

Standard 6

Student Services



The Elon News Network covers what is happening on campus and in the community

Highlights

- ❖ To promote student-faculty interaction and engaged learning, all classes in the School of Communications have enrollment caps of 15, 18, 25 or 33.
- ❖ Students majoring in the school are individually advised by a Communications faculty member each semester.
- ❖ Student media are independent at Elon. The school does provide faculty mentors and generous space and has a strong and positive relationship with student media.
- ❖ The school sponsors a student PR/ad agency, sports production unit, documentary program and film society as ways for students to experience what they learn.
- ❖ Two full-time Career Development staff members are based in the communications school to assist both undergraduates and iMedia students.

Standard 6. Student Services

1. Complete and attach Table 10, “Student Aid.”

Table 10 shows that 280 students in the School of Communications received \$2.9 million in university scholarships in 2016-17. The average scholarship recipient received more than \$10,000, and the median amount was \$4,500. The Admissions Office offers scholarships to students with high academic achievement and, often, financial need.

About 30 of these scholarship recipients are Communications Fellows (7-10 in each class), who receive a \$5,500 a year Fellows scholarship in addition to the possibility of a university scholarship. Awards are made to entering students and are renewable for four years, contingent on academic performance.

In addition, the School of Communications provided 35 student scholarships from its own annual or endowed scholarship funds, for a total of \$43,400 in 2016-17. The median amount was \$2,000.

Overall, 54 percent of Elon students received scholarships, financial aid grants, or both. Of the 42 percent of students who graduated with debt, the average debt was \$30,170.

On the graduate level, Elon provided \$95,000 in scholarship support to 13 students in the M.A. in Interactive Media class of 2016-17. The median scholarship amount was \$6,000.

Table 10. Student Aid

	2015-16	2016-17
SCHOLARSHIPS AWARDED TO UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS IN THE UNIT		
Total amount of scholarship dollars from funds controlled by institution	\$2,007,584	\$2,906,242
Number of students receiving scholarships from funds controlled by institution	188	280
Median individual scholarship from funds controlled by institution	\$3,500	\$4,500
Total amount of scholarship dollars from funds controlled by unit	\$48,250	\$43,400
Number of students receiving scholarships from funds controlled by unit	40	35
Median individual scholarship from funds controlled by unit	\$2,000	\$2,000

UNDERGRADUATE ASSISTANTSHIPS OR WORK-STUDY APPOINTMENTS

Number of students holding appointments	14	14
Range of stipends	\$1,200-5,200	\$1,200-5,200

SCHOLARSHIPS AWARDED TO GRADUATE STUDENTS IN THE UNIT

Total of scholarships from funds controlled by institution	\$100,000	\$95,000
Number of students receiving scholarships from funds controlled by institution	17	13
Median individual scholarship from funds controlled by institution	\$4,000	\$6,000

GRADUATE ASSISTANTSHIPS OR WORK-STUDY APPOINTMENTS

Number of students holding appointments	none	none
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2. Describe how the unit informs students of the requirements of the degree and the major, advises them on effective and timely ways to meet the requirements, and monitors their compliance with the requirements, including the 72-hour rule. Provide online and in the workroom advising guides, manuals, newsletters or other internal communication with students. Describe availability and accessibility of faculty to students.

In the School of Communications, faculty members individually advise all students who have declared a major in the school. These typically are sophomores, juniors and seniors.

In their first semester on campus, all students take Elon 101, a 1-credit-hour seminar featuring weekly meetings with a faculty or staff member who serves as the first-year academic adviser. Each year, several Communications faculty teach Elon 101 and advise first-year students.

At the university level, Elon's Advising Center coordinates academic counseling for all undeclared students and is available on a drop-in basis for questions from declared students. The Advising Center has seven full-time staff in fall 2017. The Advising Center assists in the training of new faculty and Elon 101 advisers and serves as a resource for faculty members interested in upgrading their advising skills.

At Elon, students routinely graduate within four years. Students may not get the exact course with the exact professor at the exact time they want during a semester, but there are not significant delays in student progress through the major or through university requirements. The presence of a winter term is one reason. Most students take 16 credit hours in the fall term, a 4-hour course in winter term, and 16 hours in the spring term. By amassing 36 hours a year, not counting summers, students comfortably complete the minimum 132 credit hours for graduation within four academic years.

Elon adds sections of courses *during* the registration process to meet enrollment needs. The department chair monitors enrollment trends almost to the hour during enrollment week to ensure that students have the course offerings that they need.

Students wanting to major in the School of Communications may take courses in the major during the first year. This fall the school is offering 10 sections of the opening course, Communications in a Global Age. One section is dedicated to Communications Fellows, and the other nine sections (33 seats apiece) are available for Elon students registering for their sophomore year or for first-year students who want to start quickly in their intended major. The school also offers multiple sections of this opening course in winter and spring terms.

Each faculty member in the School of Communications has roughly 15 to 30 advisees. New faculty members do not advise in the fall of their first year and are assigned a small number of students to advise in the spring. Significant faculty hiring over the past decade has allowed the school to create a more positive advising ratio. In February 2017, faculty in Communications advised an average of 23 students, compared to about 60 apiece in the school's formative years.

In the fall and spring, students meet individually with their advisers about registration and academic progress. In fact, a student cannot enroll for courses until the faculty adviser has indicated via computer that they have met and that the student is cleared for enrollment. During this conference, faculty members are encouraged to include career advising. Some students, of course, also meet with their faculty advisers outside of the normal registration timetable.

In previous years, the Advising Center provided electronic checksheets for each major. Beginning in fall 2017, checksheets are part of the university's online Smart Catalog. The Advising Center also provides an online "degree audit" for all students and their advisers that includes progress toward or completion of the 72-hour rule. This audit fills in a student's courses within the appropriate requirements, so students are able to immediately identify what requirements have been completed and what requirements remain.

Prior to graduation, the Registrar's Office meets individually with each senior, identifies all remaining requirements for the student, and gives a copy to the student and faculty adviser. Therefore, no student should ever be surprised by what is necessary to graduate. The Registrar's Office also verifies with all students how to pronounce their names correctly in front of the 12,000 guests at graduation.

Students have broad access to faculty at Elon. According to the 2016 National Survey of Student Engagement (322,000 students at 560 schools), 65 percent of Elon Communications students often or very often talked about their career plans with a faculty member compared to 49 percent nationwide. On academic advising, 79 percent of Elon Communications students reported a high quality of interactions with advisers compared to 69 percent nationally, and 50 percent of Elon Communications students "often worked with faculty on activities other than coursework" compared to 36 percent at all schools.

Small class sizes promote student-faculty interaction, and all Communications classes are one of four sizes: 33, 25, 18 or 15. Conceptual courses such as Communications in a Global Age, Public Relations & Civic Responsibility and Media Law & Ethics have a 33 class cap. Courses such as Strategic Research Methods have a cap of 25. Lab-based courses such as Media Writing, Creating Multimedia Content and production courses have a class cap of 18. The school's Great Ideas: Issues and Research capstone seminar is limited to 15 a section.

3. Describe the unit's process for evaluating its advising and counseling services. Include measurements of the accuracy of academic advising, student and faculty opinion of the quality of advising, or other indices of the effectiveness of advising. Discuss the results of these assessments.

The university takes academic advising seriously, and results from both a national survey and a campus survey show a high level of student satisfaction with advising in the School of Communications.

Elon participates in the National Survey of Student Engagement that includes questions about advising. For instance, when seniors were asked about the quality of their interactions with academic advisers, 79 percent of Communications seniors said the quality of advising was good to excellent (compared to 69 percent of senior respondents nationally). Asked whether they had talked about their career plans with a faculty member, 65 percent of Communications seniors said yes (compared to 49 percent of seniors nationally).

Elon's Advising Center periodically evaluates the quality of academic advising and provides results by school. In its last survey, 87 percent of Communications students (n=181, fall 2011) said they had been accurately advised. In terms of specific questions (top 3 of 6 rankings comprise a favorable response), 82 percent said they received accurate information about degree requirements (higher than the university average), and 73 percent said advising helped them connect courses in their major with academic, career and life goals (also higher than the university average). Of course, we'd like these results to be 100 percent.

4. Describe student media, student professional organizations or other extra-curricular activities and opportunities provided by the unit or the institution that are relevant to the curriculum and develop students' professional and intellectual abilities and interests.

Student media at Elon operate through the Student Communications Media Board comprised of students and faculty. Colin Donohue is director of student media and an instructor in the School of Communications. Communications professor and Associate Provost Brooke Barnett serves as board chair, and three others in the school currently serve on the board: associate dean Kenn Gaither and faculty members Max Negin and William Moner, with Donohue as an ex-officio member.

Student media consist of six organizations. Four are housed in McEwen Communications Building and advised by Communications faculty or staff.

Elon News Network, a multiplatform student news organization
(*The Pendulum* mentor is Kelly Furnas, and ELN's mentor is Rich Landesberg)

Elon Student Television, home to entertainment programming
(ESTV mentors are Staci Saltz and Ryan Witt)

WSOE-FM student radio station
(station mentor is Bryan Baker)

Phi Psi Cli, the university's yearbook
(yearbook mentor is Tommy Kopetskie)

Two other student media outlets are located and advised elsewhere. Literary and art journal *Colonnades* is advised in the English Department, and Limelight Records is advised in the Music Production & Recording Arts program.

The School of Communications has created and funds other opportunities for students to practice what they learn in the classroom.

Live Oak Communications, a student-run public relations and advertising agency
(faculty director is Hal Vincent)

Cinelon Productions, which focuses on narrative filmmaking
(faculty mentor is Youssef Osman)

elondocs, a documentary production program
(faculty mentor is Nicole Triche)

Maroon Sports, a partnership with Athletics for broadcasting and live streaming of events
(faculty director is Max Negin, coordinating producer is Michelle Manzo)

Imagining the Internet Center
(faculty director is Janna Anderson)

Communications is home to eight student chapters of national organizations:

Society of Professional Journalists chapter (Anthony Hatcher, adviser)

Radio-Television Digital News Association chapter (Rich Landesberg, adviser)

Public Relations Student Society of America chapter (Denise Hill, adviser)

American Advertising Federation chapter (Bill Anderson, adviser)

National Press Photographers Association chapter (Randy Piland, adviser)

National Sports Media Association (Glenn Scott, Max Negin, Michelle Manzo, advisers)

Media Analytics Club (adviser to be named)

Lambda Pi Eta communications honor society (Amanda Sturgill, adviser)

FreshTV is an innovative program for first-semester students who are gung-ho about getting involved in their major from the start. The 13-week workshop meets on Sunday evenings and focuses on broadcast, cinema and journalism. The workshop is led by Bryan Baker, director of multimedia projects in the school.

A Communications living-learning community is on the first floor of Sloan residence hall, with William Moner and Hal Vincent as faculty advisers. Colin Donohue, Glenn Scott and Max Negin live on campus as part of the university's Residential Campus Initiative that seeks to more fully integrate academic life and student life in order to deepen intellectual life.

5. Describe the unit’s career counseling and placement strategy for assistance in students’ searches for employment. List placement statistics for the three most recent years before the self-study year for which accurate information is available.

Helping seniors get that first job or be accepted into graduate school is a task that involves everyone, including faculty who serve as student resources, alumni who serve as networkers, and Elon’s Student Professional Development Center that has two career development staff members housed in the School of Communications to work specifically with students.

At the university level, the Student Professional Development Center has 22 full-time staff and two full-time fellows. The two staff members dedicated to assisting Communications students and alumni in their search are Amber Moser, assistant director of career services for the School of Communications, and Ashley Pinney, associate director of corporate and employer relations for the School of Communications. Their offices are prominently located on the main floor of McEwen, just off the lobby.

Moser meets daily with students to facilitate career exploration, assist with resume and cover letter construction, practice interviewing skills, and connect students to employers through programming. She speaks in more than 70 classes each year, including each section of Communications in a Global Age, Creating Multimedia Content, and the Great Ideas capstone course.

Pinney spends about a quarter of her time on the road, traveling to New York City, Los Angeles, Boston, Washington, Chicago and other cities to visit companies and learn about their job and internship opportunities while increasing Elon’s visibility and increasing the number of job postings available to students through the Elon Job Network. Pinney invites companies to come to campus both physically and virtually for information sessions, interviewing and large-scale recruitment events.

Determining employment statistics is an inexact science, depending greatly on definitions and response rates. A Student Professional Development Center employment survey of alumni nine months after graduation found these results from the graduating class of 2016:

	Accepted a job since graduation	Accepted to graduate school
2016 Communications graduates (n=240)	91%	7%

Among the 2016 Communications graduates who responded, 80 percent are employed in the corporate sector, 9 percent in the nonprofit sector, 8 percent in education, 2 percent in an entrepreneurial endeavor, and 1 percent in a government role.

The employment report on 2016 Communications graduates is stronger than the two preceding years (82% in 2014-15 and 88% in 2013-14). This upward trend in employment reflects the significant improvement in the nation’s economy and jobs outlook.

Elon's large out-of-state population influences the university's placement process. About 75 percent of Communications majors come from outside of North Carolina. For the graduating class of 2016, Elon's Cap & Gown Survey on graduation day showed that 70 percent of Communications seniors already were employed. While some students want to stay in state, many desire employment in their home states or in major cities.

6. Discuss the processes in place to collect, maintain and analyze enrollment, retention and graduation rates within the major and in comparison with university rates. Discuss the findings of the analysis. Provide the web link where the unit shares its most recent retention and graduation data with the public.

Enrollment, retention, graduation and employment data are on the [Student Success Rates](#) page on the school's website.

Retention at Elon is high. Ninety percent of first-year students at Elon return for their sophomore year. Elon's four-year graduation rate (defined as students who graduate from the same institution they entered four years earlier) is 77 percent, which is in the top 10 percent of universities. Elon's six-year graduation rate rises to 82 percent.

The School of Communications abides by university policies for academic probation and suspension. The university's Academic Standing Committee makes decisions about academic dismissals each term, and the school does not play a role.

To be suspended, students must have low GPAs as determined by their academic classification. Freshmen must have a 1.7 GPA to continue; sophomores, 1.8; juniors, 1.9; and seniors, 2.0. In addition, any student falling below 1.0 for any semester may be suspended. Probation is a warning for any student below a 2.0 GPA. Students on probation are limited to 14 semester hours (rather than the normal 16). Any student on probation for three consecutive semesters may be suspended.

Professional master's program

7. Describe the process for academic and career advising of professional master's students.

In terms of academic advising, students in the iMedia program are individually evaluated at three points in the first half of the program on whether they are making satisfactory progress.

The first occurs at the end of the summer Digital Media Workshop course. If faculty have concerns about elements of a student's progress, the student will receive a report about areas of deficiency as well as suggestions for addressing these deficiencies. Students are expected to discuss these reports with their academic advisers to plan for remediation. If the faculty find that a student's understanding of overall course content is unsatisfactory and does not seem to be correctable with extended work, a student may be removed from the program.

The second evaluation occurs at fall break upon completion of the intensive half-semester course Theory and Audience Analysis in an Interactive Age. If the faculty teaching required fall courses find that a student's understanding of course content is unsatisfactory or that normal progress is not being attained, a student may be removed from the program.

The final evaluation comes at the end of the fall term. A committee of those teaching graduate courses will evaluate the overall progress of each student. If the faculty determine that a student's understanding of course content is unsatisfactory, a student may be removed from the program. At the conclusion of fall term, students are notified of their progress in the program.

Interactive media students have regularly scheduled sessions with career development staff during the academic year.

Amber Moser, assistant director of career services, holds multiple group sessions with iMedia students and also meets them one-on-one to work on résumés, cover letters and interviewing techniques. Ashley Pinney, associate director of corporate and employer relations, meets with students to discuss the job-search process and posts job openings to the iMedia listserv. Ross Wade, director of career development for the university, meets with iMedia students at least twice a year and conducts mock interviews with students in the spring semester.

Students meet with individual faculty members regularly to discuss their academic program and for career advising, and the iMedia program regularly invites media professionals to campus to discuss the workplace. A number of iMedia graduates return to put the academic process into perspective for current students and to provide career and job-search advice.

8. Discuss retention and graduation rates in the master's program, including the grade-point average required to remain in the program and the expected time to degree. Provide the web link where the unit shares its most recent retention and graduation data with the public.

Year-by-year enrollment, retention, graduation and employment data are on the [Student Success Rates](#) page on the M.A. in Interactive Media website.

Since its origin, 265 of the 274 students who began the program have earned their graduate degrees, for a 96.7 percent retention rate. The program lost students because of poor academics in two of its eight years. It lost students in two other years for financial reasons or "not the right fit" cited by departing students.

The iMedia program prepares students for cutting-edge careers. The school’s employment survey in 2017 revealed that 92 percent of May 2016 graduates (33 of 36) had full-time positions after nine months. Job titles include bilingual content editor, UX (user experience) designer, digital marketing specialist, associate director of digital strategy, video producer, marketing coordinator, digital media designer, graphic designer, web designer, web developer, brand strategist and SEO (search engine optimization) analyst. The 2016 graduates dispersed throughout the country, accepting full-time positions in Atlanta, New York City, Los Angeles, Dallas, Seattle and Charlotte at interactive agencies, businesses, banks and universities as well as at Microsoft and Amazon Web Services.

The iMedia program does not use a traditional grading scale, so students do not have a GPA. Below is the information provided to prospective and current students on maintaining eligibility to remain in the program:

Graduation is dependent upon the quality of work and mastery of material in the course of study in the master’s degree in interactive media. The iMedia degree is a professional master’s degree. As such, mastery of material and the quality of the work that students complete is of more importance than the grade that is received. Within mastery, there are levels, however. For that reason, students are not judged on a traditional grading system. The grading scale used by the iMedia program is not one that has been devised solely by Elon University. It is one used by a number of universities across the nation. Students in the interactive media master’s program will be evaluated using the following grade scale:

<i>Grade</i>	<i>Evaluation</i>	<i>Credit</i>
H	Honors in mastery	3 credit hours earned
P	Pass with mastery	3
L	Low pass	3
F	Failure	0

A student automatically becomes academically ineligible to continue in the program for the following reasons: a grade of F, more than one grade of L per semester (for iMedia, the August and January terms are considered part of the fall and spring semesters respectively) or violation of the university’s Honor Code.