

2022-2023 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 2022-2023 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 2022-2023 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.

This 2022-2023 academic year, the School of Communications had three openings for new faculty. In total, the school received 89 applications for these positions. Of those, about 72 were from female applicants, minority applicants (regarding race or ethnicity) or both. Among the finalists considered, four were women and six were minorities. The school's three new hires this year were all women and/or minorities: one Black female, one Black male, and one white female.

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 from Human Resources and Elon's FR&D (Faculty Research & Development) committee. 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, in 2023, the following faculty were tenured and/or promoted:

- Promoted to Full Professor: Dr. Vanessa Bravo, Phillip Motley, Jr.
- Tenured and promoted to Associate Professor: Dr. Jane O’Boyle.
- Continuance in a continuing-track appointment: Bill Squadron.
- Continuance in a lecture-track appointment: Brandon Booker.

In the 2022-2023 academic year, faculty members demonstrated inclusive excellence in many ways. Of note, STC Professor Kenn Gaither (Black male) was selected, after a national search, as the **new Dean of the School of Communications**. He served as interim Dean in AY 2022-2023, and his appointment as permanent dean was announced in May of 2023. This makes him the second Black dean in the school, after Rochelle Ford, who served in this position between the summer of 2018 and the spring of 2022.

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/Latinx Implementation Team, co-Coordinator of the Latinx Employee Resource Group, co-Chair of the Asian and Pacific Islander Task Force (with this STC faculty member winning the CREDE’s Award for Excellence in Service and Dedication to Elon’s AAPI Community), and member of PACIE (Elon’s Presidential Advisory Council for Inclusive Excellence).

Additionally, several faculty members in the school provided DEI-related knowledge and leadership within and beyond Elon. For example, three faculty members presented, in total, seven times as panelists for DEI online sessions by organizations or groups such as Elon’s CATL (Center for Advanced Teaching and Learning), Elon’s Black Solidarity Conference, United Healthcare, the Charlotte PRSA (Public Relations Society of America) Chapter, the national PRSA Conference in Nashville, the Minorities & Communication (MAC) Division of AEJMC (Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication) and the Institute for Public Relations.

SoC faculty also participated in multiple CATL sessions (such as the ones on Inclusive Excellence in the Classroom: A Conversation about Pronouns and Gender) and external trainings such as the Racial Equity Institute 2-Day Training (three STC faculty members) and workshops with experts like Tressie McMillan Cotton and Roxanne Gay, as well as sessions and webinars through PRSA, the Museum of Public Relations, the Public Relations (PRD) Division and the Minorities & Communication (MAC) Division of AEJMC. A Strategic Communications faculty member also served as board member of the Diversity Action Alliance (DAA), and another was Research Chair of AEJMC’s Minorities and Communication (MAC) Division.

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 its 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 the 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, and it will continue to do so for three consecutive years. Through the EJP, 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. For the on-campus immersive version, the 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%. In its first two years, 33 of the 38 students in the immersive program applied to Elon. 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 interact informally 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 Staci Saltz teaches one of the courses that local high-school students receive on campus during the summer right before senior year.

This academic year, two important processes happened with communications students involved in the school's strategic communications agency, Live Oak, and with communications students engaged in the media operations of Elon News Network (ENN).

- With ENN students, Dean Kenn Gaither and Assistant Professor Karen Lindsey facilitated a DEI training session on Feb.16, 2023.
- With Live Oak students, in the spring of 2023, guided by faculty advisor Lee Bush, students in Live Oak conducted research and developed a Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

(DEI) Plan for Live Oak (one of the goals of the new SoC DEI Plan). Professor Bush and Live Oak students established a DEI Advisory Committee that included a member from each Live Oak function area (account, creative, media analytics, and branding). In the first week of the semester, Professor Bush presented the purpose and goals for developing the plan to all Live Oak members during the Monday night staff meeting. In weeks 3 and 4 of the semester, 10 listening sessions were held to gather input and create a shared vision for the plan. Every LO member attended a session. Each session leader submitted a report summarizing the key themes from their sessions. In March, the Advisory Committee conducted 10 interviews with students (outside of Live Oak), faculty, and LO alumni on their perceptions of or experiences with Live Oak. In April, the committee reviewed and analyzed data from all research, developed the plan draft, and posted it on Moodle for feedback. This plan fulfills point #6 under “Student Recruitment and Retention” of the SOC DEI plan for all student organizations to develop a DEI plan. Since Live Oak was the first to do so, Professor Bush forwarded the plan and process to Kenn Gaither, Tony Weaver, and Colin Donohue, and she offered to discuss the process with advisors or student leaders of other student media organizations.

Finally, 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 content in the classroom. Following are some examples:

Updates on course objectives and course curricula

In the academic year 2022-2023, the different majors in the school (except MEA, which updated its curriculum recently) had their new curriculum proposals approved by the School of Communications Curriculum Committee (SoCCC) and by the University Curriculum Committee (UCC), which praised the thoroughness of the proposals. This is significant because, as described in last year’s SoC DEI Report, some of the courses in the new curricula incorporate new or updated DEI-focused student learning outcomes. Additionally, the new COM2000 Inclusive Communications course was offered both in fall 2022 and spring 2023 as an elective course, but this year the school was able to have it approved by the SoCCC and the UCC to become a required course for all students in the School of Communications, rather than being an elective course. All these changes will be implemented in fall 2023.

This academic year 2022-2023, the school’s new Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Plan (from now on, [new SoC DEI Plan](#)) was brought forth for discussion to several faculty meetings, in which the school’s faculty members were able to offer comments and recommendations. Advancing a

collaborative process like this takes longer than using a top-down approach, but it is worth it. Finally, in February of 2023, a motion to approve the final version of the new SoC DEI Plan was put forth at the SoC Faculty Meeting, and it passed unanimously. The new plan will be implemented starting in the academic year 2023-2024.

In Cinema and Television Arts (CTA), the course Entertainment Media and Society transitioned to be a 4000-level capstone course in the major. The course was also successful in obtaining AER (Advancing Equity Requirement) status, as approved by Elon’s AER Committee, during the spring 2023 semester.

Graduating Senior Students’ DEI Knowledge

The School of Communications conducted surveys with 275 graduating seniors, total, in fall 2022 and spring 2023, to assess the quality of their educational experience. These surveys, which serve as benchmarks for comparisons in the future, were administered during the communications capstone course (COM 4970) at the end of each semester. The following questions asked graduating seniors in the School of Communications whether they agreed (from strongly agree to strongly disagree) that they had learned about or discussed the following aspects in their classes during their time in the school (results are presented by major and as a total for the school):

Survey results of note (n = 275):

Question: Did you learn about diversity of audiences during your classes in the School of Communications?

In numbers:

Q3_5 (Diversity of Audiences)	Very much	40	43	23	18	93	217
	Quite a bit	11	12	4	3	21	51
	Some	3	8	2	3	7	23
	Very little	0	1	1	0	1	3
	Valid cases	54	64	30	24	122	294

In percentages:

Q3_5	Very much	74.1	67.2	76.7	75	76.2	73.8%
	Quite a bit	20.4	18.8	13.3	12.5	17.2	17.3%
	Some	5.6	12.5	6.7	12.5	5.7	7.8%
	Very little	0	1.6	3.3	0	0.8	1%
	Valid cases	54	64	30	24	122	294

Diversity, equity, and inclusion have been long standing priorities for the School of Communications. The heightened standards set by ACEJMC motivated the school to be more intentional about measuring its commitment to DEI, driving the school to innovate and provide

an exceptional experiential educational program for its students. As such, the school started adding additional questions to its surveys to better understand the knowledge that communications students perceive they have by the time they graduate from Elon.

Among the newer DEI questions, the first five inquired whether students engaged in discussions about DEI topics such as “race/ethnicity,” “multicultural history of communication professions,” “economic class,” “gender/sexuality,” or “diverse political points of view.” Furthermore, two questions asked whether students had collaborated with individuals from different races and ethnicities during class projects or during their involvement in student media. The eighth question focused on whether students learned how to advocate for team members with diverse backgrounds. The responses are presented in the following table (cumulative, in percentages).

Cumulative Table: Diversity Engagement by Major (n = 275)

(Unit: %)

Question	Answer	CDE	CT A	JOU	ME A	STC	Subtotal
Q11_1 (Discussions about race/ethnicity)	Strongly agree	37	48.4	50	29.2	40.8	41.8%
	Agree	66.7	79.7	83.3	66.7	76.7	75.3%
	Slightly agree	85.2	89.1	96.7	91.7	90.8	90.1%
	Neither agree nor disagree	90.7	93.8	100	100	96.7	95.5%
	Slightly disagree	94.4	98.4	100	100	99.2	98.3%
	Disagree	98.1	100	100	100	99.2	99.3%
	Strongly disagree	100	100	100	100	100	100%
	Valid cases	54	64	30	24	120	292
Q11_2 (Discussions about multicultural history of communication professions)	Strongly agree	33.3	34.4	20	29.2	32.5	31.5%
	Agree	57.4	64.1	43.3	54.2	61.7	58.9%
	Slightly agree	77.8	76.6	80	83.3	83.3	80.5%
	Neither agree nor disagree	87	84.4	86.7	95.8	91.7	89%
	Slightly disagree	92.6	90.6	90	100	98.3	94.9%
	Disagree	98.1	96.9	100	100	99.2	98.6%
	Strongly disagree	100	100	100	100	100	100%
	Valid cases	54	64	30	24	120	292
Q11_3 (Discussions about economic class)	Strongly agree	18.9	20.3	31	16.7	25.8	23.1%
	Agree	45.3	42.2	58.6	50	48.3	47.6%
	Slightly agree	71.7	67.2	75.9	75	73.3	72.1%
	Neither agree nor disagree	83	79.7	86.2	87.5	81.7	82.4%
	Slightly disagree	90.6	92.2	89.7	100	92.5	92.4%
	Disagree	94.3	96.9	100	100	96.7	96.9%

	Strongly disagree	100	100	100	100	100	100%
	Valid cases	53	64	29	24	120	290
Q11_4 (Discussions about gender and sexuality)	Strongly agree	33.3	34.4	43.3	25	34.2	34.2%
	Agree	61.1	53.1	66.7	54.2	54.2	56.5%
	Slightly agree	79.6	81.2	80	83.3	80	80.5%
	Neither agree nor disagree	87	90.6	86.7	95.8	89.2	89.4%
	Slightly disagree	94.4	95.3	96.7	100	95.8	95.9%
	Disagree	98.1	98.4	100	100	99.2	99/
	Strongly disagree	100	100	100	100	100	100%
	Valid cases	54	64	30	24	120	292
Q11_5 (Discussions about diverse political points of view)	Strongly agree	29.6	25	41.4	25	33.3	30.9%
	Agree	50	46.9	58.6	41.7	54.2	51.2%
	Slightly agree	64.8	64.1	89.7	66.7	76.7	72.2%
	Neither agree nor disagree	77.8	81.2	93.1	75	84.2	82.5%
	Slightly disagree	92.6	90.6	96.6	95.8	92.5	92.8%
	Disagree	98.1	100	100	100	97.5	98.6%
	Strongly disagree	100	100	100	100	100	100%
	Valid cases	54	64	29	24	120	291
Q11_6 (Class projects with people of different races or ethnicities)	Strongly agree	31.5	31.1	33.3	20.8	29.2	29.8%
	Agree	59.3	50.8	50	50	53.3	53.3%
	Slightly agree	72.2	70.5	73.3	70.8	76.7	73.7%
	Neither agree nor disagree	81.5	78.7	80	79.2	84.2	81.7%
	Slightly disagree	94.4	95.1	90	83.3	92.5	92.4%
	Disagree	98.1	98.4	93.3	95.8	96.7	96.9%
	Strongly disagree	100	100	100	100	100	100%
	Valid cases	54	61	30	24	120	289
Q11_7 (Media activities with people of different races/ethnicities)	Strongly agree	32.7	31.1	39.3	18.2	31	31.2%
	Agree	65.4	55.7	75	50	55.8	59.1%
	Slightly agree	76.9	68.9	85.7	68.2	70.8	72.8%
	Neither agree nor disagree	88.5	85.2	89.3	81.8	84.1	85.5%
	Slightly disagree	98.1	100	96.4	90.9	91.2	94.9%
	Disagree	98.1	100	96.4	95.5	97.3	97.8%
	Strongly disagree	100	100	100	100	100	100%
	Valid cases	52	61	28	22	113	276
Q11_8 (Gain tools to advocate)	Strongly agree	48.1	37.5	53.3	29.2	44.5	43.3%
	Agree	77.8	64.1	76.7	58.3	76.5	72.5%

different background)	Slightly agree	92.6	81.2	90	79.2	89.9	87.6%
	Neither agree nor disagree	98.1	95.3	96.7	95.8	96.6	96.6%
	Slightly disagree	100	98.4	96.7	95.8	98.3	98.3%
	Disagree	100	98.4	96.7	100	99.2	99%
	Strongly disagree	100	100	100	100	100	100%
	Valid cases	54	64	30	24	119	291

Except for economic class, in all the other categories more than 50 percent of the school's graduating students agreed or strongly agreed that they had participated on discussions about these topics during their time in the School of Communications, ranging from 51.2 percent (discussions about political views) to 75.3 percent (discussions about race and ethnicity). Moreover, 72.5 percent agreed or strongly agreed that, during their years at the school, they gained tools to advocate for people of different backgrounds (the percentage reaches 87.6 if the slightly agree category is included).

Experiential learning

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

Study abroad: In January 2023, 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 COM 4970 Great Ideas in Communications to mentored research experiences with individual faculty members. A few examples of such projects that resulted in conference presentation or publication were the following:

- Three Little Words: Law and Order, Videostyle Framing, and Dog Whistle Racism in Richard Nixon's 1968 Campaign, by Katie Dalrymple. Published in the *Elon Journal of Communication*.
- Pushing Period Progressivism: An Analysis of Menstrual Product Advertisements, by Claire Grider. Published in the *Elon Journal of Communication*.
- Working in Media Analytics: A Feminist Analysis of Gender Inequality in the Data and Communications Industry, by Corinne Rose. Published in the *Elon Journal of Communication*.
- Digital Exclusion: Analyzing Disparities in Internet Access for Disabled and Vulnerable People, by Lindsay Bennett. Published in the *Elon Journal of Communication*.

- Representation of Bisexuality: An Analysis of Bisexual-Identifying Characters in Film, by Diana Lynch. 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. The following are a few selected examples:

- John Hendrickson, freelance journalist for *The Atlantic* and author of the book *Life on Delay: Making Peace with a Stutter*, spoke at Elon in LA, in an event sponsored by the School of Communications, on March 2, 2023. Hendrickson is a white male with a stuttering disability.
- Meredith Clark, associate professor at Northeastern University, and Tracie Powell, CEO and founder of The Pivot Fund, provided the keynote presentation on March 16, 2023, at Elon, for the North Carolina Local News & Information Summit, an event organized by the school’s North Carolina Local News Workshop. The keynote presentation addressed the opportunities and challenges facing black-led, indigenous-led, and people of color-led news organizations and startups in North Carolina. Clark and Powell are Black females..
- Patrick Rees ‘05, Chief Communications Officer for the Minnesota Timberwolves (NBA), spoke to school students, faculty and staff on Nov. 4, 2022, after receiving the 2022-2023 School of Communications Outstanding Alumni Award. Rees also spoke to students in different classes and attended a university networking event. He is Black.
- Cara Anna, journalist who has reported extensively from Ghana and Ethiopia, spent two days on Elon’s campus on Nov.14-15, sharing insights from her career as an East Africa correspondent. She spoke with students in nine classes and with students from the elondocs program. She is white.
- Philip A. Nardone, Jr., PAN Communications Agency CEO, spoke to assistant professor Michele Lashley’s Strategic Campaigns class, once in fall 2022 and once in spring 2023, about the need for diversity within the advertising and public relations industries. He is an LGBTQIA+ white male.

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 “**2022-2023 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 Elon University and the School of Communications aim to create a supportive environment for students, faculty and staff:

The university hired a director of employee relations and culture in 2021 to ensure equitable processes in hiring at Elon. In 2022, the university updated the language of its ads for faculty and staff searches, so that the language not only clearly establishes that it is an equal-opportunity employer but also that it strongly emphasizes that it values diverse backgrounds in its applicants. As such, this is now mandatory language in the school's recruiting ads:

Elon University is an equal employment opportunity employer committed to a diverse faculty, staff and student body and welcomes all applicants. Candidates who have experience working with a diverse range of people, and who can contribute to the climate of inclusivity are encouraged to identify their experiences in their cover letter.

Additionally, the university has increased the number of faculty-job sites where it posts its recruitment ads to better reach potential candidates of underrepresented identities. For example, the school advertises its available faculty positions on its career site and on websites such as The Chronicle of Higher Education, Inside Higher Ed, and HigherEdJobs.com, but now it might also post on the websites of the Black PhD Network, Asians in Higher Ed, Diverse Education and the Higher Education Recruitment Consortium, among others.

The School of Communications instituted this academic year an Excellence in DEI Faculty Award. Strategic Communications (STC) Assistant Professor Karen Lindsey was recognized in 2023 with the school's inaugural Faculty Excellence in DEI Award. The school also supports its students for recognition of their academic and leadership work through student awards on campus and beyond. Faculty actively promotes underrepresented students' work to achieve recognition beyond Elon University. For example, in 2022-2023,

- Two Black female students who major in Journalism attended NABJ (the National Association of Black Journalists) annual conference, accompanied by Strategic Communications assistant professor Karen Lindsey.
- One Black STC student and one Latinx STC student received 2022 LAGRANT Foundation Scholarships.
- One Black STC student was granted a Fulbright U.S. Student Program Scholarship.
- One LGBTQIA+ STC student received one of 49 scholarships of the One Pulse Foundation, in Orlando, in memory of the lives lost in the mass shooting at PULSE nightclub.

Programming in partnership with university groups

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

- The Elon in Los Angeles program invited five Elon University alumni on June 20 to share their insights and experiences about the world of entertainment in Hollywood. The

alumni panel featured Diego Pineda Davila '19, deputy editor at *The Independent en Español*; Julia Buckingham '15, vice president at Outerbanks Entertainment; Marissa Mahoney '21, creative coordinator at NBCUniversal; Jordan Roman '15, writer and director at Ominous Entertainment and story/editorial coordinator at Netflix Animation; and Emily Merlin '14, development manager of original programming at Hallmark Media.

- Associate professor Amanda Sturgill and assistant professor Israel Balderas hosted a session on disinformation and media ethics on June 21 for journalists from Bangladesh, India, Nepal and Sri Lanka who visited the United States funded by the Department of State in a tour organized by the [Meridian International Center](#).
- In 2022-2023, the School of Communications hosted its second Scripps Howard Emerging Journalists Program (EJP) online and on-campus, supporting journalism in diverse and underserved communities and educating 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, coordinated its execution. This academic year, the school provided virtual sessions throughout the year and received, on campus, 20 students from underrepresented socioeconomic, racial and ethnic groups from around the country, to teach them the fundamentals of journalistic research, interviewing, writing, photography, design, videography, editing, and producing, during a 12-day residential immersion program. Students produced a newspaper, aired a broadcast and launched a website during the program. An unintended consequence is that, since 2021, 33 of the 38 participants in this program have enrolled at Elon University.
- Meg Daniels screened her *Proper Pronouns* documentary about 30 transgender ordained ministers in the United States who, she said, are “battling narrow-mindedness within the religious community, their families, and NC natives. They are bravely preaching from a pulpit despite the danger they face not only as a transgender person living in the South but also as transgender ministers navigating their way through local, state, and national governing bodies who decide what it means to be a human being.”
- Michele Lashley’s Strategic Campaigns class partnered with PAN Communications and participated in four Zoom sessions with various PAN Communications personnel. Topics addressed during these sessions included media analytics, diversity within the PR industry, portfolio development, interview skills, media planning and how to build a PR career.

Appendix 1

2022-2023 Diversity & Inclusion Faculty Activity Report

Here are 20 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 for GCI Health (a national healthcare communications agency based in New York, where STC students worked to develop a campaign targeted to Black women), the Alamance NAACP Chapter, Burlington Woman’s Club, and ElonVotes!

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

Qian Xu (MEA and STC): “In COM 1000, aside from the DEI topics already incorporated into the course, we covered the following DEI-related topics for in-class discussions and activities: the role of a community radio station for women in Somalia, representation of underrepresented groups in blockbuster movies, global demand for minority filmmakers and what it means to the movie industry, use of social media by different demographic groups and implications on social media design for equity, P&G’s advocacy for equality and inclusion (e.g., the #TalkAboutBias campaign and its advocacy film *The Name*, supporting the AAPI community), and biases in media research.”

Anthony Hatcher (JOU): “To facilitate cultural diversity in learning, I invited diverse guest speakers to my classes to interact with students. These included, among others:

- COM 3330 – Jack Jenkins, Religion News Service reporter, who spoke about covering the religious left and his book, *American Prophets*, on Christian nationalism.
- COM 3330 – Four Latter-Day Saints missionaries, who spoke about their faith and missions. A visit by LDS missionaries has been cited by alumni who took my class as one of their best engaged classroom experiences at Elon.
- COM 3330 – Yasmin Bendaas, host of the *Me & My Muslim Friends* podcast.
- JOU 2500 – Joe Killian, NC Policy Watch reporter, who spoke about Nikole Hannah-Jones’ *The 1619 Project*, and the controversy over her job offer at UNC-Chapel Hill. Killian got one of the first interviews with Hannah-Jones after being denied tenure.
- JOU 2500 – Jason Zengerle, writer for the *New York Times Magazine*, who spoke about long form reporting, including his cover story on Black Rifle Coffee, a company that caters to gun rights conservatives.”

Lee Bush (STC): “In Research Methods, I added an individual DEI assignment to accompany the DEI and research ethics teaching modules. Students were asked to develop a research plan to give a consumer products’ company insights on how they could support Pride month without ‘rainbow washing.’ Students were required to read the LGBT Foundation “Good practice guide

to researching LGBT communities” and then respond to five prompts on how they would develop an inclusive research plan while avoiding harm and preserving the well-being of participants. The DEI module and added assignment also helped students think about inclusive research throughout their subsequent research projects. On one group’s survey project, I encouraged them to conduct preliminary research on the lack of diversity in TikTok trends. This led them to add research questions and survey questions on the issue, and to recruit participants that represented a diversity of races and ethnicities. Their results showed that, indeed, Black women, Asian women, and Latinas did not feel well represented in skin tone and hair type, and White women didn’t feel well represented in body type. Subsequently, one of the group members expanded the survey into her Honors thesis project and asked me to be her mentor.”

Kai Swanson (CTA): “I created the course description, objectives, and syllabus for the Elon in LA Summer course CTA 2700: Comedy Writing and taught two sections in Summer 2022. I designed the syllabi based on my experience of studying and performing improv at The Second City – Chicago and writing about anti-humor as part of my MFA thesis. This was the first time that an Elon-based Elon University faculty member taught a course at Elon in LA. As someone who is extremely passionate about the power of comedy as a means of catharsis and connection, I am happy that the course was not only accepted but embraced by so many students. Of the six course objectives, two were specifically focused on diversity, equity and inclusion: consider issues of freedom of expression in writing commercially viable comedic content, and understand and incorporate best practices of diversity, equity and inclusion in writing, producing and performing comedy. Many students are unaware of the long history of sexism, racism, and anti-LGBTIA+ structures in place in standup comedy and writer’s room. Although we’re only in the class together for five weeks, it’s important that students understand this history, and work to create more equitable comedic spaces in the future.”

Bill Anderson (STC): “In my COM 1000 course, I dedicated one module to show how the media portrays different groups based on fault lines (i.e., race, gender/sexual orientation, income, geography, or age). One assignment in that module allowed the students to contrast a positive media portrayal of a group in one or more fault lines with examples of negative media portrayals.”

Max Negin (CTA): “In COM 3350 Sports and Media, we had several weeks of analysis of how the media tells stories related to DEI. For example, the class read and analyzed an article about the toxic culture of the Dallas Mavericks, how the issue came to light, and how the organization handled the matter. When Brian Flores brought a lawsuit against the NFL, the class analyzed, discussed and wrote about the so-called “Rooney Rule,” a rule the NFL has in place to consider minority candidates for coaching and front-office jobs. The class also discussed topics related to mental health, socio-economic disparity, and racial issues related to drug-testing at the Olympics.”

Harlen Makemson (CDE): “In my CDE Writing for Visual Media class, I continued to adapt a module regarding ‘unconscious bias.’ Before class, students were assigned to listen to a podcast (or read the summary) with Jahan Mantin and Boyuan Gao, of Project Inkblot, a consulting firm that works with companies to produce equitable products. During the podcast, Mantin and Gao discuss the contours of their Designing for Diversity (D4D) framework, which gives teams a

series of questions to ask as they are developing a new project. In the following class, I divide the students in groups of four and lead them through a “7 Lenses” exercise that was developed by Stanford University. In the exercise, students identify seven “lenses” they see the world through, whether it be race, gender, orientation, religion, or economics, among a host of other possibilities. Then, students are asked to share their lenses in small groups, then consider where their “blind spots” may be, both individually and collectively, that might result in unconscious bias. The hope is that students become more aware of their own unconscious biases and consider whether a group they are working in may have collective unconscious biases and how to account for them. Then, I give each team a scenario (such as, develop an app for prospective Elon students and their families) and have them work through the D4D framework. Finally, students were to reflect on the overall experience in a 500-word post on their course blog sites.”

Michele Lashley (STC): “Our client during Winter Term 2022 was the Alamance NAACP. Our main points of contact within the organization were Quinn Ray (Communications Committee Chair) and Barrett Brown (President). Working with Alamance NAACP provided both the students and me multiple opportunities to learn more about the issues that matter most to communities of color within Alamance County and to come to a better understanding about the challenges these communities face. We also spent time learning about what the national NAACP organization does, who it represents, and how it’s working to make a difference.”

Rich Landesberg (JOU): “In my Broadcast News Writing class, one of my major graded assignments looks specifically at the issue of diversity and inclusion. It is called getting comfortable with being uncomfortable. Students are assigned to go somewhere they have never gone, where they will be uncomfortable. For instance, straight students might choose to go to a gay bar; a white student might go to a party where he/or she is the only white person in the room; or anywhere that the student might, for the first time, be the “other.” The piece they need to produce should have nothing to do with the fact that they are in an uncomfortable place, nor should it be about the venue. The piece they produce should be about a story they find in a place they would have never looked. I also tried to make sure guest speakers for the class included people from diverse backgrounds. These included journalists of color as well as those with diverse sexual orientation and different political points of view.”

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:

Lee Bush (STC) and Karen Lindsey (STC): “We co-edited a DEI textbook in Strategic Communications titled *Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in Strategic Communications: Becoming Culturally Proficient Communicators*. The proposal went to Routledge / Taylor and Francis in September of 2022, and it was accepted by the end of the year. We serve as co-editors of the

book and writers of some chapters, plus we invited chapters from Elon STC faculty Vanessa Bravo, Michele Lashley and Qian Xu. The book was in progress during 2023, and the final version is due to the publisher in February of 2024.”

Kelli Furnas (JOU): “As director of global engagement for the national Journalism Education Association, I have a bounty of opportunities to work alongside high school students and teachers from other countries. In 2023, my most substantial efforts were working on behalf of young journalists in England, Colombia and Japan.”

Sowjanya Kudva (CTA): (As quoted by CTA Department Chair Staci Saltz in CTA’s End of Year Report 2023): “They consults and works with filmmakers from traditionally minoritized backgrounds or filmmakers who want to tell stories that are not often told or supported. For instance, this fall they edited a short film for two cis women looking to tell the story of a trans-nonbinary character. These advisor roles are extremely valuable and enhance their ability to relate to their students, provide more comprehensive feedback to student work, and overall be a better educator and professional partner in the industry.”

Hal Vincent (STC): “Among other trainings, I attended this year the Partnership Project two-day Phase 1 Racial Equity workshop for education and training, to identify and dismantle codified systems of racial bias and inequity training. I also attended Dean Ford’s multi-day “Inclusive Leadership” training in preparation for teaching the 2hr course COM 2000 Inclusive Communications. I liaised with Alamance County NAACP chapter to partner with Prof. Lashley’s winter Strategic Campaigns class. I attended seven Workshops/Webinars from Elon CATL, PRSA, and other industry specific sources with DEI focus. Additionally, I mentored a student to win one of 49 scholarships from the One Pulse foundation in Orlando dedicated to the memory of the lives lost at the PULSE nightclub, which are awarded to students committed to promote love and tolerance.”

Qian Xu (MEA & STC): “My two on-going projects with Elon’s Assistant Professor Dr. **Ke Jiang (MEA & CDE)** (on cross-racial solidarity through co-hashtags of #BlackLivesMatter and #StopAsianHate) and Dr. Tom Mould (on counter memes on welfare) are respectively related to anti-racism and equity. My involvement as editorial board member of the *Asian Journal of Communication* enables me to contribute to its mission of being an Asian voice in communication research. And Dr. Jiang and I take pride in involving students in our research. This is an example of research we conducted with an Elon student:

Jiang, K., Afromsky A*, & **Xu, Q.** (2022, August). *What do employers expect for jobs requiring media analytics? A comparison between in-person and remote positions during the COVID-19 pandemic.* Paper presented at the 105th annual conference of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication. [One of the three top papers in the Internship and Careers Interest Group] * Elon undergraduate student.”

Shannon Zenner (CDE): “One of my most important responsibilities as the Vice-Chair for the Visual Communication Division at AEJMC was organizing the division’s luncheon with a speaker from a related professional field. I had a goal to increase the diversity of the speaker, as

almost all the speakers from the past have been male, white, and photojournalists. I received so much positive feedback for the event as I was able to secure not one, but two amazing female speakers (one Black and one white), Kiana Wenzell, director of Detroit Month of Design and co-executive director of Detroit's Design Core, and Kristi Tanner, Ph.D., a computational journalist at the Detroit Free Press and a professor at Wayne State University who uses data visualization in her work."

Barbara Gaither (STC): "My scholarship primarily focuses on corporate social advocacy and how corporations engage with important social issues. I'm currently exploring the role of accountability (i.e., organizations being held accountable for the claims they make) in regard to their CSA on a range of issues, including those related to race and gender. Additionally, I am currently working with a research team exploring perceptions of CSA outside the U.S., namely Chile and South Korea. This study is among the first to explore this topic from a non-U.S. perspective."

Philip Motley (CDE): "Some of the ways that I am able to address DEI concerns at Elon and beyond include the following: assisting faculty with developing community engagement opportunities for students; bringing diverse voices to Elon through regular Community Based Learning Conversations; working with the International Service-Learning Network to create programs for students focused on the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals; and collaborating on a Colonial Athletic Association IN/CO grant to create resources that will facilitate stronger engagement between Elon and the Burlington/Alamance county community."

Alex Luchsinger (JOU): "Most of my research and professional activities touch on DEI principles, and I use those real-world examples in my teaching, too. My film, *First Chances*, unpacks the existential disparities in the American prison system and tells the story of a Black man's journey from nine-year prison sentence to becoming a successful entrepreneur. This experience helped me connect with many people from diverse backgrounds. I also joined a few colleagues in writing a grant proposal for the Knight Foundation to create educational content and work with local news organizations to better engage underserved Hispanic communities around North Carolina. I am also making a film exploring the uphill battle a female graffiti artist faces in a male-dominated art form with my colleague, Brandon Booker, from the Cinema and Television Arts department. Additionally, my BEA award was about the Trump-era border policies, where I reported a story of Cuban exiles trying to enter the United States because of health problems and political persecution in their home country. This mother-daughter pair is currently stuck in Tijuana, Mexico, where I spent time with them awaiting a judicial hearing. I also did a separate story in Tijuana about a family and their two children also in limbo because of border polices and COVID-19 restrictions."

Vic Costello (CTA): "Much of my work as BEA (Broadcast Education Association) President focused on advancing our association's diversity initiatives, specifically expanding membership and involvement of faculty and students from HBCUs (Historically Black Colleges and Universities) and other MSIs (Minority Serving Institutions)."