

## **2021-2022 School of Communications DEI Report**

(Based on the objectives established in the 2016-2023 School of Communications Diversity Plan)

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### **This report is divided into two sections:**

1. The 2016-2023 School of Communications Diversity Plan (pages 1-2).
2. Outcomes for the 2021-2022 academic year, based on the main areas described in the Diversity Plan: A diverse faculty and staff, a diverse student body, an inclusive curriculum, and a supportive environment.

### **1. The School of Communications Diversity Plan (2016-2023)**

The School of Communications at Elon University is committed to having a diverse and inclusive program that reflects domestic diversity and a global society. 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 individuals. 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.
- Formally instruct search committee members on how to achieve best practices in building and considering a diverse applicant pool.
- Partner with nearby historically black institutions that have strong journalism and communications programs through faculty exchanges and joint endeavors.

## **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.
- 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.
- Increase the school's scholarship funds designated to enhance the diversity of the student body.
- 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.
- Promote achievements in national programs by diverse students.

## **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.
- Encourage and support student conversations on campus climate and diversity topics, as evidenced by National Survey of Student Engagement data.
- Promote experiential learning that exposes students to the diverse domestic and international world in which they live.
- Invite a diverse group of professionals as guest speakers in classes to expose students to different perspectives and issues.

## **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.
- Partner with university groups to offer programming and discussions related to diversity.
- Participate in national organizations and events on the importance of diversity and inclusiveness in the communications discipline.
- Support the university's religious holiday observance policy and be sensitive to the observed and practiced holy days of different faiths.
- Recruit women and minority professionals to serve on the School of Communications Advisory Board.

## **2. Outcomes for the 2021-2022 academic year**

### **A diverse faculty and staff**

The School of Communications is committed to recruiting and supporting a diverse faculty and staff. When a search committee is formed, the school's dean and/or an Elon HR representative will join the first meeting to discuss and emphasize the importance of recruiting candidates with diverse backgrounds and underrepresented identities.

Faculty search committees include a diverse combination of members in gender, race, ethnicity and seniority level at Elon. Intentional measures are taken so the recruiting process is equitable for all candidates (regarding activities during on-campus visits and questions asked during remote and on-campus interviews). The hiring process also accommodates the particular needs of candidates with disabilities, varied religious traditions, meal requirements and lactation-space needs, among others. And while Elon University has been a long-term equal-opportunity employer, in 2021 it hired T.J. Bowie as its inaugural equal opportunity and human resources compliance manager. Bowie is primarily responsible for all development and training around equitable employment protocols, including assessing recruiting and hiring practices.

This 2021-2022 academic year, the School of Communications had five openings for new faculty. In total, the school received 107 applications for these positions. Of those, about 54 were from female applicants, minority applicants (regarding race or ethnicity) or both. Among the finalists considered, eight were women and 10 were minorities. The school's five hires this year (four tenure-track assistant professors and one lecturer) were all women and/or minorities: one Asian female, one Hispanic male, and three white females. The year prior, after being able to "unfreeze" lines affected by the budgetary impact of Covid19, the school hired one Hispanic male faculty member (in Journalism, as a tenure-track assistant professor) and two Black female faculty members (one as tenure-track assistant professor and one as a lecturer, both in Strategic Communications).

Retention is also an important part of having a diverse faculty and staff. As such, there are, each year, intentional efforts to retain diverse faculty and staff both at the university and at the school levels. At the university level, all new-faculty members across the university form a cohort through a one-year orientation process offered by Elon's CATL (Center for the Advancement of Teaching and Learning). This orientation encompasses monthly sessions centered on engaged pedagogies and techniques, how to navigate a new institution of higher education, and how to write effective annual reports (Unit Is), among other topics. In some of these sessions there are also invited guests from across campus, such as Human Resources and Elon's FR&D (Faculty Research & Development) committee members. These monthly sessions are formative and allow all new faculty members to network.

At the School of Communications level, each new faculty member is assigned a senior faculty mentor within the school. These mentors guide new faculty in their transition to the life of the university and through the culture and nuances of the School of Communications. The mentorship happens formally for one year, but in practice, mentoring relationships continue

informally for the long-term. Mentor-mentee pairs are encouraged to meet regularly over coffee or lunch, and the school covers all costs.

One measure of success related to these support systems is that the school's faculty members have been highly successful in attaining tenure and promotion to Associate Professor, promotion to Full Professor, or continuance (in continuing track appointment). For instance, between the spring of 2019 and the spring of 2022, the following faculty were tenured and/or promoted:

- Promoted to Full Professor: Lee Bush (2022), Dr. Qian Xu (2022), Dr. Julie Lellis (2020), and Dr. Naemah Clark (2019).
- Tenured and promoted to Associate Professor: Dr. Shaina Dabbs (2022), Dr. Kathleen Stansberry (2022), Dr. Young Do Kim (2021), Dr. Denise Hill (2020), and Dr. Jessalynn Strauss (2020).
- Continuance in a continuing-track appointment: Michele Lashley (2022) and Sana Haq (2020).

In the 2021-2022 academic year, the school's faculty members demonstrated inclusive excellence in many ways. For example, STC professor Kenn Gaither (Black male) was selected as one of only six finalists, and received an Honorary Mention, for the PRNews Outstanding Educator of the Year award. At Elon, Dr. Gaither was honored with the endowed professorship in Communications A.J. Fletcher.

School of Communications faculty members also engaged in leadership regarding DEI topics at the University level. The school's representation included serving as co-Chair of the Hispanic/Latino (Latinx) Implementation Team, co-Coordinator of the Latinx Employee Resource Group, co-Chair of the Asian and Pacific Islander Task Force, coordinator of the Asian Studies minor, and member of PACIE (the Presidential Advisory Council for Inclusive Excellence).

Additionally, several faculty members in the school provided DEI-related knowledge and leadership beyond Elon. Four of them presented more than a dozen times as panelists for DEI online sessions by organizations such as the PRSA Chapters of Puget Sound and Silicon Valley, in California; the PRSSA chapter of Temple University, the Institute for Public Relations Research, the PRSA Educators Academy, the Museum of Public Relations, AEJMC's Public Relations Division, the Arthur Page Society, the Diversity Action Alliance, the PRWeek Convene Talent virtual event, and Mullen Lowe Public Relations.

A Strategic Communications faculty also served as board chair of the Diversity Action Alliance, and another was Grants Chair of AEJMC's Minorities and Communication (MAC) Division. Finally, Dean and STC professor Rochelle Ford received the Distinguished Service Award of the Arthur W. Page Society for being a DE&I Champion in higher education.

## **A diverse student body**

The School of Communications' dean and associate dean, as well as different faculty members collaborate with Elon's Admissions Office to support their events. As such, school faculty serve as panelists for Admissions gatherings with prospective students and their parents, and school faculty teach mock classes during Phoenix Fusion Weekend, where underrepresented students are invited to spend the weekend on campus. The dean and associate dean meet monthly with the Admissions Dean and other senior staff members. The School of Communications Fellows Program Director also meets with Admissions staff regularly.

Recruiting students who represent the diversity of the United States is a key effort of the School of Communications. Several professors from the school participate in the Zoom informational events such as Viva Elon! (for Latinx prospective students), Black Advance (for Black prospective students), API Achieve (for API prospective students) and PRIDE Raise (for LGBTQIA+ prospective students), where they also join the chat rooms to get to know prospective students and answer any questions they might have about any aspect of Elon or the School of Communications.

Additionally, thanks to a generous grant from the Scripps Howard Foundation, the school started hosting the Scripps Howard Emerging Journalists Program (EJP) in 2022, with a grant that will allow for this program to continue for three consecutive years. Through the program, high school students from around the country apply and are selected to immerse themselves in journalism, either online (through four interactive learning sessions) or in-person, for two weeks, in a journalism bootcamp on campus. For the on-campus immersive version, the about 20 students selected come from underrepresented groups (race, ethnicity or socioeconomic status).

Many students leave so impressed with the experience that they decide to major in journalism. The program has unintendedly also become an admissions tool. The yield for these students is higher than that for the Communications Fellows program, which is above 60%. More information about EJP can be found [here](#).

Furthermore, the school's director of student engagement and special projects, Colin Donohue, provides the Admissions Office with names of prospective students who have visited the school through personalized tours or interacted with school faculty, to identify particularly promising students and ask Admissions to monitor them. And during Fellows/Scholarships Weekend, school faculty conduct Saturday interviews with prospective students and also informally interact with them on a social that is held on a Friday night. Faculty pay special attention to interact with students from underrepresented backgrounds, to make sure they feel seen and welcomed to Elon, and to convey they should consider Elon as their choice for college.

Elon has an innovative program in Alamance County called "Elon Academy," a college-readiness program for high-school seniors that supports students for two full years. Many program participants end up attending Elon. To better connect with these students, Cinema and Television Arts Department Chair and lecturer Staci Saltz teaches one of the courses that local high-school students receive on campus during the summer right before senior year.

Beyond scholarships offered at the university level, the School's Dean has some funds to support students who need additional funding to complete internships and research/creative projects. These funds are not for new students, but they help with the retention of some underrepresented students.

### **An inclusive curriculum**

The School of Communications has updated its curricular contents through changes in student learning outcomes in the different required and elective courses, through experiential learning opportunities made available to students, through diverse guest speakers who visit the school periodically, and through diverse contents in the classroom. Following are some examples:

#### *Updates on course objectives and course curricula*

In the academic year 2021-2022, the School of Communications' Inclusive Excellence Committee developed a polished draft for a new Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Plan for the school and an initial version of a syllabus for a course that fulfills Elon's Advancing Equity Requirement (AER), called COM 2000 Inclusive Communications. Initially, the plan is to offer this class as an elective course both in the fall and spring semesters, with the goal of transitioning it into a required course in the future.

In Strategic Communications, Lee Bush and Vanessa Bravo developed DEI teaching modules for three required Strategic Communications courses. These modules fulfill the new DEI guidelines by the Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communication (ACEJMC). Over the summer, Bush and Bravo conducted research on DEI concepts and pedagogy in Strategic Communications, for which they developed an annotated bibliography. They subsequently developed teaching modules for the three courses: Strategic Research Methods, Strategic Campaigns, and Public Relations & Civic Responsibility. Both the Strategic Research and Strategic Campaigns modules focus on a "DEI First" approach, teaching students to infuse DEI throughout the research and campaign development process. Bush and Bravo tested each of these modules in classes in the fall and conducted an assessment of student learning. The assessment included three components: a Qualtrics survey completed by students in each course, instructor reflections on teaching the modules, and the result of questions included in quizzes from three of the classes. Response to the modules was positive and showed a shift in student learning. Bush and Bravo uploaded their modules, as PowerPoint presentations, to the STC Moodle site, for any STC faculty member to use (as is or modified to their needs).

The different majors in the school (except for Media Analytics, which had recently updated its curriculum), worked on the process of developing a new curriculum structure in fall 2021. This happened at the department level, through the formation of subcommittees that conducted research, gathered data, discussed proposals and started drafting new curricular models for each department. Each department in the school also concurrently updated student learning outcomes in several required and elective courses in their majors to more strongly include contents related to diversity, equity, inclusion, and the multicultural history of each discipline.

CDE (Communication Design) faculty invited/interacted with diverse-identity professionals Antionette Carroll, Vinicius Lima, Anna Karpinski, Cheryl D. Holmes Miller, Kirk Visola, Mingxuan Shen, and Alex Savakis to lecture in their courses. Additionally, students from several CDE courses participated in a diversity-themed design workshop led by Elon by Design and the Design Forge, featuring keynote presentations by Pierce Otlhogile-Gordon and Adam Royalty. Many CDE faculty created new projects within their courses that focused on DEI-related issues, audiences with diverse backgrounds, and opportunities to reflect on how diversity, equity, and inclusion can make teams and organizations stronger and more equitable. CTA (Cinema and Television Arts) faculty shared best practices for inclusive teaching during its February department meeting. Among the ideas were class projects that ask students to create social justice messages, tell stories of people with different identities from their own, and use data to analyze DEI social media content.

In general, faculty in the School of Communications continued to pursue increased DEI knowledge through workshops, seminars, and conferences (see Appendix 1 for some examples).

### *Experiential learning*

Some of the experiential learning opportunities for communications students were the following:

Study abroad: In January 2022, Dr. Rich Landesberg and Dr. Kenn Gaither led the Holocaust Journey course and Dr. Vanessa Bravo co-led the study abroad class Costa Rica: Language, Culture and Ecotourism.

Undergraduate research: Students conducted undergraduate research that involved DEI issues in myriad ways, from research projects in the course COM495 Great Ideas in Communications to mentored research experiences with individual faculty members. A few of such projects resulted in conference presentation or publication:

- Living in The Background: Analyzing the Representation of Marginalized Identities in Predominantly White TV Shows, by Matisse Gilmore. Published in the *Elon Journal of Communication*.
- Portrayals of Women in Super Bowl Advertising, 2016–2021, by Emily Holland. Published in the *Elon Journal of Communication*.
- When Words Fail: A Study of Audience Perceptions of Aphasia as Portrayed in Film, by Jeremy Palladino. Published in the *Elon Journal of Communication*.
- It's Not All Black and White: Portrayals of Mass Shooters Before and After the 2020 Black Lives Matter Movement, by Michaela R. VanDerVelden. Published in the *Elon Journal of Communication*.

### *Diverse guest speakers*

The School of Communications faculty frequently engages high-level guest speakers to present on topics related to DEI. Following are a few selected examples:

- Panelists Joss Richard, senior content producer for Red Table Talk and founder of Margot Community; Kelsey Wang, senior manager of finance at Hello Sunshine; Denise Rodine, chief people officer at Madison Wells Media; Nneka Enurah, global video partnerships lead at Amazon; Kayla Dixon, marketing brand manager at TikTok; and Nancy Azcona, creative recruiter at Agency Worx, spoke at Elon in LA's Women of the Elon Entertainment Empire (WEEE)'s event EmployHER on Sept. 24, 2021, about how Covid-19 disproportionately impacted women and how industries need to hire women back. All the panelists are women. Two are black, one is Latina, one is white, and one is mixed race.
- Maity Interiano '07, Emmy Award-winning journalist and on-air talent at Univision Network, spoke on Nov. 6, 2021, about her experience as a Journalism major at Elon from Honduras and participating in Phoenix 14 (the precursor to Elon News Network). She also received the school's Outstanding Alumni Award. She is a Latinx female from Honduras.
- Jane Ferguson, award-winning foreign correspondent, met with classes, student media and the campus community on Nov. 18, 2022, to share her reporting experiences in Afghanistan and the Middle East. Ferguson is a Polk, Emmy and DuPont award-winning foreign correspondent for "PBS NewsHour," a contributor to The New Yorker, a 2020 McGraw professor of journalism at Princeton University and Pulitzer Center grantee. She is a white female.
- Panelists Theresa Helmer '12, vice president of digital and social media at Lucasfilm; Mykel Dodson '10, creative producer at Squarespace; Loren Brunson '19, casting coordinator at Sony Pictures; David Morrow '07, L'10, co-founder & COO at Greenbelt Group; and Mia G. Watkins '16, communications specialist at PlayStation spoke on Feb. 26, 2022, at "Strong Black Lead," the inaugural event of Unity LA, an Elon alumni organization created to celebrate diversity and advance inclusion. The panel was moderated by Nneka Enurah '11. They are all black. Mykel and David are males; Theresa, Loren, Mia and Nneka are females.
- Tomás Ayuso, photographer for National Geographic, spoke on April 7, 2022, at an event at Elon sponsored by the Department of Strategic Communications. Ayuso explored the migratory crisis and ongoing violent conflicts in Latin America, urging a critical reexamination of the human rights situation in the area and the roots of forced displacement, especially in Tijuana, Mexico. He is Latinx male born in Honduras.



### *Diversity topics in the classroom*

Examples of how the school's faculty included DEI topics or experiences in the classroom are too numerous to be fully captured in this document. However, there is a list of selected examples at the end of this report, under the section **"2021-2022 Diversity & Inclusion Faculty Activity Report."** These examples of DEI-related work include mostly in-classroom content and activities, and also DEI-related professional activity, as described by faculty members in their Unit I reports (annual reports). See Appendix 1.

### **A supportive environment**

Following are examples of ways in which the School of Communications aims to create a supportive environment for students, faculty and staff:

The school's Inclusive Excellence Committee started working in the Fall of 2021 to develop the school's new DEI plan, now available [here](#). As part of developing the plan, each committee member reviewed DEI programs at peer and aspirant universities. The plan was presented to the faculty twice in the Spring of 2022 (for gathering feedback from the faculty). The vote to approve the plan was delayed, and it is expected in AY 2022-2023.

The school supports its students for recognition of their academic and leadership work, through student awards on campus and beyond. Faculty actively promotes underrepresented student work to achieve recognition beyond Elon University. For example, in 2021-2022, two STC students received 2022 LAGRANT Foundation Scholarships and one was selected as part of a group of 50 students, nationwide, recognized by the American Advertising Federation as "Most Promising Multicultural Students."

### *Programming in partnership with university groups*

This academic year, the School of Communications organized events such as the following:

- Unity in LA hosted 70 alumni at the "Strong Black Lead" panel that focused on African American leadership in the entertainment industry. Nneka Enura '11 hosted the event.
- The Los Angeles chapter of the Women of the Elon Entertainment Empire (WEEE) hosted EmployHER at Second Home Hollywood in Los Angeles on Sept. 24. This panel featured industry leaders discussing how the pandemic has negatively impacted women and professional development networks.
- Assistant Professor Sowj Kudva hosted a panel on inclusive crews for Film in Color, on Nov. 13, with filmmakers Nava Maua and Kristal Sotomayor. The panelists discussed their experiences and strategies for building inclusive and equitable media production cultures. Nava Mau (HBO's *Generation*, Netflix's *Disclosure*) is a filmmaker, actress, and cultural worker, and Kristal Sotomayor (Program Director, Philadelphia Latino Film Festival) is a documentary filmmaker, festival programmer and journalist.

- In 2020-2021, the School of Communications secured a three-year \$300,000 grant from the Scripps Howard Foundation to establish the Emerging Journalists Program (EJP), which will support journalism in diverse and underserved communities, and it will educate high school students who are interested in pursuing careers in journalism. Senior Lecturer Kelly Furnas and Colin Donohue, director of Student Engagement and Special Projects and instructor in journalism, were instrumental in the grant application and are heavily involved in its execution. One of the first tangible results of the EJP grant was the summer 2022 immersion program for high school journalists from around the country. Eighteen students from diverse backgrounds were on Elon's campus, June 20-July 1, to develop skills in reporting, writing, multimedia storytelling, leadership, and media management. The students produced web content and learned to track audience engagement metrics. The school provided six virtual sessions throughout the 2021-2022 academic year, but the crown jewel of EJP was the 12-day residential summer workshop held on Elon's campus. The on-campus program attracted 18 students from underrepresented socioeconomic, racial and ethnic groups who learned about the fundamentals of journalistic research, interviewing, writing, photography, design, videography, editing, and producing. Students produced a newspaper, aired a broadcast and launched a website during the program.
- Assistant Professor Israel Balderas and Communications Design Senior Lecturer Randy Piland built a brace to hold a smartphone to be used as a video camera for a Journalism student with limited mobility confined to a wheelchair. This allowed the student to successfully complete JOU 3510 Television News Reporting.

## Appendix 1

### *2021-2022 Diversity & Inclusion Faculty Activity Report*

Here are 30 selected examples of how faculty in the School of Communications included DEI into their teaching and professional activity. This list is not exhaustive, but it provides an overview of the variety of approaches to teaching and professional activity related to diversity, equity and inclusion:

#### *Teaching Examples*

This year, STC Campaigns students developed work for a diverse range of clients, including The Bail Project, the organization North Carolinians Against Gun Violence, Elon's Kernodle Center for Civic Engagement, and Elon's Center for Race, Ethnicity and Diversity Education (CREDE).

Strategic Communications (STC) faculty also included this academic year, in different courses, content and case studies from the Maynard Institute for Diversity in Journalism Education or from the Racial Equity Institute (in Greensboro); speeches from diversity champions such as John Lewis, Edna Chavez, Canwen Wu and Chimamanda Ngozi; and materials from other sources, such as the *New York Times' 1619 Project* and the *Washington Post*, or from books such

as *How to Be an Inclusive Leader*, *Data Feminism*, *Algorithms of Oppression*, *Weapons of Math Destruction*, *White Too Long* or *The Color of Law*. STC faculty also showed and discussed documentaries such as *13th*, *Latinos Beyond Reel*, *Asian Americans*, *When They See Us*, and *Forbidden Voices*, as well as feature films such as *Parasite* and *Monsoon Wedding*.

The following are other examples provided by individual School of Communications faculty members, in their annual reports, in their own words:

**Israel Balderas (JOU):** “I required a case brief activity in previous Media Law courses I taught in the past. But in my attempt to redesign this course with the goal of fostering an inclusive course climate for learning, as well as aligning my pedagogy with Elon’s commitment to developing diversity and inclusion initiatives across the institution, I introduced the basic tenets of critical race theory, or CRT, as originally conceived as a framework for critical legal analysis. By way of in-class instruction early in the semester – and offering 10 extra points in the midterm exam for anyone attending an Elon campus panel discussion: Understanding Critical Race Theory – students were challenged to consider the complex relationship between racial justice and free speech. My in-class instruction plan was based on material from “Words That Wound: Critical Race Theory, Assaultive Speech, and the First Amendment” by Professors Mari Matsuda and Richard Delgado, as well as related scholarship written by Professor Henry Louis Gates, Jr.”

**Lee Bush (STC):** “I furthered my students’ understanding of equity and anti-racism by partnering with The Bail Project to serve as our client in Strategic Campaigns. The Bail Project is a national non-profit working to prevent pre-trial incarceration and promote systemic change in the U.S. cash-bail system. Students learned about the racial and economic inequities in the bail system by conducting secondary research and interviewing criminal justice and policy experts, social justice activists, and people who had faced pre-trial incarceration because they could not afford even a small amount of bail. Students then developed campaigns to educate Millennials and Gen Z on how cash-bail functions, clear up common misconceptions about the system, and build awareness of The Bail Project’s National Revolving Bail Fund and “Community Release with Support” model. One of the most significant learnings students took away from working on a social justice project was the sensitivity needed in telling the stories of those who have been impacted by systemic inequality.”

**Rebecca Bagley (CDE):** “In my CDE 2580 class, I rotate the list of designers in my list each semester. They pick one from the list to research and present to the class. Many of the designers I picked resonated with the students. They felt like it was good to see people who had commonalities make it in the world of design. A sample from my long list are: [Aries Moross](#) - transgender designer, [Andrea Pippens](#) - black educator and designer, [Luis Pinto](#) - Mexican designer and illustrator, and [Sadie Red Wing](#) - Lakota Native American designer and advocate for tribal visual sovereignty. In my CDE 3500 class, we viewed a video on DEI in design with Equity Designer Antoinette Carrol. She has been an outstanding resource on this topic. After the video, we had a discussion, and my students felt like it helped them on the Social Media campaign project. They also incorporated a lot of her quotes and stats in their designs.”

**Naemah Clark (CTA):** “To help them communicate about what they were learning, students wrote critical analyses of a current film or series using Feminist Theory, Critical Race Theory, or

Queer Theory. They also studied the mission statements of corporations to determine how they addressed DEI. Students then used social media to interact with that brand.”

**Kelly Furnas (JOU):** “In the Editing & Design course, we spend a module specifically talking about aspects of the Associated Press Style-book that cover diversity. This helps students learn to be more aware, and perhaps even more sensitive, about the language used to describe ethnic, racial, religious, gender and sexual identities. It’s also been a refreshing opportunity for dialogue, as students debate some of AP’s decisions. Also, for years in the Media Writing course I have been conducting a modified version of the Maynard Institute’s Fault Lines diversity audit. We generally use *The Pendulum* student newspaper to assess how well the publication’s coverage depicts the community it is trying to represent. This leads to a healthy discussion about students’ own sources.”

**Vic Costello (CTA):** “In the course COM 456 Producing for the Screen, students completed a broadcast quality 60-90 second PSA to be entered in the 2020-21 Broadcast Education Association PSA Competition. Projects entered in the BEA PSA Competition were required to address either: 1) a memorable moment in Broadcast History in celebration of the 100th anniversary of commercial radio in the US, or 2) an issue related to racial justice and social change. I encouraged students to take this opportunity to create a meaningful and intentional message to address racial justice and issues of inequity, while allowing them freedom to choose which direction they wanted to pursue for the project. Out of the six student producing teams, five chose to take on racial justice as their subject and one chose to highlight broadcast history. The racial justice PSA projects provided lots of opportunity for class discussion and more than a few challenges for students as many of them wrestled with how to approach the PSA’s messaging and design when they or their entire group lacked diverse representation. They wanted their projects to be authentic and to avoid the pitfalls of being tone deaf. To assist in the design phase of the project, I asked Professor Brandon Booker if he would serve as a diversity consultant on the project. This role required him to be present for the student pitches and to offer feedback and suggestions to students about their concepts and central ideas and themes. He made himself available to students outside of class and was present for the final screenings, serving as a respondent. The students greatly appreciated his input and encouragement, which helped to put them at ease, while also instilling in them the confidence needed to take on such a project without fear of failure or embarrassment. The PSA challenge was a great success. Five of the six student projects completed in CTA 456 were recognized as award winners by BEA. PSA titles included Black Lives Still Matter, Token, Welcome to P.W.I. University, Mi-cro-ag-gres-sion, and Life Without.”

**“Ahmed Fadaam (CDE):** I taught COR 363A History, Culture and Art of Iraq as part of the Elon Core Curriculum. This course was designed to take a look at the country of Iraq, and focus on the Saddam era, the 2003 invasion and what came after. The course gives a summary of the ancient and modern history of Iraq, the tribal and religious structure and the culture and traditions in the country. The course also discusses the wars Iraq was involved in, the regional conflicts and the rise of the armed militias and terrorist organizations like ISIS. In The Global Experience courses I taught, I discussed topics such as stereotyping, racism, displacement, marginalization, discrimination against other races and genders, socio-economic differences, religious views, homophobia, misogyny, and colorism. Discussing cultural differences between

the East and the West and looking at political, cultural and demographic changes and conflicts growing in regions like the Middle East usually gave good examples for the students to think about and compare.”

**Barbara Gaither (STC):** “In Strategic Research Methods, we talked about the importance of DEI in ethical research. We discussed the Tuskegee syphilis study as it relates to the concepts of autonomy, maleficence, and informed consent. We also discussed how the aftermath of this study (as well as other events) has played a role in communication challenges we still see today, including vaccine hesitancy among some minority groups. In addition to this study, we highlight the role of considering diversity in research planning, the implementation of findings, and the importance of building a diverse research team. New topics I introduced included DEI in the work force and how these issues continue to drive the growth of corporate social advocacy initiatives.”

**Kenn Gaither (STC):** “For COM 100, I brought more DEI into the forefront, including an activity where students learn about fault lines and then analyze a magazine through both their own fault lines and those prescribed from other underrepresented groups. In Public Relations and Civic Responsibility, we spent one class discussing diverse pioneering PR practitioners including women such as Betsy Plank and (minority practitioners such as) Joseph Baker and Moss Kendrix.”

**Dan Haygood (STC):** “I mentored undergraduate student Leila Jackson in developing her paper “Black, Biracial or Other? An Analysis of Tweets Concerning Meghan Markle’s Race after the Airing of the 2021 TV Special, Oprah with Meghan and Harry” She presented it at SURF Day at Elon, and I urged her to submit her work to AEJMC. Leila’s paper was accepted for presentation in the Cultural & Critical Studies Division. Her specific session included ten other presenters who were either graduate students or assistant professors. Without question, her presentation was the best of the group. She received a nice ovation from everyone and was treated like a graduate student colleague by all participants.”

**Jenny Jiang (MEA and CDE):** “I worked very closely with three of my students in MEA 3290 on a research project related to diversity and inclusion. Using semantic social network analysis in MEA 3290, we examined how different types of influencers contribute to the tweets with the co-hashtags of #BlackLivesMatter and #StopAsianHate over time to discuss how the collective intelligence of cross-racial solidarity are manifested on Twitter. Collaborating with my students in MEA 3290, we submitted an extended abstract titled “Cross-Racial Solidarity on Twitter: A Social Semantic Network Analysis of Influencers’ Discourse with the Co-hashtags of #BlackLivesMatter and #StopAsianHate” to the 72nd Annual Conference of the International Communication Association.”

**Ray Johnson (CTA):** “In my COR seminar course (which deals with the JFK assassination), I included sections on the assassinations of Dr. Martin Luther King, Malcolm X and the filmic response to these events. By including both Dr. King and Malcolm X, I was able to bring in more films by African American directors. I was pleased with the fact that so many students found these topics interesting, and we had several rewarding discussions about the impact of their lives. Also, I considerably altered the syllabus for CTA 3060 Development of Cinema to

include more diversity. The entire second half of the course was devoted to women filmmakers and filmmakers of color. I was also able to discuss my personal experiences with Spike Lee when he visited Elon to shoot scenes for the film *He Got Game*. We also considered early filmmakers of color like Oscar Micheaux. Spike Lee shared with me the influence on him of the Elon graduate Martin Ritt. So, we viewed and studied Ritt's film *Souther*, about a black family living in the American South during the Great Depression."

**Doug Kass (CTA):** "I completed my CATL scholar project - The High Impact Inclusive Classroom - which seeks to bring personal traits of students in the class into the learning process, to foster a more inclusive and ultimately richer classroom experience. In my class, I had students write about a liminal phase in their own lives, what they learned from it, and how they rose out of it. This led to some strongly cathartic thinking and writing, including experiences such as coming out of the closet, self-injury, the assertion of feminism, the discovery of bi-sexuality, and abuse. Given this level of response, the two-year CATL scholar program was entirely transformative for me. I think it made me a better teacher, a more inclusively conscious teacher, and most importantly, a more empathetic teacher."

**Lee Bush (STC):** "In my two Strategic Research Methods classes, Dean Ford asked me to work with GCI Health, a national healthcare communications agency based in New York, to research young Black women's perspectives of health. Working with the executive vice president of GCI's Inclusion, Equity, and Diversity division and an associate of the division, we were asked to research Black women. More specifically, their personal visions of good health, challenges or barriers faced in pursuit of good health, support and information needed to achieve their personal health goals, and if there were differences in perceptions between a PWI and an HBCU. To fulfill the research objectives, my two Strategic Research Methods classes conducted 10 focus groups: five with students from N.C. A&T and five with students from Elon."

**Sowjanya Kudva (CTA):** "In CTA3160 Writing for Cinema & Television, I continued to curate screenings and readings across a diversity of representations in front of and behind the camera. This year I also brought in a new textbook, *Craft in the Real World* (Catapult 2021), a guidebook for writing instructors to re-examine the social and cultural values that inform "craft," storytelling, and the writing workshop. Teaching this book helped me structure DEI into the curriculum throughout the semester. I also believe it is important for students to be aware of the current and historical DEI politics of the industry they want to enter. For example, upon the IATSE (film/tv technicians union) strike in October 2021, I lectured on the history of unions in Hollywood and the harmful and inequitable working conditions that led to the strike. I asked students to consider how this relates to the working conditions of productions at Elon. The discussion was eye-opening, with some students arguing that inequities in the industry are just "the way things are." While others stated the problem was in "accepting" these conditions as normal. While we didn't solve all the issues of the industry, raising them helped students to think about their positionality within their chosen industry. Furthermore, this year I worked with three mentees. I gear much of my mentorship at Elon toward minoritized students, particularly students who identify as queer, trans, and/or of color, and I've been privileged that many of these students seek me out for mentorship."

**Michele Lashley (STC):** “My Strategic Campaigns class partnered with PAN Communications throughout the fall semester to bring attention to a variety of issues involving diversity. The roundtable discussions we had with the PAN Communications teams included opportunities to discuss the need for diversity within the advertising and public relations industries. COM 1000 Communications in a Global Age is another class that provides many opportunities to discuss diversity. When we talked about fake news, there was a discussion about the challenges of navigating political differences. When we talked about books, we had a wonderful conversation about book banning and looked at the books that are most often banned or challenged today. It provided an opportunity to discuss why certain communities disliked the content of those books. We also spent quite a bit of time discussing the role television has played in social change. As part of that, we looked at examples of shows that helped force conversations about topics such as the AIDS crisis, LGBTQIA representation, abortion, racial inequality, interracial relationships, racial profiling by police, and police brutality.”

### ***Professional Activity Examples***

When reading each faculty member’s Unit I (annual) report, it becomes clear that there is a sustained, intentional and scaffolded process where faculty members are trying to learn more about diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging, and to apply this knowledge in their courses and outside of the classroom. School of Communications faculty are reading books and articles on these topics, attending training sessions on campus and beyond, and following processes of self-reflection. They are also creating knowledge through their presentations, publications and creative projects, as the following examples showcase:

**STC training:** In summer 2022, the STC Department covered the full cost of the 2-day DEI training offered by the Racial Equity Institute and The Partnership Project in Greensboro, North Carolina, for three faculty members on June 17 and 18. Hal Vincent and Karen Lindsey took advantage of this opportunity, and Vanessa Bravo also re-took this training, as an alumna from this same workshop.

Other individual faculty member examples are the following ones:

**Rebecca Bagley (CDE):** “I am currently serving as a mentor for diverse designers from all over the US. Last year, I signed up through the [“Where are all the Black Designers”](#) website. As a result, I discussed and provided resources with mentees during the WATBD Conference. I also signed up to be an ally on their website to obtain and share new resources.”

**Lorraine Ahearn (JOU):** “With Barbara Friedman, I published the paper “A Commemorative Bind: How the Birmingham News Redressed Past Journalistic Failure through Contemporary Civil Rights Memory” in *Journalism History* (Winter, 2022): 1-20.”

**David Bockino (MEA):** “To further my DEI competencies, especially as it relates to pedagogy, I attended various seminars and workshops around campus, including the “Inclusive Leadership” workshop on 8/10 (run by Dean Rochelle Ford), the “Un-grading & Contract Grading in ARH/HST Courses as Anti-Racist Pedagogy” workshop on 9/10 (run by the Center for Writing Excellence), and the “Title IX training” (run by the GEC) on 11/10.”

**Brandon Booker (CTA):** “I served as Chair of the Diversity Committee (which helped develop and submit for approval a proposal for an Inclusive Leadership course as an elective class) and was a panelist at BEA (Broadcast Education Association) on “DEI Infusion on Senior Capstone Classes and Advanced Projects.””

**Karen Lindsey (STC):** “I presented at the pre-conference of AEJMC (Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication) on the topic of wellbeing for academics of color. Also, I presented at the February 2022 Black Solidarity Conference at Elon University. The Elon University Black Solidarity Conference aims to unite Black-identifying students, faculty, and staff by providing an avenue through which Black identity, Black intersectionality, and building solidarity are explored. I presented two sessions to the more than 150 attendees at this event, in alignment with my research agenda. The sessions were: *Educational Session: Black Woman Wellness: Mind, Body, Spirit* and *Ain't I Woman?* Additionally, I participated as a speaker at the June 2022 –PRSA Corporate Communications conference in Nashville, TN, sharing my research on the intersections of race, gender and leadership with more than 200 public relations industry professionals from across the U.S.”

**Naemah Clark (CTA):** “I updated my book *Diversity in U.S. Media* for its third edition. I wrote a new chapter that focuses on the media representations of social movements. The chapter covers media coverage of Black Lives Matter, MeToo, and the Make America Great Again movement. In explaining the latter movement, the chapter also introduces “whiteness” as an identity group with unique characteristics. Previous editions of the book have not focused on whiteness as being essential when studying diversity; however, as my interest in intercultural learning grows, I wanted to make sure that students who used the book saw the interplay of overrepresented and underrepresented identities when understanding US media. I also revised five existing chapters in the book.”

**Kelly Furnas (JOU):** “I attended “Activism Fatigue, isn't oppression over?” which was part of Elon's summer Race Reflections series, on July 29. The session had a panel of community activists talk about how marginalized communities are often left in more taxing conditions after the fleeting involvement of majority identity holders because of their “allyship fatigue.” The sessions included breakout sessions that encouraged those who want to be allies to use their privilege, positions and networks to leverage their power for liberation. I also attended the Elon session “Supporting First-Generation Students as Faculty & Staff ,” on Jan. 21, 2022.”

**Ahmeed Fadaam (CDE):** “I narrated and illustrated the documentary “*Baghdad Graphic*,” which is now completed. Produced and directed by Doug Kass and edited by Max Negin, this documentary, which talks about the war in Iraq since 2003, will be distributed later in 2022.”

**Ben Hannam (CDE):** “This year I read *Design for Cognitive Bias*, which examined unconscious bias within a design context, and *Is Everyone Really Equal*, by Robin DiAngelo and Özlem Sensory. I have watched numerous videos on the intersection of race and graphic design and attended the UX'Yall Conference whose keynote speaker was Antoinette Carroll, a Black designer and activist. As such, I've incorporated some of the information I've learned into the



courses I taught in 2021. I've also modified several of the Keynote presentations I deliver in my classes to reflect a more inclusive point of view.”

**Sowjanya Kudva (CTA):** “Among other DEI-focused trainings, I attended the session “Navigating Challenging Situations with Empowerment Despite Systemic Constraints – A Workshop for BIPOC Conference Participants,” with Karen Cone-Uemura. Ph.D. This session focused on why BIPOC-only spaces are sometimes necessary in group processing. It was held at the Minnesota Group Therapy Virtual Conference.”

**Vanessa Bravo (STC):** “I published my first book, titled *Latin American Diasporas in Public Diplomacy* (Palgrave-Macmillan). This peer-reviewed book is an edited collection where I served as main editor (with my co-editor Dr. Maria De Moya, from DePaul University, in Chicago) but where I also wrote four of the book’s chapters: the Introduction (first author), the Conclusion (second author), a sole-author chapter, and a second-author chapter. The table of contents for the book can be found [here](#). It is the first book that focuses on diaspora communities and their public diplomacy efforts in the region of Latin America, and all the contributing authors are of Latinx origin.”