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ELON SUSTAINABILITY NEWSLETTER

Elon Establishes a Waste Reduction Advisory Group

By: Kelly Harer

Waste reduction is an important aspect of sustainability at Elon, with over 1,200 tons of waste sent to the landfill each year. During FY 19-20, Elon hired a waste consultant team to conduct a waste audit of selected campus buildings, assess campus waste operations and provide recommendations for campus wide improvement. One of this group's initial recommendations was to create a Waste Reduction Advisory Group.

The Advisory Group's main objective will be to develop a waste reduction master plan based on the recommendations and strategies from the consultant team's final report. The group will also provide feedback on additional ideas and/or programs to further Elon's waste reduction efforts. The Advisory Group will consist of staff, students and faculty and be co-led by the Environmental Services Department and Office of Sustainability. Its work will begin this spring and is expected to be complete by May 2023.



Waste reduction ideas can be sent to sustainability@elon.edu for consideration by the Advisory Group.



Faculty Spotlight: Dr. Aaron Sparks

By: Hannah Naehring

Dr. Aaron Sparks' interest in sustainability grew out of his connection to nature which he developed at a young age. He grew up in Minnesota and every summer his family would go on a 2-3 week vacation, usually to Colorado, where they would camp and explore nature. He recalls visiting interpretative centers during these trips where he initially learned about the natural and anthropological history of the landscape. Dr. Sparks' father was a member of various conservation organizations, which is how he began to see firsthand how organizations and politics play a role in the preservation of wild places. Dr. Sparks believes that these experiences in his youth instilled in him a deep appreciation for



nature and a commitment to protecting it. Now as an Assistant Professor of Political Science and Policy Studies and father himself, Dr. Sparks often thinks explicitly about the kind of place we are leaving for the next generation. He feels like it is part of his duty as a parent to ensure that his kids have the same opportunities to explore the wilds that he did and have a suitable climate. He believes that the most sustainable thing we can do is to be advocates for rapid climate policy. His research tries to support this by furthering our understanding of how and why people become politically active. In addition to this, he hopes to translate his research into his teaching in a way that motivates students to get involved.

The term "sustainability" wasn't something that Dr. Sparks had heard much about until his time in grad school at the University of California Santa Barbra. During this time, he worked with their sustainability office to develop a measure of sustainability knowledge. Through that work, he attended sustainability conferences and got plugged in to the wider conversation about sustainability. Now his primary connection to sustainability is through his area of study in the politics of environmental policy. One aspect of this is measuring what people know about sustainability. Along with coauthors, he recently published an article in *Nature Sustainability* about the failure of the Sulitest (the most prominent global test of sustainability literacy) to actually measure any coherent knowledge structure. He has now become concerned over the overuse of the term sustainability and is worried that it has lost its initial meaning.

Faculty Spotlight Cont.

"There are so many different definitions and so many corporations and institutions use it as a way to greenwash their image. I would like to see more focus on climate justice that is combating the climate crisis while centering environmental justice. That should be our number one priority."

Dr. Sparks also carries his concern for the environment into his personal life. His family of four lives in a modest house, and he drives a 2007 Prius with nearly 200,000 miles on it. He has purchased shares in a CSA (Community Supported Agriculture) and tries to buy organic and local produce when possible. He believes that although it can be difficult to live with minimal impact, it is important for each of us to establish sustainable practices as we are able.

Staff Spotlight: Allison Pelyhes

By: Kaitlynn Dixon



As the Multifaith Coordinator at the Truitt Center for Religious and Spiritual Life, Allison Pelyhes oversees a cohort of Interfaith Interns, the Interfaith House LLC, the Numen Lumen Speaker Series, and works alongside university chaplains to serve as a mentor to all students. At first glance, the connection between spirituality and sustainability may not be as clear, but as Allison explains, religious and spiritual life offer a lot in continuing and furthering conversations around environmentalism. Specifically in religious traditions, there is historical and present harm that has surfaced from a variety of religious concepts that have led to devastating impacts on our planet. There

are also many religious traditions that seek to care for the Earth and serve as stewards of the planet's resources. By creating spaces where people from different religious, spiritual, and secular worldviews can work together to reach common values, the interfaith movement holds an important role in working to reflect on past environmental damages and contribute greater efforts to protecting our planet in the future.

Allison first became interested in sustainability through her travels to places like the Pine Ridge reservation in South Dakota and the ancestral deserts of Oman. Through these experiences, Allison learned the importance of focusing on environmental justice, as marginalized communities are often the areas most affected by environmental disasters happening today. Along with her community-based efforts in the Truitt Center, Allison has worked diligently to change the products she uses, her activities, and her habits in order to make her everyday life more sustainable.

Staff Spotlight Cont.

Allison likes to focus on using what she already has, as she believes this is the most sustainable thing she can do. She has been learning about minimalism and the mindset around how much you actually need versus what society tells us we need. Some of her sustainable habits include planting in leftover containers and unplugging appliances when they aren't being used.

Allison also works to ensure that new products she buys are environmentally conscious by asking questions such as "where did this item come from, who made it, and where will it go when I'm finished using it?" A creative way Allison shares all that she has learned is through her sustainability-focused Instagram Page: [@simplypelyhes](https://www.instagram.com/simplypelyhes). By creating engaging content, Allison encourages and enlightens others to incorporate more sustainable living habits in their everyday lives!

Student Spotlight: Rohan Wilson

By: Gibson Field

Rohan Wilson, an Environmental Studies major believes that sustainability is important because it is necessary to make sure there are enough resources for not only himself to live comfortably in the future but younger generations to live comfortably as well. According to Rohan, if done right, practicing sustainability also protects the environment and ensures we can continue to enjoy it. Sustainability is important to Rohan because he enjoys what has been preserved by hiking, or touring various places with different ecosystems for recreational purposes.



Rohan became interested in sustainability throughout his time at Elon. He didn't know much about sustainability until he got to campus and began learning about it in his classes. He specifically became interested in sustainable practices because they seemed like a solution that balances human needs while protecting our environment.

Rohan works as a Teaching Assistant for an Environmental Science Lab where he helps students with water quality testing of the three lakes on campus. Some of his personal sustainable habits include having a separate bin for recycling in his room and saving plastic bags from the grocery store to use them as trash bags for his mini trash cans. When he goes grocery shopping, he only buys food he knows won't go bad quickly or buys food he knows he'll eat.

GET INVOLVED

Earth Week is Here!

Apr. 19

6:00 pm | Documentary - Kiss the Ground (Turner Theater, Virtual option available) - [registration required](#)

7:30 pm | Outdoor Yoga (Iconic Plaza, [Virtual option available](#)) - [registration required](#)

Apr. 20

9:40-10:20 am | Earth Week College Coffee

2:30 pm | Tree Walk (Historic Neighborhood, meet at Fonville Fountain in front of Alamance) - [registration required](#)

4:30-6:00 pm | The Green Zine (Under the Oaks) - [registration required](#)

5:30-6:30 pm | Eco-Grief Tending in Community (Loy Farm) - [registration required](#)

6:30-7:30 pm | Composting 101: Planting Seeds of Knowledge (Elon Community Garden) - [registration required](#)

Apr. 21

1:00-5:00 pm | Lake Mackintosh Kayak Clean-Up (Meet in front of Center for the Arts) - [registration required](#)

9:00 pm | S'Mores with Outdoors (Beck Pool Patio)

Apr. 22

3:00-6:00 pm | Authentically Alamance Farmers' Market (Elon Community Church)

3:30-5:30 pm | Party for the Planet (Colonnades Quad)

6:00-7:00 pm | Earth Week Keynote: Carolyn Finney, "Seeing Green: Christian Cooper, John Muir & Playing the Long Game" - [registration required](#)

Apr. 23

3:00-5:00 pm | Bike to Burlington (Meet at Koury Athletic Center) - [registration required](#)

Learn more on the Office of Sustainability [Website](#).

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Submit to the Database!

What is it?

Online platform of past or current student projects related to sustainability

SUSTAINABILITY PROJECTS DATABASE
STRENGTHENING SUSTAINABILITY AT ELON



Why submit?

This is an opportunity to showcase your work and offer research ideas to interested undergraduates

How to submit:

1. Go to "[The Sustainability Projects Database](#)"
2. Log in with Elon username & password
3. Click "To add a project click here"



Elon has partnered with UCapture, a green-tech company that funds environmental projects and applies coupon codes, at no cost to you, when you shop with online partners.

How Does It Work?

When you shop using UCapture, partner stores pay commissions. UCapture uses 66% of these commissions toward high-quality, third-party verified carbon offset projects, which are then retired in Elon's name, reducing Elon's carbon footprint.

Follow These Steps to Utilize UCapture:

Step 1: Visit www.ucapture.com/elon

Step 2: Click 'Add UCapture' to install the browser extension on your computer and set-up your account

Step 3: Activate UCapture when you shop with online partner stores