cam-

pus life. Brothers of the chapter also support the Scholars in their endeavors, attending athletics events that they participate in. The brothers of the chapter along with the Scholars also participate in community service together. This program was developed to provide an extra resource to students to facilitate success in all aspects of life. Students who are interested should contact Carl Hairston at ghairston@elon.edu.

The Black Cultural Society Continues its Tradition of Service

Elon University's Black Cultural Society, founded in 1974, recently sponsored a Christmas Cheer family in the Graham, NC area. The family is headed by a single mother of two young boys. She works as a bus driver at a local school, but needed help providing for her children. BCS spoke and met with her and discussed what type of gifts she needed and wanted for her family. BCS was fortunate enough to provide her family with gifts and necessities.



"We do Christmas Cheer every year, and really enjoy helping to make Christmas special for a kind family in need. The Christmas Cheer agency is located in downtown Burlington near May Memorial Library. The staff has

always been very friendly, and cooperative with BCS., "notes-Shante' Barnwell, President of BCS. As the major and oldest Black student-run organization at Elon, the Black Cultural Society has a long history of service to the institution and must continue to lead in all areas, especially in its tradition to service. Students interested in participating and contributing to BCS service initiatives should email sbarnwell@elon.edu for more information.

Race Plays Key Role in Decision to Study Abroad or to Stay Home Study Finds

Taken from *The Chronicle for Higher Education* by Peter Schmidt September 20, 2010

If colleges want their minority students to undertake foreign study at the same rate as white ones, they need to take into account big differences in how racial and ethnic groups respond to the forces influencing students' decisions to go abroad, a new study concludes. Students' racial and ethnic backgrounds play a significant role in shaping how they think about study abroad and in determining what factors they consider before embarking on it, the study found. For example, white students who are open to diversity and to challenges generally are more likely than other white students to choose foreign study, but possessing such traits does not appear to have much bearing on whether black or Asian-American students decide to study abroad.

"Minority students don't need to seek out cross-cultural experiences by traveling to another country because, in most cases, they already regularly interact across cultural differences in their everyday lives," says a paper summarizing the study's findings, which were discussed in Chicago this month at a meeting of off-campus study directors belonging to the Associated Colleges of the Midwest, a consortium of liberal-arts colleges. "Although study abroad is often marketed as if all students should be attracted to study abroad for the same reasons, these findings suggest that some of the most widely used arguments in favor of participation—that study abroad will provide opportunities for cross-cultural skill development and improve postgraduate career opportunities—appear to have no effect on increasing study-abroad intent among most minority students," the paper says. Experts on foreign-study programs welcomed the study as likely to help them hone their approaches to recruiting minority students. "If we are serious about trying to diversify study abroad, we have to reach students where they are and design programs which meet their varied needs and concerns," said Peggy Blumenthal, chief operating officer of the Institute of International Education, which is joining the American Institute for Foreign Study and other groups in hosting a workshop on Tuesday in Washington for study-abroad directors and advisers looking for ways to diversify participation in their programs. Diana K. Davies, Princeton University's vice provost for international initiatives, said the study "shows us that we should not be following a one-size-fits-all approach to promoting study abroad," even if it does not offer any clear guidance for translating its findings into practice. She suggested that colleges might want to consider new means of marketing study abroad to minority students, such as promoting it in the context of outreach programs for those in high school, or using social networking to get students who have gone on foreign study to encourage others to follow in their footsteps.

A Major Concern for Study-Abroad Programs

The study was conducted by Mark H. Salisbury, director of institutional research at Augustana College, in Rock Island, Ill., and Michael B. Paulsen and Ernest T. Pascarella, both professors of higher education at the University of Iowa. They based on their analysis on data on about 6,800 students at 53 two- and four-year colleges collected as part of the Wabash National Study of Liberal Arts Education, a large-scale, long-term study of students who entered college as freshmen from 2006 through 2008. The three researchers had previously examined why women were almost twice as likely as men to study abroad and, in a paper presented last year at the annual conference of the Association for the Study of Higher Education, found significant gender-based differences in how students' decisions on foreign study were influenced by their backgrounds, academic environments, and social interactions. Although the racial and ethnic gaps in foreign-study participation are not as large as the gap linked to gender, they nonetheless are substantial enough to remain a major concern for administrators of foreign-study programs.

As of the 2007-8 academic year, when federal data showed that about 65 percent of full-time college students were white, data collected by the Institute of International Education indicated that white students accounted for nearly 82 percent of all participants in foreign-study programs. Moreover, the gap between white and minority students in study abroad has widened over the past decade, as the share of minority students studying abroad has grown at a much slower pace than minority students' share of overall college enrollment. In their latest study, the researchers also found a surprising negative correlation between ACT scores and black students' decisions to study abroad. The higher their ACT scores, the less likely black students were to plan on foreign study, even though those with the highest test scores tended to be enrolled in small liberal-arts colleges with strong study-abroad programs. Nothing in the researchers' analysis explained the finding, but they speculated that many black students at predominantly white institutions might fear that going abroad would expose them to the same sort of negative stereotyping they dealt with at their home institutions. Hispanic students differed substantially from non-Hispanic white students in how they reacted to various financial considerations in weighing decisions on foreign study. Having received a need-based federal grant for college appeared to make it less likely a white student would plan on foreign study but more likely a Hispanic student would do so. Although having received a student loan appeared to have no effect on white students' plans to study abroad, it seemed to make Hispanic students less likely to intend to go on foreign study. Asian-American and white students differed in several key ways. The negative effect of being male on one's chances of planning for foreign study was stronger for Asian-American than white students. Receiving an institutional grant did not affect white students' plans to study abroad, but appeared to make it much likelier Asian-Americans would plan on it. And parental education appeared to play very different roles for each group; the more educated their parents, the more likely white students were to plan to study abroad, and the less likely Asian-American students were to do so. Aspiring for a graduate degree appeared to make white students less likely to intend to study abroad, while Asian-American and black students with graduate-degree plans were the most likely to plan on foreign study.

One author of the study, Mr. Salisbury of Augustana College, said colleges should look not just at how to increase participation in study-abroad programs, but also at how to bring about some of the educational outcomes associated with such programs among students who choose to stay home. "We need multiple ways to reach multiple students," he said. "You cannot say, 'Every student needs to study abroad,' and that is it, because most students don't."

Mission Statement



The mission of the program is to provide imaginative and productive spaces that foster excellence, nurture the scholarly and cultural pursuits of our students and faculty, bring global exposure to the program, and expose a wider cross-section of the Elon University community to the histories, societies, politics, languages, cultures, and economies of Black people within the United States, Africa, and throughout the world. In addition to its principle aim of stimulating teaching, research, scholarship, and service, the program will also serve as a national and international forum for individuals and organizations with an interest in and concern for African-Americans, Africa, and the rest of her Diaspora.

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Ending an Era of Rare Mentorship by Trevor Wynn

My positive experiences with the aforementioned professors correlate with the reasoning that students benefit from racially diverse professors. In the future I will continue my relationships with Eke and Gunby, but thinking about those who will not get to experience their wonderful characteristics bothers me.

Hopefully, in a few years there will be no need for an article discussing the benefits of tenured black professors. But until then I will say goodbye to two mentors who affected my life for the better and taught me what a relationship with a professor should be like.

*Reprinted from *The Pendulum* 4/13/10

The Coordinator's Corner

Race! Why do we avoid it? Does it still matter? Yes! Yes! Yes! 'Race matters!' This issue of *The Black Oaks Newsletter* focuses on the role of race in the promotion and tenure process, study abroad, and service at Elon. It is the subject that still makes most people squirm or deflect the attention to another subject.

We should learn from the same disease out nation experiences around unresolved issues of race, a condition whose symptoms threaten to overwhelm us whenever racial powder kegs ignite our passions, such as the Rodney King and O.J. Simpson trials and Jena Six. Fortunately, nothing so dramatic has directly impacted our campus, but we should learn the lessons of foresight, vigilance and advocacy.

To act with foresight means to begin/continue asking some of

the questions our cover story raises about the implications of *The Elon Commitment* for African American students. To be vigilant means that we must hold accountable our administrators, faculty, students and others in our community responsible for advancing Elon's "unprecedented commitment to diversity and global engagement." We must ensure that the answers to our questions are adequately answered and that those answers inspire action. All of us must be advocates for our students, but we cannot forget or ignore the unique challenges that our faculty and staff face in and outside the classroom. Being effective advocates also require us to be proactive in our approach to serving the needs of Elon's Black community, but also for fostering the kind of environment that "engages and

inspires the minds" of Elon's best and brightest.

To that end, AAASE pledges to do its part, to re-commit to our

mission "to provide imaginative and productive spaces that foster excellence, nurture the scholarly and cultural pursuits of our students and faculty, bring global exposure to the program, and expose a wider cross-section of the Elon University community to the histories, societies, politics, languages, cultures, and economies of Black people within the United States, Africa, and throughout the world."



Dr. Prudence Layne
AAASE Coordinator