

Elon Commemoration Project

Meeting Minutes – September 17, 3:30-5:00 p.m., Alamance 101

Present: Brandon Bell, Chrystal Carpenter, Denise Hill, Steven House, Charles Irons, Brad Moore, Sandra Reid, Keren Rivas, Detric Robinson, Cameron Shirley, Andrea Sinn, and Jeff Stein

- I. Introduction and Welcome
- II. Charge from Provost House

In an effort to examine our institutional history in a transparent, participatory, and intellectually rigorous manner and to guarantee that we tell Elon's story in a manner consistent with Elon's values, I have appointed a committee to work on The Elon Commemoration Project. We join a growing number of colleges and universities who are revisiting the stories institutions of higher education tell about themselves.

Members of the committee will not serve as gatekeepers of Elon's complex and dynamic history. Rather, their charge will be to engage the broader community in important conversations about our shared past; inspire those with relevant training and expertise to uncover hidden stories; advise those seeking to tell a more democratic and rigorous version of our history; and share more broadly the excellent work students, faculty and staff are already doing. To achieve these goals, the committee may establish best practices, propose mechanisms for sustaining the work, and/or solicit proposals for new initiatives. The committee will make recommendations to the Provost on an as-needed basis and, when appropriate, make requests for funding through the regular university budget process.

The committee will serve for two years, at which time it will submit a report to the Provost on ways to sustain the work of engaging the university community in the ongoing commemoration of our institutional history, including collection in the Elon University Archives.

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This committee will consult actively with others across the Elon community, and there will be many opportunities for anyone interested to engage with the work of commemoration. Please do not hesitate to send ideas or feedback to commemoration@elon.edu.

- III. Parallel Work at Other Institutions

- A. We briefly reviewed work institutions such as Brown, UVA, UNC-CH, and Clemson
- B. We brainstormed additional questions we would like to know about efforts at peer institutions, including:
 - 1. If the initial group was temporary, does it have a more permanent successor?
 - 2. How does the initiative to address history and memory intersect with diversity and inclusion work more generally?
 - 3. Does the institution include the history and memory initiative within its strategic plan? If so, how?

4. Have donors and/or alumni expressed particularly strong support or concern for the work (i.e., has it become politically charged)? Is there anything we can learn from the dynamic, if so?
 5. Has the institution already implemented any recommendations from a group charged with addressing issues of history and memory? Are there any metrics/sources available with which to evaluate the results?
- C. Committee members added Washington and Lee to the list of peer institutions and signed up to conduct additional research, as follows:
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|-----------------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1. Bucknell University (PA) | _____ |
| 2. Butler University (IN) | <u>Sandra Reid</u> |
| 3. College of Charleston (SC) | <u>Detric Robinson</u> |
| 4. College of William & Mary (VA) | <u>Cameron Shirley</u> |
| 5. Creighton University (NE) | _____ |
| 6. Davidson College (NC) | <u>Brandon Bell</u> |
| 7. Furman University (SC) | <u>Chrystal Carpenter</u> |
| 8. Ithaca College (NY) | _____ |
| 9. James Madison University (VA) | <u>Charles Irons</u> |
| 10. Lehigh University (PA) | <u>Brad Moore</u> |
| 11. Loyola University (MD) | <u>Andrea Sinn</u> |
| 12. Rollins College (FL) | <u>Jeff Stein</u> |
| 13. Santa Clara University (CA) | <u>Keren Rivas</u> |
| 14. University of Richmond (VA) | <u>Charles Irons</u> |
| 15. Villanova University (PA) | <u>Chrystal Carpenter</u> |
| 16. Washington & Lee (VA) | <u>Denise Hill</u> |

IV. Organizing the Work at Elon

- A. We identified some of the ways questions about history and memory are already surfacing at Elon
- B. Tentative two-year plan
 1. We set the time for monthly full-committee meetings in fall 2018 as Wednesdays at 3:30 and planned to meet when all members were available (i.e., October 3, October 24, November 7, November 28, December 5)
 2. Monthly meetings of the full committee and of subcommittees in subsequent semesters
- C. We reflected on the challenge of organizing ourselves to confront so many overlapping questions and on the necessity of coordinating with the strategic planning process

V. Initial Inventory of Ongoing Work and Community Needs / Discussion of Committee Name

- A. We distributed existing feedback from colleagues as a resource
- B. Rather than discuss ways to collect community feedback, as planned, instead we discussed the name of the committee
 1. The name “Elon Commemoration Project” conveys too celebratory a connotation, which might alienate from the work precisely those community members most essential to it
 2. After significant conversation, we proposed instead “Elon Committee on History and Memory”

VI. Emerging Principles

- A. We noted the desirability of articulating best practices at Elon, and the chair sketched several principles emergent even at this early stage:
1. The history of Elon we tell will be **democratic** (attentive to the experiences of the full range of participants) and **rigorous** (vetted by experts on campus and/or in the field more generally);
 2. **Students will contribute** to this story, with the expectation the university will responsibly curate their work and make it available to future generations;
 3. Elon faculty, staff, and students will work **collaboratively with members of the community** and will demonstrate respect for those not formally connected with the institution by remunerating them for their work on Elon's behalf;
 4. The work will be **transparent**, with both the process and outcomes open to all members of the community.
- B. We resolved to look at other compilations of 'best practices'

Attachments:

- Formal Proposal to Establish the Elon Commemoration Project
- Feedback from Colleagues