

2023-2024 School of Communications DEI Report

(Based on the objectives established in the new School of Communications [Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Plan](#), approved by the faculty in the spring of 2023 to start in AY2023-2024)

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This report includes the following content:

1. The new [School of Communications Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Plan](#) (from now on, SoC DEI Plan)
2. School of Communications (SoC) DEI outcomes for the 2023-2024 academic year, based on the main areas presented in the new SoC DEI Plan:
 - Inclusive Curriculum (page 2),
 - Student Recruitment & Retention (page 14),
 - Diverse & Culturally Proficient Faculty (page 17),
 - Inclusive Climate (page 19), and
 - Communications (page 23).

An Appendix section with the school's *2023-2024 Diversity & Inclusion Faculty Activity Report* is presented on page 23.

School of Communications DEI outcomes for the 2023-2024 academic year

Despite the difficult context of the challenges presented in multiple areas by Covid-19, the School of Communications' Inclusive Excellence Committee (formerly known as Diversity Committee) worked on developing a more comprehensive Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) Plan to replace the SoC DEI Plan that guided the school's efforts between 2016 and 2023. The process included research and data collection and also drafting different versions of the plan, presenting them to the school's faculty and staff, to incorporate their feedback, bringing back the final version of the plan for a faculty vote. The plan was approved February of 2023, to start implementing it in Academic Year (AY) 2023-2024.

A key consideration identified for the successful implementation of the new school's DEI plan was the need to create a dedicated school staff position to more fully concentrate on DEI. Until 2023, that work was largely shouldered by one of the deans, but the plan suggested a dedicated administrative position to better coordinate and connect DEI efforts and initiatives. This position was secured in AY 2023-2024, with the internal search conducted in the fall of 2023 and the new position starting on June 1st, 2024. The inaugural Assistant Dean of DEI and Assessment is Dr. Vanessa Bravo, former STC Chair (2020-2024). This new administrative position is an important accomplishment for AY 2023-2024. Professor Bravo will work closely with the Inclusive Excellence Committee starting this fall of 2024 to work on a 6-year implementation cycle for the new school's DEI plan.

The following report details other outcomes in DEI achieved during AY 2023-2024.

Inclusive Curriculum

The School of Communications updates its curriculum through changes in student learning outcomes in required and elective courses, through experiential learning opportunities for students, from diverse guest speakers who visit the school, and through diverse perspectives shared with students in the classroom. Following are some examples of each of these aspects:

Updates on course objectives and course curricula

As part of the new Communications Core Curriculum, a new elective course (in AY 2022-2023) became a required course for all students in the School of Communications, regardless of major. The course is COM 2000 Inclusive Communications:

Description: “This course is an introduction to foundational social and theoretical communication concepts related to diversity, equity and inclusion. You will practice interpersonal, small group, and written communication skills essential for advocating, participating, and leading in today’s global workplaces. Students will explore how mass media and social media helps construct notions of social reality, with a focus on media representations of marginalized groups in the United States and globally.”

Goal: “To equip students with knowledge and skills to advocate for and understand the value of diversity, equity and inclusion.”

Student Learning Outcomes:

- develop awareness and appreciation for *diverse peoples and cultures*.
- explain the concepts of diversity, equity, and inclusion in collaborating with and *advocating for diverse and inclusive teams*.
- recognize the validity of differing perspectives in *ethical reasoning and decision-making*.
- consider issues of identity within the context of media, including stereotypes, ownership, power, and audience perception.
- demonstrate *culturally proficient communication in writing and speaking* to and about *diverse global audiences*.

The words in italics in the aforementioned SLOs correspond with some of the “Elon 11,” which are the 11 skills and values that the school expects its students to master by the time they graduate. The “Elon 11” skills and values correspond, in turn, with the 11 professional values and competencies students are expected to master, according to the school’s accrediting body, ACEJMC (Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communications).

By making this course a required class, all our students have exposure to DEI topics. However, the school understood that placing the responsibility of teaching about DEI in one course alone was not enough. After a three-year process (described in previous annual DEI reports), in the fall of 2023 the School of Communications started implementing its new curricula in four of its

majors: Journalism (JOU), Strategic Communications (STC), Communication Design (CDE), and Cinema & Television Arts (CTA). Media Analytics (MEA) will update its curriculum within the next two years.

As part of the School of Communications' core curriculum and specific majors' new curricula, required courses in each major include new or updated DEI-focused student learning outcomes (course objectives), as follows:

In the COM Core Curriculum:

COM 1000 Communications in a Global Age

- identify significant milestones and individuals in the multicultural history of communications.
- define “audience” and describe examples of media content tailored to reach diverse domestic and global audiences.

COM 4970 Great Ideas in Communications: Issues & Research (capstone for MEA & STC)

Two of the five issues that students can choose from to develop in-class discussions and to write a research paper include the following two:

- Audience and Consumption
- Power, Knowledge and Diversity

In Cinema and Television Arts (CTA)

CTA 2100 Introduction to Cinema and Television Arts

- reflect on how cinema & television are tools of communication and can facilitate the understanding of *domestic, global and diverse* cultures.
- *write and speak clearly and effectively to critically evaluate one's own viewing habits, preferred genres, and biases.*

CTA 3260 Cinema Production

- understand and incorporate best practices of diversity, equity and inclusion including an emphasis on supportive and equitable working environments.

CTA 3240 Studio Variety Reality TV Production

- understand and incorporate best practices of diversity, equity and inclusion on set and in creative works

CTA 4550 Advanced Documentary and Non-Fiction Production

- critique content for aesthetic value while considering diverse domestic and global audiences.
- understand and incorporate best practices of diversity, equity, and inclusion, including an emphasis on supportive and equitable working environments.

CTA 4550 Advanced Narrative Production

- critique content for aesthetic value while considering diverse domestic and global audiences.
- understand and incorporate best practices of diversity, equity, and inclusion, including an emphasis on supportive and equitable working environments.

CTA 4974 Entertainment Media Issues and Research

Course Description: “In this senior level course, students use sound research methodologies to offer solutions to contemporary issues related to systemic racism and other inequities through the lens of the entertainment industry. To accomplish this goal, students will examine scholarship focused on race, intersectionality, media representations, onset production cultures, content distribution, and exhibition. Students will gain an understanding of how equitable practices in the industry can influence the success of media production and consumption. In addition, students will learn how entertainment content can serve as an educative tool for media consumers. *Senior Standing Required*

- *use clear and effective* writing to assess the relationship between your racial and other identities and the entertainment industry both as a consumer and as a professional.
- conduct historiography and case study research to assess the structures and systems that shaped the *multicultural history and roles of media in society*.
- apply qualitative and quantitative *research methods* to assess diverse representations in front of and behind the screen
- examine how images in the entertainment industry reflect issues related to the state of race and racism in the US
- assess content or textual analysis to understand current trends in the depiction of race and intersectional identities in current entertainment content
- recommend or *advocate* for racial and intersectional equity in entertainment media organizations and/or teams in a well sourced paper or project.

In Communication Design (CDE)

CDE 2580 Principles of Communication Design

- Consider how visual components influence the perception of media messages and impact diverse domestic and global populations.
- Describe how issues relevant to freedom of expression and ethical ways of reasoning influence the practice of visual communications.

CDE 4580 Design Strategies and Solutions

- Use advanced design theories and methodologies to produce professional-quality content that targets a specific audience.
- Engage in advanced levels of research and analysis to deliver professional-level solutions to clients, key stakeholders, and specific, targeted audiences.

In Journalism (JOU)

JOU 1100 News Writing and Reporting

- gather information from *diverse sources* and critically evaluate the credibility of sources.

- further develop awareness of *ethical ways of reasoning* and professional writing standards in matters such as *truth*, accuracy, fairness, objectivity, diversity and meeting deadlines.
- compare and contrast writing for different audiences, different media and across multimedia platforms.

JOU 2500 Journalism in a Free Society

- explain the contributions of *domestic and global diversity* to the evolution of journalistic practice.
- evaluate reporting on race and intersectional identity, as well as historical, cultural, and societal causes of *systemic and structural inequity*.

JOU 3100 Reporting for the Public Good (elective course, not included in the grid)

- further develop awareness of ethical ways of reasoning and professional writing standards in matters such as truth, accuracy, fairness, inclusive excellence, and timeliness.
- write clearly, accurately, and effectively, and with a sense of serving the public good. This includes serving a wide range of people across our society and being alert and committed to issues of free expression, social justice, and equity.
- reflect on and articulate the community-building function of news, and your place in it.

JOU 3150 Digital News Production

- assess how technology in news can affect diverse groups, such as sampling issues with social media, effect of lighting on skin tones, algorithmic bias, and disability access.

JOU 4500 Multimedia Journalism (elective course, not included in the grid)

- engage in ethical ways of thinking and apply professional standards, such as truth, fairness, accuracy and attention to diversity of audiences.

JOU 4970 Investigative Journalism

- plan and produce multimedia reporting projects using data, diverse sources, public records, and the tools of technology
- review the history and roles of investigative reporting in journalism, comparing the levels of diversity in historic news reporting with modern reporting.

In Media Analytics (MEA)

JOU 1100 News Writing and Reporting

- (see SLOs listed above, under “In Journalism”)

MEA 2600 Understanding Audiences

- explain demographic and psychographic variables that are traditionally used to describe media audiences.
- explain strategies used by the creators of media messages to appeal to large and specialized audiences, including diverse domestic and global populations.

MEA 3190 Communicating Media Insights

- interpret complex media analytics to provide insights and make recommendations to guide informed decisions for communicating with *diverse domestic and global audiences*

In Strategic Communications (STC)

JOU 1100 News Writing and Reporting

- (see SLOs listed above, under “In Journalism”)

STC 2520 Foundations of Strategic Communications

- understand issues of diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) in the United States, historically and currently, and their impact in the practice of the strategic communications professions today.
- demonstrate an awareness of domestic and global diversity with internal and external audiences.
- recognize the impact that lack of diversity in strategic communications and within working teams can have in the real world, including reputation damage, crises and financial losses.

STC 3120 Strategic Writing

- demonstrate writing and presentation techniques that pertain to diverse domestic and global audiences, media and messages.
- create culturally appropriate content targeted to different communities/groups, according to their information needs, that considers DEI.

STC 3620 Strategic Research Methods

- understand the impact of DEI (or lack thereof) in the research process, and apply this understanding to research ethics, design, instrument selection, data-collection, analysis and synthesis of results, and production of written and oral reports

STC 4520 Strategic Campaigns

- demonstrate cultural proficiency and awareness about diversity, equity, and inclusion in the preparation of strategic campaign materials.
- understand the value of working with diverse teams and of advocating for diverse teams in your profession to develop strategic campaigns.
- articulate the business case for incorporating DEI in the strategic communications and within the teams that develop those communications, in the U.S. context and internationally.

The school is also working to have some of its courses approved to fulfill Elon University’s Advancing Equity Requirement. Several course syllabi are under review by the Advancing Equity Requirement Committee for approval of AER-certification. For example, STC Associate Professor Jane O’Boyle submitted her Great Ideas in Communications syllabus to obtain AER approval. Additionally, CTA Department Chair Staci Saltz attended the Advancing Equity Summer Institute to workshop one of her courses and to become more familiar with the learning outcomes of the Advancing Equity Requirement. Both Saltz’s Entertainment Media: Issues and

Research and O'Boyle's Great Ideas in Communications courses were approved as AER courses. In other words, these two courses were designated this year, by Elon, as fulfilling the Advancing Equity Requirement (AER).

Furthermore, the school led a process to develop a new Global Film & Cultures minor, which was approved by the UCC (University Curriculum Committee) in November of 2023. Although some of the classes for this minor are already being offered, its official first semester will happen in spring of 2025. To support this new minor, a faculty advisory committee was formed with a non-voting student member and several voting faculty members, and it had the bylaws approved by Nancy Harris, Associate Dean of Elon College. To promote the minor, CTA faculty Kai Swanson engaged in recruitment events like College Coffee, the Global Spring Festival, and the Global Neighborhood Film Series, and the advisory committee received a \$5,000 Fund for Excellence grant to host guest filmmakers and screenings in Fall 2024 and Spring 2025. The minor will be added to the course catalog in Fall 2024, and the school anticipates having 10 declared students by the end of Spring 2025. CTA Department Chair Staci Saltz also became a member of the Global Film and Cultures Advisory committee.

Experiential learning

Student experiential-learning opportunities for 2023-2024 as part of the School of Communications were the following:

Study abroad: In January 2024, Dr. Rich Landesberg and Dr. Kenn Gaither led the Holocaust Journey study abroad course (Germany, Czech Republic and Poland) and Dr. Vanessa Bravo co- led the study abroad class Costa Rica: Language, Culture and Ecotourism.

Study away: Dr. Israel Balderas, along with Dr. Jill Auditori (Political Science & Policy Studies), developed a Study USA preparation seminar course in the fall of 2023 for a Winter Term course titled, "The Presidential Campaign Starts Here: The First Primaries," which took students to cover the primaries in South Carolina and New Hampshire.

Undergraduate research: Students conducted undergraduate research that involved DEI issues in many ways, from research projects in the course COM 4970 Great Ideas in Communications to mentored research experiences with individual faculty members. Following are some projects that resulted in conference presentation or publication:

- Radical Social Media Managers: How Thai Activism Group Thalufah Used Instagram to Organize Under Strict Lèse-majesté Laws, by Megan Curling. Published in the *Elon Journal of Communication*.
- Graphic Designers' Consideration of Color Accessibility, by Tiffany C.T. Huang. Published in the *Elon Journal of Communication*.
- A Period Piece: Analyzing Portrayals of Menstruation in Film from the 1960s to the 2020s, by Nadine Jose. Published in the *Elon Journal of Communication*.

- Love, Revenge, Ambition, and Scorn: A Content Analysis of the Portrayal of Women in Telenovelas and American Soap Operas, by Alexandra Borda. Published in the *Elon Journal of Communication*.
- The short documentary *Evainna Ross & The Black Suit Initiative*, by Samantha Katz, won first place and \$1,000 at a contest sponsored by the Greensboro, N.C., chapter of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc., to celebrate the stories of African-Americans and how they have made an impact in Guilford County communities.
- *The migration crisis on the United States-Mexico border*, by Madison Powers, was presented at a journalism panel in October of 2023 at the Pulitzer Center’s National Meeting in Washington, D.C.
- The documentary *Not Without a Trace*, by Emily Prins, was presented at NCUR (National Conference of Undergraduate Research) in 2023 (in Wisconsin), and also at the RiverRun International Film Festival, the Raleigh Film and Art Festival, the Indigo Moon Film Festival (where she won the Audience Award for Best Documentary Short), and at the Grand Rapids Film Festival (where she also won Best Student Short). Emily was also selected as Elon Provost Scholar. *Not Without a Trace* centers on gender-based violence in the case of the disappearance of teenager Deanie Peters, in Michigan, in 1981.

Diverse guest speakers

The School of Communications faculty frequently engages high-level guest speakers that present on topics related to DEI. Selected examples include:

- Scott McCrary ’00, openly gay, multiple Emmy-award and Murrow award-winning television producer, and currently executive producer for WUSA9, TEGNA’s flagship CBS affiliate in Washington, D.C., spoke at the school on Oct. 20, 2023, after being recognized with the School of Communications’ Outstanding Alumnus Award. The focus of his talk was “Building a space for people who are not like you.”
- Sherri Barros, vice president of sports partnerships at the American Cancer Society and Elizabeth Motta, vice president of insights and analytics at World Wrestling Entertainment, were invited panelists in the fourth Women Influencers in Sport (WINS) Forum held by the school on November 10, 2023. They are, respectively, a Black female and a white female.
- Marcus Yam, *Los Angeles Times* foreign correspondent and Pulitzer Prize-winning photojournalist, presented an on-campus lecture in Turner Theatre on May 1, 2024, sponsored by the National Press Photographer Foundation: “From conflict, to mass shootings, to environmental stories: How to engage folks with an open heart and sensitivity.” His talk also included his experience covering the war in Gaza and he spoke in several classes. Yam is an Asian (Malaysian) male.
- Janet Kiboneka, film and casting executive at Netflix and casting and talent relations executive at Disney, spoke to Dr. Karen Lindsey STC 2520 Public Relations & Civic

Responsibility class about public opinion and target audiences. She is a Black female.

- Victoria Cuza, creative planning & insights director at Publicis Groupe in Panama City, Panama, and Marisa Moody '15, freelance advertiser based in Berlin, Germany, spoke to Dr. Dan Haygood's class STC 3380 Advertising in Society about the role of strategic planning in developing great brand communications and the experience of working for Mercedes Benz and Nivea while based different capitals of the world. Both Victoria and Marisa are Latinx females of Puerto Rican origin.

Diversity topics in the classroom

A list of selected examples are presented at the end of this document, under the section “**2023-2024 Diversity & Inclusion Faculty Activity Report.**” These examples of DEI-related work include mostly in-classroom content and activities, but also professional activity, as described by faculty members in their Unit I reports (annual reports). See Appendix 1.

Graduating seniors’ perceptions of their knowledge about DEI competencies

The School of Communications conducts a survey with graduating seniors every year to measure seniors’ perceptions on their knowledge about DEI competencies. The results for 2023-2024 are the following (for a sample of 289 seniors, and the results are presented in cumulative percentages, first by major and then as a total):

Table 1. Cumulative (in percentages): Diversity Engagement by Major (N = 289)
(Marked **in yellow** are the cumulative percentages of Agree + Strongly Agree)

Question	Answer	CDE	CTA	JOU	MEA	STC	Subtotal
Q11_1 (Discussions about race/ethnicity)	Strongly agree	31.2	46.3	40	24	50.8	42%
	Agree	64.1	82.9	82.5	60	77.1	74.3%
	Slightly agree	87.5	97.6	95	84	92.4	91.7%
	Neither agree nor disagree	95.3	100	95	88	95.8	95.5%
	Slightly disagree	98.4	100	95	88	98.3	97.2%
	Disagree	98.4	100	97.5	92	99.2	98.3%
	Strongly disagree	100	100	100	100	100	100%
	Valid cases	64	41	40	25	118	288
Q11_2 (Discussions about multicultural history of	Strongly agree	26.6	31.7	27.5	19.2	43.2	33.6%
	Agree	57.8	68.3	57.5	57.7	70.3	64.4%
	Slightly agree	81.2	82.9	77.5	69.2	83.1	80.6%
	Neither agree nor disagree	89.1	87.8	80	76.9	91.5	87.5%

communication professions)	Slightly disagree	95.3	97.6	85	76.9	96.6	93.1%
	Disagree	96.9	100	95	92.3	99.2	97.6%
	Strongly disagree	100	100	100	100	100	100%
	Valid cases	64	41	40	26	118	289
Q11_3 (Discussions about economic class)	Strongly agree	17.2	24.4	17.5	11.5	29.7	22.8%
	Agree	39.1	56.1	27.5	38.5	51.7	45%
	Slightly agree	62.5	82.9	67.5	61.5	69.5	68.9%
	Neither agree nor disagree	75	87.8	75	69.2	83.9	79.9%
	Slightly disagree	85.9	97.6	82.5	80.8	92.4	89.3%
	Disagree	95.3	100	95	92.3	97.5	96.5%
	Strongly disagree	100	100	100	100	100	100%
	Valid cases	64	41	40	26	118	289
Q11_4 (Discussions about gender and sexuality)	Strongly agree	31.2	34.1	23.1	23.1	35.6	31.6%
	Agree	51.6	68.3	56.4	53.8	61	58.7%
	Slightly agree	75	95.1	74.4	69.2	78.8	78.8%
	Neither agree nor disagree	89.1	100	82.1	76.9	90.7	89.2%
	Slightly disagree	93.8	100	94.9	88.5	96.6	95.5%
	Disagree	96.9	100	97.4	92.3	99.2	97.9%
	Strongly disagree	100	100	100	100	100	100%
	Valid cases	64	41	39	26	118	288
Q11_5 (Discussions about diverse political points of view)	Strongly agree	26.6	26.8	23.1	23.1	39.8	31.2%
	Agree	48.4	43.9	53.8	57.7	59.3	53.8%
	Slightly agree	73.4	63.4	74.4	76.9	82.2	76%
	Neither agree nor disagree	85.9	78	79.5	84.6	92.4	86.5%
	Slightly disagree	92.2	87.8	89.7	88.5	96.6	92.7%
	Disagree	100	100	94.9	88.5	99.2	97.9%
	Strongly disagree	100	100	100	100	100	100%
	Valid cases	64	41	39	26	118	288
Q11_6 (Class projects with people of different races or ethnicities)	Strongly agree	25	36.6	32.5	26.9	34.7	31.8%
	Agree	56.2	63.4	62.5	61.5	56.8	58.8%
	Slightly agree	75	82.9	85	65.4	72.9	75.8%
	Neither agree nor disagree	81.2	97.6	90	69.2	80.5	83.4%
	Slightly disagree	89.1	97.6	95	73.1	87.3	88.9%
	Disagree	96.9	100	97.5	80.8	97.5	96.2%
	Strongly disagree	100	100	100	100	100	100%
	Valid cases	64	41	40	26	118	289

Q11_7 (Media activities with people of different races/ethnicities)	Strongly agree	33.3	41.5	37.5	24	36.4	35.5%
	Agree	61.7	68.3	65	60	61.8	63%
	Slightly agree	80	90.2	80	76	78.2	80.4%
	Neither agree nor disagree	88.3	100	90	80	90	90.2%
	Slightly disagree	96.7	100	92.5	84	95.5	94.9%
	Disagree	98.3	100	97.5	92	98.2	97.8%
	Strongly disagree	100	100	100	100	100	100%
	Valid cases	60	41	40	25	110	276
Q11_8 (Gain tools to advocate different background)	Strongly agree	39.1	41.5	52.5	26.9	45.8	42.9%
	Agree	68.8	68.3	77.5	69.2	80.5	74.7%
	Slightly agree	92.2	87.8	95	76.9	93.2	91%
	Neither agree nor disagree	96.9	100	100	88.5	97.5	97.2%
	Slightly disagree	96.9	100	100	88.5	98.3	97.6%
	Disagree	98.4	100	100	92.3	98.3	98.3%
	Strongly disagree	100	100	100	100	100	100%
	Valid cases	64	41	40	26	118	289

Alumni perceptions of their knowledge about DEI competencies

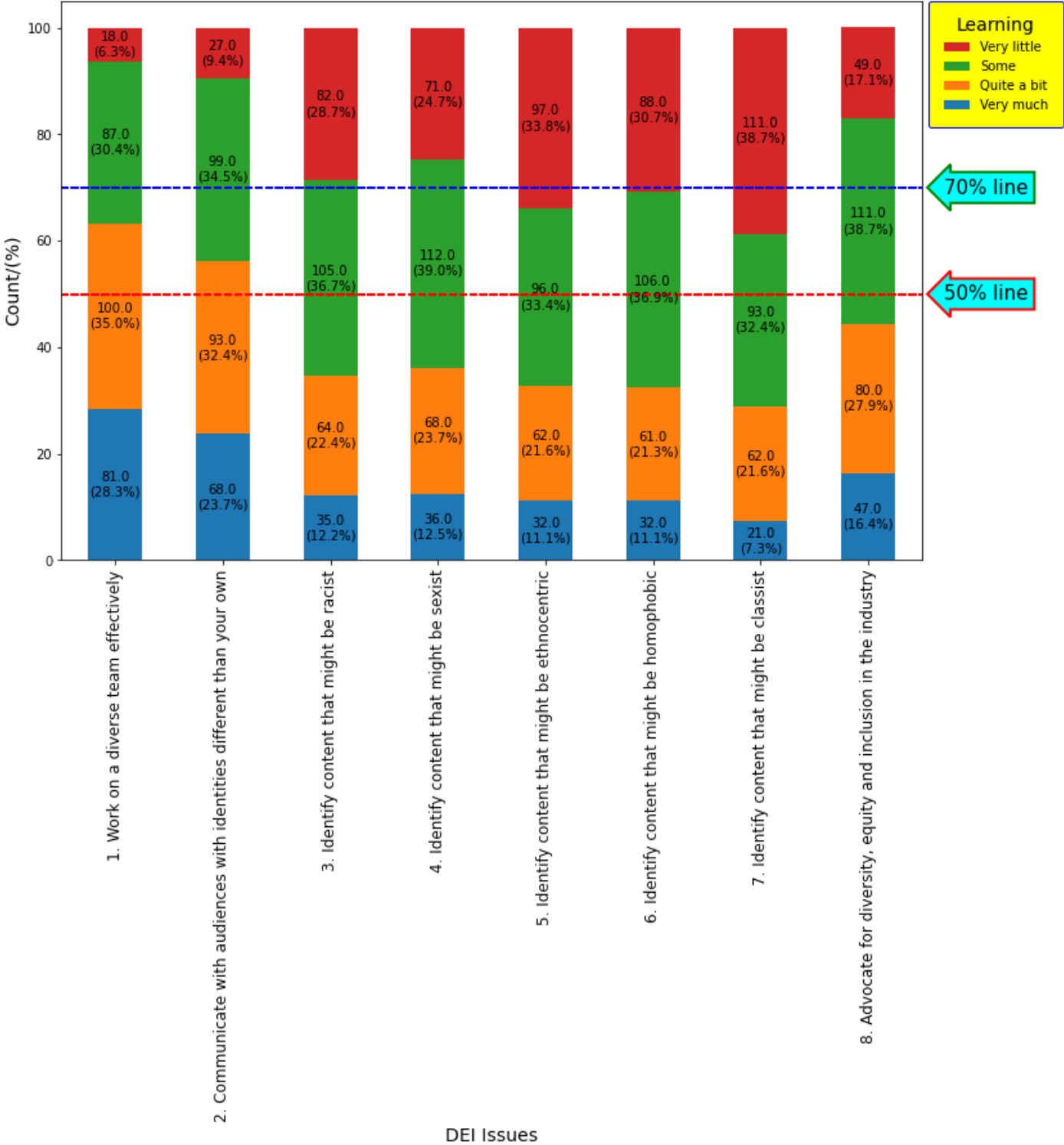
Every three years, the school conducts a survey with alumni about different areas, including what they learned about DEI while they were students in the school. Following are the DEI results from the most recent alumni survey, conducted in 2022, for comparison’s sake. The number of participants was 289, and the large majority of them graduated between 2010 and 2021.

Chart 1. Alumni perceptions of their knowledge about DEI competencies (2022. N = 289)

Regarding DEI competencies, alumni respondents evaluated, in 2022, whether the school contributed to their understanding of eight DEI issues. They are 1. “Work on a diverse team effectively,” 2. “Communicate with audiences with identities different than your own,” 3. “Identify content that might be racist,” 4. “Identify content that might be sexist,” 5. “Identify content that might be ethnocentric,” 6. “Identify content that might be homophobic,” 7. “Identify content that might be classist,” and 8. “Advocate for diversity, equity, and inclusion in the industry.” Only the first two categories exceeded 50 percent, but not 70 percent.

These results are disappointing. However, when compared to the results of the survey administered to 2023-2024 graduating seniors in communications, these results suggest that communications students’ knowledge about DEI is improving, compared to the school’s alumni. In other words, current seniors indicate that they know more about these topics than the school’s alums, which means that the school is obtaining better results today, compared to the past, in how faculty teach about these aspects and in how much students today learn about them.

Learned Ability to Understand DEI Issues



In the spring of 2024, the School of Communications started evaluating senior exit portfolios as part of its assessment process. The senior exit portfolio serves as a comprehensive showcase of student work samples that encapsulate the achievements and growth of seniors within the Elon 11-ACEJMC program outcomes. It includes written reflections documenting the evolution of professional knowledge and skills acquired during their tenure at Elon, the pivotal learning outcomes attained, and the significance of their educational journey through both courses and co-curricular experiences. The e-Portfolio functions as an internal direct measure of program assessment, highlighting students' accomplishments in learning outcomes, professional competence within the curriculum, and readiness for their future careers.

Faculty and industry professionals specializing in the majors of Cinema and Television Arts, Communication Design, Journalism, Media Analytics, and Strategic Communications, assessed a representative sample of e-Portfolios submitted by seniors.

Seniors enrolled in the spring 2024 sections of COM 4970 Great Ideas: Issues and Research were required to submit an e-Portfolio consisting of six guided reflections, their capstone research paper, and 2-3 signature creative works. From a population of 141 enrolled students, a subset of 55 student e-Portfolios was randomly chosen for evaluation, representing approximately 20 percent of the graduating senior population in each major (see Table 2). Each portfolio underwent evaluation twice in June 2024, once by an industry professional and once by a department faculty member.

Table 2: e-Portfolio Sample Size by Major

e-Portfolio Major* ¹	Evaluator		Total Evaluations
	Faculty	Professional	
CDE	12	12	24
CTA	10	10	20
JOU	8	8	16
MEA	5	5	10
STC	20	20	40
Total	55	55	110

Evaluators used an online survey instrument to rate each content submission on a three-point scale as follows: 5 points for Excellent, 3 points for Satisfactory, and 1 point for Needs Improvement. The rubric was adapted accordingly for each program outcome being assessed. To enhance rating consistency, evaluators were provided with three sample reflections (one rated as Excellent, one rated as Satisfactory, and one rated as Needs Improvement) along with a detailed rationale for each score. Below is an example of the rubric used for scoring student's reflections on the first program outcome:

Evaluate the student's understanding of key aspects related to truth, accuracy, and fairness in communications.		
5 - EXCELLENT <i>Demonstrates a Deep Understanding</i> Analysis is highly insightful, accurate, and thorough in response to the reflection prompts.	3 - SATISFACTORY <i>Demonstrates a Basic Understanding</i> Analysis is thoughtful but lacks substantive depth or clarity in response to the reflection prompts.	1 - NEEDS IMPROVEMENT <i>Demonstrates a Limited Understanding</i> Analysis is vague or incomplete in response to the reflection prompts.

While the 11 skills and values were assessed, for the purpose of this DEI annual report only the results for learning about the multicultural history of communications (R4) and about domestic & global diversity (R5) are presented.

Table 3: Average Assessment Scores by Program Outcome

3-point scale (1=Needs Improvement; 3=Satisfactory; 5=Excellent)

Elon 11 Program Outcome	Average Score
Multicultural History (R4)	3.7
Domestic and global diversity (R5)	3.7

Table 4: Average Assessment Scores by Major and Program Outcome

3-point scale (1=Needs Improvement; 3=Satisfactory; 5=Excellent)

Elon 11 Program Outcome	CDE	CTA	JOU	MEA	STC
Multicultural History (R4)	2.9	3.3	3.8	4.2	4.2
Domestic and global diversity (R5)	3.7	3.0	4.1	3.6	4.0
Sample Size	N=12	N=10	N=8	N=5	N=20

Table 5: Percentage of student scores rated as satisfactory or excellent (Goal: 80%)

Percentage (%) of Student Scores Rated as Satisfactory or Excellent ²						
Elon 11 Program Outcome	CDE	CTA	JOU	MEA	STC	ALL
Multicultural History (R4)	70.8%	85.0%	87.5%	100.0%	92.5%	87.30%
Domestic and global diversity (R5)	87.5%	80.0%	87.6%	80.0%	92.5%	87.30%

Student Recruitment and Retention

The School of Communications' leadership team and faculty members collaborate with Elon's Admissions Office to support their events. As such, school members serve as panelists for admissions events 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 regularly with the Admissions Dean and other senior staff members. The School of Communications Fellows Program Director also meets with Admissions staff regularly.

Recruiting diverse students is a priority for 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 questions. Some faculty members participate in other Admissions events such as Phoenix Fusion, where accepted students from underrepresented backgrounds spend a weekend on-campus and receive mock classes, among many other activities.

Additionally, thanks to a generous grant from the Scripps Howard Foundation, the school launched the Scripps Howard Emerging Journalists Program (EJP) in 2022. High school students from around the country apply to the EJP 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 about 20 students selected come from underrepresented groups (race, ethnicity or socioeconomic status). Many participants decide to major in journalism. The program has unintendedly also become an admissions tool. In its first two years, 33 of the 38 students in the immersive program applied to Elon. In its third year, the on-campus immersion program [accepted 18 students](#). For more information about EJP, see [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 with them on a social that is held on a Friday night. At those moments, 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 offers Elon Academy, a college-readiness program for high-school seniors in Alamance County that supports students for two full years. Many of them end up attending Elon. To better connect with these students, Cinema and Television Arts department chair, Staci Saltz, teaches a course that local high-school students receive on campus during the summer right before senior year. Regarding scholarship funds, beyond the scholarships offered at the university level, the school's Dean can provide modest support to 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.

Following are the School of Communications student retention and graduation rates, compared to Elon University as a whole.

Table 6. School of Communications Retention Rates Class of 2023 (started in fall of 2019).

Retention:

Class of 2023	Cohort	Soph Yr	Junior Yr	Senior Yr
COM Students Total	342	317 (92.7%)	299 (87.4%)	292 (85.4%)
COM Minority Students	Cohort	Soph Yr	Junior Yr	Senior Yr
	43	40 (93%)	35 (81.4%)	34 (79.1%)
All Elon Students	1,659	1,487 (89.6%)	1,411 (85.1%)	1,364 (82.2%)
All minority students	284	256 (90.1%)	240 (84.5%)	231 (81.3%)

Graduation:

For the class of 2023, there were 342 students whose last-declared major was one in the School of Communications. Of those, 282 graduated (82.5%). The minority students with any COM major as last-declared major for the Class of 2023 were 43. Of those, 33 graduated (76.7%). The entire Elon University entering-cohort in fall 2019 was 1,659 students. Of those, 1,288 graduated (78%). The minority students in the entire university entering-cohort for 2019 were 284. Of those, 213 graduated (75%).

Student Demographics

In terms of student body composition, students in the School of Communications have the following demographics (in comparison with the student body at Elon University):

Table 7. School of Communications’ Student Demographics

Academic year: 2023 – 2024

Total number of COM majors: 1037. Male: 276 (27%). Female: 761 (73%)

Group	Male	Female	% of total in unit	% of total in institution
Black/African-American	13	33	4.44	5.24
White	224	639	83.22	77.74
American Indian/Alaskan native	0	0	0	0.13
Asian	4	13	1.64	2.38
Hispanic/Latino (any race).	20	47	6.46	6.85
Native Hawaiian/other Pacific Islander	0	0	0	0.02
Two or more races	6	12	1.74	2.66
Other race	6	10	1.54	3.06
International students (any race)	3	7	0.96	2.03

Diverse & Culturally Proficient Faculty

In spring 2024, 29 percent of the full-time faculty in the School of Communications were from minority communities and 42 percent were female. Six of the eight faculty members hired into full-time positions during the past four years have been women (75 percent), and four (50 percent) have added to the faculty’s racial, ethnic and international diversity. Table 4 and Table 5, respectively, present the demographics of full-time faculty as of the spring of 2024 and of the part-time faculty as of the fall of 2024.

Table 8. Full-time Faculty, Spring 2024

Total: 62. Gender: Male = 35 (56%); Female = 26 (42%); Non-Binary = 1 (2%).

Group	Female	% total fac	Male	% total fac	Non-Binary	%
Black/African American	3	4.8%	3	4.8%	--	--
Native American	1	1.6%	--	--	--	--
Hispanic/Latino (any race)	1	1.6%	2	3.2%	--	--
Asian	3	4.8%	2	3.2%	--	--
Internat. faculty (any race)	--	--	2	3.2%	--	--
White	18	29.0%	24	38.7%	1	1.6%

Table 9. Part-time/adjunct faculty, Fall 2024

Total: 11. Male: 7; Female: 4.

Group	Female	% of faculty	Male	% of faculty
Black/African American			1	9%
Native American			1	9%
Asian			1	9%
White	4	36%	4	36%

The School of Communications is committed to recruiting and supporting a diverse faculty and staff. When a faculty or staff search committee is established, the school’s dean and/or an Elon HR representative joins 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, questions asked during remote and on-campus interviews, etc.). The hiring process also accommodates the particular needs of candidates with disabilities, varied religious traditions, meal requirements and lactation-space needs, among others.

Retention is also an important part of having a diverse faculty and staff. 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 includes 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 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 the fact 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 2024, Dr. Alex Luchsinger was tenured and promoted to associate professor.

Faculty Inclusive Excellence

In the 2023-2024 academic year, School of Communications faculty members demonstrated inclusive excellence in numerous ways. For example, several are engaged in DEI efforts at the university level, serving roles such as co-Chair of the Hispanic/Latinx Advisory Council, co-Coordinator of the Latinx Employee Resource Group, member of PACIE (Elon's Presidential Advisory Council for Inclusive Excellence), member of the Asian and Pacific Islander & Middle East and North Africa (API & MENA) Implementation Team, and member of the newly formed group Elon Partners & Allies of Students with Different Documentation Statuses on Campus.

Furthermore, as part of their professional activity, five faculty members in the school published book chapters about DEI in Strategic Communications in the book *Diversity, Equity and Inclusion in Strategic Communications: Becoming Culturally Proficient Communicators*, which was co-edited by Professor Lee Bush and Assistant Professor Karen Lindsey, for Routledge / Taylor & Francis. Additionally, two faculty members presented as panelists for DEI online sessions organized by AEJMC (Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication)'s Black Academics Group, Charlotte's PRSA (Public Relations Society of America) chapter, the Ragan Communications Virtual Conference, and the Minorities & Communication (MAC) Division of AEJMC.

In AY 2023-2024, faculty members Karen Lindsey and Lee Bush assumed leading roles by teaching the newly required course COM 2000 Inclusive Communications and by training other faculty members to do so. For her DEI book, for coordinating the school's "Spotlight on DEI" event, for chairing our SoC Inclusive Excellence Committee, for deeply infusing her classes with contents about these issues, and for many other DEI efforts developed inside and outside the classroom, Professor Lee Bush was recognized in 2024 with the School of Communications Faculty Excellence in Diversity Award.

School of Communications faculty also participated in multiple DEI-related training sessions and webinars, among others, through Elon’s Advancing Equity Summer Institute and Elon’s CATL (Center for the Advancement of Teaching and Learning), Cardiff University’s Data Justice Conference, Tableau’s webinar “Data + Diversity: Using Data for Human Rights Advocacy,” PRSA, the Museum of Public Relations, and the Minorities & Communication (MAC) division of AEJMC. A faculty member in the school is part of the board of the Diversity Action Alliance as well. A selected, longer list of trainings is included in Appendix 1, at the end of this report.

Inclusive Climate

Elon University periodically conducts campus climate surveys among faculty and staff, as well as among students, regarding campus climate. The following are the most recent results of those surveys. For faculty, the results come from the HEDS Survey of 2023. For students, the results come from the MSL Survey of 2021.

Table 10. Faculty Survey Highlights (From HEDS, 2023).

In a scale of 1 to 5, the following are averages for COM faculty in comparison to Non-COM Elon faculty and Elon faculty overall:

STATEMENT	COM Faculty	Non-COM faculty	Elon faculty
<i>Climate satisfaction level- The extent to which you experience a sense of belonging or community at this institution</i>	4.10	3.75	3.76
<i>Climate satisfaction level- The extent to which you feel all community members experience a sense of belonging or community at this institution</i>	3.43	3.24	3.25
<i>Institutional support agreement level- The campus environment is free from tensions related to individual or group differences.</i>	3.33	2.89	2.90
<i>Institutional support agreement level- Recruitment of historically marginalized students, faculty, and staff is an institutional priority.</i>	3.86	3.64	3.64
<i>Institutional support agreement level- Retention of historically marginalized students, faculty, and staff is an institutional priority.</i>	3.86	3.39	3.41
<i>Institutional support agreement level – Senior leadership demonstrates a commitment to diversity and equity on this campus.</i>	4.10	3.68	3.70

<i>Extent you agree that diversity on campus improves experiences and interactions within the classroom, the workplace, and the overall community</i>	4.67	4.51	4.51
<i>Overall, how comfortable would you be sharing your views on diversity and equity at this institution?</i>	4.10	3.63	3.64

Table 11. Elon Student Survey Highlights (From MSL, 2021)

Office of Institutional Research and Assessment [MSL COMPARISON 2012-2015-2018-2021 FOR CAMPUS CLIMATE FOR DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION ITEMS]										
MSL 2021 CAMPUS CLIMATE FOR DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION ITEMS										
PERCENTAGE OF RESPONDENTS WHO INDICATED AGREE OR STRONGLY AGREE										
Item	PARENT EDUCATION ⁴		GENDER		RACE/ETHNICITY ⁵		SEXUAL ORIENTATION ⁶		ABILITY STATUS	
	1 st Gen	Non 1 st Gen	M	F	ALANAM	Non ALANAM	LGBQ+	Het.	Self-ID Disability	None
I feel valued as a person at this school	47.7% ○	64.0%	56.9% -	64.0%	52.6% ○	63.9%	55.5% ○	63.8%	52.9%	● 64.3%
I feel accepted as a part of the campus community	56.6% ○	72.5%	67.0% -	72.4%	60.8% ●	72.7%	59.0% ●	73.7%	58.2%	● 73.8%
I feel I belong on this campus	48.0% ○	69.2%	63.6% -	67.6%	55.3% ○	68.9%	60.0% ○	68.2%	58.2%	○ 68.4%
I have encountered discrimination while attending this institution	45.1% ●	29.8%	28.4% ○	32.1%	52.0% ●	26.7%	39.4% ○	29.6%	37.6%	○ 30.0%
I feel there is a general atmosphere of prejudice among students	42.0% ○	32.9%	29.6% ○	34.8%	40.7% ○	32.2%	44.0% ○	31.1%	44.1%	○ 31.1%
I would describe the environment on campus as negative/hostile	19.2% ○	9.0%	13.0% -	9.6%	12.8% -	9.7%	12.3% ○	9.6%	12.2%	- 9.6%
Faculty have discriminated against people like me	17.2% ○	11.5%	11.3% -	11.7%	24.1% ●	9.1%	15.5% ○	11.0%	17.0%	○ 10.7%
Staff members have discriminated against people like me	11.5% ●	7.1%	7.9% -	7.4%	16.4% ●	5.6%	8.7% -	7.5%	11.1%	○ 6.8%
Other students have discriminated against people like me	33.9% ●	21.9%	23.4% -	22.9%	47.1% ●	17.5%	38.5% ○	18.9%	28.9%	○ 21.8%

Response Choices: Strongly Agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree, Strongly Disagree

○ Student means between groups were significantly different with an effect size less than .3
● Student means between groups were significantly different with an effect size greater than .3
- No significant difference

⁴ A student is classified as first-generation if neither parent has earned a baccalaureate degree (Elon definition)
⁵ Students who identify from at least one of the following groups are in one cluster: Middle Eastern/North African, African American/Black, American Indian/Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, Asian American, Latino/Hispanic/Multiracial, or Race Not Listed
⁶ A student is classified as LBGQ-identified if they selected at one of the following: Asexual, Asexual/Heterosexual, Bisexual, Bisexual/Heterosexual, Bisexual/Pansexual/Queer, Bisexual/Queer, Gay, Lesbian, Heterosexual/Unsure, Pansexual, Pansexual/Queer, Queer, Questioning/Unsure

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

- As part of valuing the contributions of all forms of diversity, school faculty focus on the recruitment of underrepresented students during the Communications Fellows/Scholarship Weekend and on identifying and celebrating the work of underrepresented students through nominations for the school's annual Student Awards.
- Some annual student awards are scholarships for excellent students who also have demonstrable need for financial aid or are from an underrepresented background. The school supports its students by recognizing their academic and leadership work, which includes promoting minority students' work to achieve recognition beyond Elon University. For example, in 2022-2023,
 - 2 STC students (one Black female and one Latinx female) received 2023 LAGRANT Foundation Scholarships.
 - 1 STC Black male student was granted a Fulbright U.S. Student Program Scholarship.
 - 1 STC Latinx female student was awarded a DEI Summit Student Travel Scholarship to Chicago, by the Plank Center for Leadership in Public Relations
 - 1 STC Black female student was awarded a PRSA Foundation's Just Drive Media Fellowship, with an award to be received at PRSA's ICON conference in California.
 - 1 STC Black female student traveled to Egypt with an Elon team to produce social media and video content for the 46th and 47th ICPC (International Collegiate Programming Contest) World Finals.
- The school created the Unity in Communications program in fall 2021 to connect students interested in "enhancing diversity and inclusion in the communications and sport management industries." With support from the dean's office, this student-run program organizes lectures, discussions, and other special activities. In 2023-2024, Unity in Communications had a low level of activity. As such, starting in the fall of 2024, the group will have a new staff advisor, Karla Estrada Pérez, and she will be supported by Professor and Assistant Dean Vanessa Bravo, to reinvigorate the group and its activities.
- As part of assessment measures, the school conducts surveys with seniors and alumni that include questions about school climate and knowledge about DEI.

Programming in partnership with university groups

This academic year, the School of Communications organized DEI events including:

- A Spotlight on DEI event, organized by the school's Inclusive Excellence Committee in spring 2024, celebrated a wide variety of DEI-related activities in the school. The event's format included 12 table topics where students circulated between discussions, and longer tables along the perimeter, highlighting SOC DEI initiatives. The intention is for this activity to become an annual event. Together, topics for this event fulfill several objectives of the school's DEI plan, including:

- Create programming where students from all majors and identities can come together, get to know each other, and share student experiences.
 - Infuse and promote DEI as part of engaged/experiential learning.
 - Create opportunities for international students to be recognized and talk about their cultures.
- 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 four virtual sessions throughout the year and received, on campus, 18 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 of EJP is that, since 2021, 33 of the 38 participants in this program have enrolled at Elon University.
 - Professor Vanessa Bravo presented her research on government-diaspora communication and public diplomacy in Latin America during Elon's Distinguished Scholar Award lecture, on Wednesday, Sept. 27, to Elon's faculty and staff. This event was organized by the FR&D (Faculty Research and Development) Committee at Elon.

Student Organizations

While this effort is still work in progress, the school has supported student groups in their processes of developing DEI plans and gaining deeper knowledge on DEI issues in their fields. Two groups that have gone through this process already are the student staff of student-led communications agency Live Oak Communications (which developed a DEI Plan in 2023, in a semester-long process guided by Professor Lee Bush) and ENN (Elon News Network), whose student staff received a one-day training in diversity, equity and inclusion, both in news coverage and in staff culture, led by Dean Kenn Gaither and Assistant Professor Karen Lindsey.

Live Oak Communications is a signatory of the Diversity Action Alliance pledge. The student-run organization works with local and national clients, including through a partnership with the Alamance County Chamber of Commerce, whereby Live Oak students work with at least one client per year that is minority or BIPOC-owned, or whose business directly works toward DEI and community engagement.

Communications

The school is starting the process of updating its communications about DEI efforts and initiatives, including uploading its yearly DEI reports to the school's website, but displayed more prominently, at the top of the web section on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion. The website also features, now, both the current school's DEI Plan (approved in 2023) and the former one (active from 2016 to 2023) on the top right corner of the web section on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion. The list that showcases some DEI-focused events during the year has also been updated.

A structural change mentioned previously, which will have an impact on DEI-focused communications from now on, is the creation of the position of Assistant Dean of DEI and Assessment in the School of Communications. The inaugural Assistant Dean is Professor Vanessa Bravo, former Chair of Strategic Communications (2020-2024), who has been deeply involved with diversity initiatives at Elon, including supporting efforts of the CREDE (Center for Race, Ethnicity and Diversity Education) and El Centro (Elon's Latinx Center), as well as through her previous roles of co-Chair of Elon's Latinx/Hispanic Working Group and co-Chair of the Latinx/Hispanic Implementation Team, as well as her current roles of co-Chair of the Latinx/Hispanic Employee Resource Group (ERG) and co-Chair of the Latinx/Hispanic Advisory Council. Bravo is also Vice-Head of the Minorities and Communication (MAC) Division at AEJMC (Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication).

The importance of this new Assistant Dean position has been [communicated clearly](#).

Appendix 1

2023-2024 Diversity & Inclusion Faculty Activity Report

Following are 20 selected examples of how faculty in the School of Communications included DEI content in 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 in connection to themes and experiences related to diversity, equity and inclusion. It is followed by a selected list of trainings that faculty in the School of Communications took this academic year to enhance their knowledge on DEI-related topics:

Teaching

This year, **Strategic Campaigns** students developed work for a diverse range of clients, including Benevolence Farms (which works with women who were formerly incarcerated in Alamance County), the Burlington Community Land Trust (which seeks to provide equitable access to affordable housing for low-income households in Burlington and focuses on Morrowtown, one of the first African-American communities in Burlington), Alamance County Libraries, Alamance Pride, Elon's Imagining the Digital Future Center, and the Mosaic Center.

Other selected examples, provided by individual faculty members in their Unit Is (annual reports), are presented next (quoted from their reports):

Shanetta Pendleton (STC): “While teaching STC Research Methods this past semester, I made sure that students understood the importance of diversity in research by addressing DEI in strategic research early in the semester through lectures and assignments that required students to reflect on their personal biases and how they would develop a culturally sensitive research project to address a client challenge. Each of the assignments completed throughout the semester also required students to discuss their plan to reduce bias in the research process and/or limitations associated with sampling and the generalizability of their results. Students were also required to demonstrate an understanding of the ethical challenges associated with DEI in the research process. With the foundation provided through lectures, assignments, and feedback, students were able to address a variety of strategic communications issues through research, including algorithmic bias and AI, corporate social advocacy and LGBTQ+ marketing, LGBTQ+ representation on Netflix, and inclusive advertising and marketing in the fashion and beauty industries.”

Kai Swanson (CTA): “I feel supported and comfortable integrating DE&I practices into my work at Elon University. This was particularly evident in the courses I taught and developed, where I consciously incorporated DE&I content and perspectives. For instance, in CTA 2700 Comedy Writing, I not only focused on the comedic aspect but also emphasized the importance of creating content that is inclusive and respectful of diverse backgrounds and experiences. This approach has enriched the learning experience for my students, fostering an environment of understanding and respect that I hope they will bring to their professional experiences beyond Elon University.”

Laura Lacy (STC): “In COM 4970, I included readings and a discussion about how to think about diversity, equity, and inclusion while on the hunt for a job. For example, one assigned article by the National Association of Colleges and Employers, titled “Conscious Job Seeking: Assessing Employer’s Commitment to DEI,” provides a list of questions an interviewee might weave into a meeting with a potential employer to gauge the company’s commitment to DEI. We also considered how students could keep their own social identities in mind when looking at company culture.”

Kelly Furnas (JOU): “For many years, I have been using the Maynard Institute’s “Fault Lines” exercise in COM 1100 Media Writing — and now JOU 1100 News Writing and Reporting — to have students evaluate the inclusion (or exclusion) of demographics in a medium; we use a semester’s worth of *The Pendulum* for the exercise. It’s a helpful exercise that helps contextualize the importance of diversity in sourcing while also acknowledging the potential pitfalls of quotas or tokenism.”

Lee Bush (STC): [In COM 1000 Communications in a Global Age, a class she taught after about five years of not doing so] “When I have taught this class in the past, I’ve used the Maynard Institute’s Fault Lines model. I did so again, but this time I paired it with a textbook discussion on “the myth of objectivity” in journalism and a report on community-based ethnic media. Students read the multi-page report “Asian Media on the Front Lines: How community

media have served Asian Americans during the pandemic” by the Center for Community Media, and a blog on “How the media have fueled hate targeting Asian Americans.” Students then responded to a series of prompts, including what they learned from the report, identifying the intersectionality of Fault Lines in the report, stereotypes of the AAPI community (I learned some new stereotypes myself from students’ papers), and how the articles related to the myth of objectivity. We then discussed their papers in class.”

Ke (Jenny) Jiang (MEA & CDE): “In 2023, the incorporation of unique experimental Chinese cultural activities during the COR 1100 teaching sessions contributed significantly to DEI in teaching. This initiative aimed to help students acquire a better understanding of global citizenship, cultural tolerance, humanitarian responsibility, conflict resolution, and a sustainable future. Furthermore, for teaching the upper-level Media Analytics classes (MEA 3290, MEA 3590), I also utilized several case studies featuring trending DEI hashtags, such as #BlackLivesMatter and #StopAsianHate, to demonstrate DEI storytelling with data analytics. I have included these DEI examples in my textbook 'Media Analytics with R.' These examples have inspired my students to analyze their own interesting topics/hashtags for storytelling.”

Lorraine Ahearn (JOU): “I taught units on diversity and Associated Press style in my editing and reporting classes. I incorporated theories of representation, social construction of reality, and cultural appropriation in COM 1000 teaching and writing assignments.”

Sydney Nicolla (STC): “In my Strategic Writing class, in the fall of 2023 we learned about and discussed standpoint theory. Standpoint theory allows us to understand how we come to have our own worldview, and how important it is to keep in mind the experiences that formed our perspectives. I asked students to reflect on their own standpoint and pieces of their identity that shaped it. Some felt comfortable sharing these reflections and others did not. Students who shared spoke about identity elements like race, ethnicity, and childhood experiences. We considered how these might influence our tendencies in thinking and writing.”

Rebecca Bagley (CDE): “In my Design of Visual Images class, I included reading and reactions to an article on [DEI in Design](#) and an Introduction to the [Diversity in Design Collaborative](#) and [Where are all the Black Designers](#) advocacy group. Students also read some of my research on the topic of designing for the visually impaired and a great article on [Designing for the Blind and Visually impaired](#). In my CDE 3500 class, I continue giving the students a social media campaign project to focus on the lack of DEI, precisely in the graphic design field. They also have to design a Social Justice cause or movement to educate the public clearly, informally, and accurately. We also critiqued past and current campaigns with DEI issues and completed a paper on what was wrong with the ads and how they could be improved to capture a broader, more diverse audience. This assignment impacted the students; many said they saw bias for the first time in many ads.”

Julie Lellis (STC): “In my Health Communications course, students used AI during class for our health literacy discussion. I made sure to emphasize topics related to diversity when we discussed access to healthcare and health literacy. Project topics this year ranged from eugenics to birth control advertising, comprehensive sex education, postpartum depression, and portrayals of addiction in television. Students were required to attend HealthEU Day.”

Bill Anderson (STC): “In Strategic Campaigns, student teams of three chose an existing STC campaign that interested them. Each group had to present recommendations on how to extend the chosen brand’s campaign to a new, multicultural facet of the audience. For instance, one group discussed how a cosmetic brand could include members of the LatinX community in its campaign. In each case, students learned that multicultural persons were not a new audience – they were already a member of the audience, but that group had been ignored by the brand. The goal was to encourage students to think about representing the full spectrum of an audience in STC campaigns.”

Staci Saltz (CTA): “In COR 1100 The Global Experience, I created a variety of assignments to challenge the students to look at how bias affects how we interpret and are influenced by media. For example, the students did two group podcasts throughout the semester. The first one was around the topic “Why Representation Matters” and the second one was around “Media and Identity.” During these podcasts, the students had to research, write questions, and most of all practice their listening and communication skills. These podcasts were the best assignments this semester. It was extremely rewarding to hear how students were processing the content we had been discussing and then create dialogue with their classmates.”

Barbara Gaither (STC): “In Environmental Communications, I devoted significant time in the course to issues related to environmental justice. Rather than having this topic as a separate module within the course, I have infused this content throughout the semester to acknowledge environmental problems are often closely linked to issues of systemic racism and injustices. At this summer’s Advancing Equity Requirement (AER) Institute, I began revising my COM 3310 syllabus and assignments to submit the course for an AER designation.”

Jessica Gisclair (STC): “In teaching Media Law and Ethics, I lead discussions about the conservative makeup of the supreme court, constitutional originalism, and the impact of *Dobbs v. Jackson*, keeping conversations focused on reproductive rights, women’s health rights, and privacy. We also discussed the numerous federal cases of incitement to violence against accused involved with the January 6, 2021, riot on the Capital. In fall 2023, we discussed the Chauvin appeal of his murder conviction in *State vs. Derek Chauvin* along with course content that connected the 1st and 6th amendment rights, media coverage, and witnesses, sources, subpoenas, and search warrants. We discussed the SPJ Code of Ethics guidance on media coverage of high-profile cases and the ethics of trial-by-public-opinion as part of our DEI dissection of the appeal. Finally, I introduced a class exercise called Deliberative Dialogue to address current free speech topics such as “Should hate speech be protected speech,” and “AI’s bias, discrimination, and ethical concerns in relation to copyright.”

Professional Activity

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 to apply this knowledge to 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. These are some examples of what they did this year:

Lee Bush (STC): “I worked on developing, writing, and editing the content for the book *DEI in Strategic Communications: Becoming Culturally Proficient Communicators*. Karen Lindsey and I signed a contract with Routledge / Taylor & Francis for the book last December, and the final manuscript was sent to the publisher on Feb. 1 of 2024.”

Israel Balderas (JOU): “I presented the session “DEI in North Carolina: Tracking the Dismantling of Academic Freedom” during the 3-day Advancing Equity Summer Institute at Elon University, in June. I informed attendees on how academic freedom intersects with state regulation of DEI on campus.”

Karen Lindsey (STC): “I was deeply moved and honored to be awarded the first School of Communications [Academic Excellence in Diversity award by Dean Gaither](#) for my work in helping reframe and develop the Inclusive Communications-COM 2000 course, which included helping create the catalog description and syllabus, as well as conducting a training to help faculty prepare to teach the course. I also assisted student leaders in Elon News Network in conducting a climate survey to evaluate inclusion, belonging, and diversity practices.”

Kai Swanson (CTA): “In my creative work, particularly in film production, I have strived to ensure representation and equity both in front of and behind the camera in the stories I write, and the crew and cast I work with. This commitment to DE&I has not only enhanced the quality and depth of my creative projects but also set a strong example for my students. Moreover, my involvement in university initiatives, like the collaboration on LGBTQIA+ inclusive practices in Study USA and Abroad programs, reflects my dedication to promoting an inclusive campus culture. These efforts have been instrumental in addressing gaps in inclusivity and providing a more welcoming environment for all students.”

Sowjanya Kudva (CTA): “Much of my professional activity aligns with the DEI initiatives at Elon and my own values as a filmmaker-scholar. All three of my films were made in the spirit of diversifying screen narratives: the stories were made by and about trans people, queer people, and/or people of color. My paper demonstrates how the documentarians of *Disclosure: Trans Lives on Screen* (Sam Feder, 2020) subvert the legal and socio-political history of discrimination in Hollywood. My web design project aims to join the growing battle against global mis/disinformation while creating more accessible pathways for students to engage in media scholarship.”

DEI-Related Trainings:

School of Communications faculty received DEI-related trainings at multiple sessions this academic year 2023-2024. Following is a selected list of events/organizations that our faculty attended to continue their process of learning about DEI:

At Elon:

- Elon's Advancing Equity Summer Institute (3 full days)
- Elon's Advancing Equity Developing Series Workshops: Framing Advancing Equity for All Students; Political and Legal Foundations of Systemic Racism; and Racism Through a Lens of Community-Based Systems
- Elon's CATL (Center for the Advancement of Teaching and Learning) DEI sessions, including Creating an Inclusive Classroom; Intentionally Designing for Your Wellbeing; and Approaches to teaching that center student academic wellbeing and success
- Elon's Global Education Center Managing Bias on Short-Term Study Away Programs
- Elon's Winter Term Study Abroad Title IX Training
- Elon's Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Suite (Office of Human Resources and Office of Inclusive Excellence Education and Development (OIEED))
- Elon's Gender & LGBTQIA Center training on Allyship
- Elon's Antisemitism Awareness Training, sponsored by the CREDE
- Elon's Teaching & Learning Conference's sessions on resilience, centering student voices, trauma-informed teaching, and creating equitable curricula
- Elon's Summer Race Reflection and Discussion Series: Unpacking Multiple Perspectives on Race; Challenges Talking About Race; and Raising our Race Consciousness
- Elon's session SMART Mentoring for ALANAM Students, during Planning Week, organized by the CREDE

Beyond Elon:

- Academy for Holistic Reimagining of the Recruitment, Mentoring, and Retention of Racially Minoritized Faculty (about 7 Friday afternoons per semester)
- AIGA Embodied Inclusive Leadership: Webinar
- American Bar Association Forum on Communications Law's Webinar The Importance of Advancing DEI in the Communications Law Ecosystem
- Candid Conversations: Diversity, Inclusion & Belonging Podcast
- Cardiff University's Data Justice Conference
- LinkedIn Learning online courses on Using Gender Inclusive Language and Diverse Talent in Recruiting and Hiring
- Macmillan Learning Webinar on Culturally Responsive Teaching
- Minorities & Communication (MAC) Division of AEJMC sessions
- Museum of Public Relations (sessions on practitioners of Black, Latinx, Indigenous and LGBTQIA communities)
- North Carolina's American Council on Education (ACE) Women's Network Conference "A Leadership Mindset: Turning Intention into Action"
- Public Relations (PRD) Division of AEJMC sessions.
- Public Relations Society of America (several sessions, including The AP Stylebook on Inclusion in Reporting, Writing and Editing)
- Tableau's Webinar "Data + Diversity: Using Data for Human Rights Advocacy"