

Elon Commemoration Committee
Meeting Minutes – October 24, 3:30-4:30[?] p.m., Alamance 101

- I. Approval of Minutes
- II. Discussion of History and Memory at Peer Institutions
- III. Commemoration Committee and Universities Studying Slavery
- IV. Progress toward Fall Goals
- V. New Business: Transparency

- I. Approval of Minutes from October 3 (*Attachment*)

Approved.

- II. Discussion of History and Memory at Peer Institutions

A. We organized our discussion of initiatives relating to history and memory at peer institutions, on a dozen of which we had done research, around three key questions (B-D below). *Throughout our conversation, we noted repeatedly variations across institutions and the necessity of identifying with more precision than we already have exactly which problem(s) at Elon we are attempting to solve—which must entail broad-based and transparent efforts to achieve community feedback/guidance.*

- B. What do you see other institutions doing that you believe we should do at Elon?
Possibilities included:

- 1. Joining the Universities Studying Slavery consortium
- 2. Active consultation with many constituents (community, alumni, students, etc.)
- 3. Reading groups around key themes (diversity, inclusion, history, etc.)
- 4. Curriculum: Sponsored courses (grant-funded) around content matter, including service-learning courses
- 5. Sponsored research
 - a. Summer research fellowships designated for students participating in the work
 - b. Funding for faculty and/or outside experts to conduct additional primary research on the history of the institution
- 6. Inventory existing building names, monuments, and other sites of formal commemoration
- 7. Consider [re]naming practices
- 8. Connect work across administrative units and disseminate best practices (at Elon, for example, Academic Climate, CREDE, etc.); create healthy, sustainable institutional home for ongoing work; Note that in some peer institutions, this has involved the creation of a funded center for ongoing research and advocacy
- 9. Create/recognize new spaces for commemoration; at some institutions, this has taken the form of a museum or other designated space devoted to university history
- 10. Consider adding historical context to Elon Day and/or other opportunities for formal commemoration
- 11. Offer guidance to orientation and tour leaders to make certain that tours reflect our institution's values of inclusivity and present an honest vision of the past

12. Find good mechanisms, including an excellent online platform, for the dissemination of research, student work, and best practices
 13. Create safe spaces/opportunities for discussion about difficult chapters in our institution's past (and present)
- C. Do you notice any promising administrative/procedural strategies to coordinate work on history and memory with diversity and inclusion work more generally? What are other "key institutional players" in the work at other colleges and universities?
1. This was a less obviously productive conversation, since other institutions seem to be struggling a great deal with how to integrate memory work—with its intrinsic focus on social justice—with other work on diversity and inclusion.
 2. At JMU, they have housed a working group on "History/Context" within a Presidential Task Force on Inclusion
 3. At the University of Richmond, they feel the difficulty of integrating this work so keenly the President has formed an "Interim Coordinating Committee" to attempt to create new pathways of reporting and cooperation across initiatives to create a more inclusive campus.
 4. We discussed the relative merits of attempting to organize the work by content area/marginalized group (e.g. race, labor, gender/sexuality, religion, etc.) or by administrative function (buildings and grounds; curriculum; advancement/admissions; community relations; etc.).
- D. Have any other schools laid out "first principles" in a way that might be useful to us as we attempt to identify best practices at Elon? Are there resources other institutions have cited as formative ones in their work?
1. Values included:
 - a. Authenticity
 - b. Participation
 - c. Intergenerational Justice Philosophy
 - d. Restorative Justice
 - e. "Humane instincts"
 - f. Dignity
 - g. Justice
 - h. Space for Exchange
 - i. "Leveraging power of place"
 - j. Religious/spiritual resources
 2. A committee member noted that some values/theoretical approaches which work especially well for some parts of the work—e.g. restorative justice—might not work well for all parts of a broader effort.

III. Commemoration Committee and Universities Studying Slavery (USS)

- A. As requested, the chair contacted coordinators of the USS consortium for more information about joining. According to Kirt Van Daake, co-chair, "In terms of joining, the process is pretty simple. Send me the names, titles, and email contacts of the handful of people involved in your project and also those who can sign off on the using of the school name (we typically ask for president, provost, or chancellor, etc.). That way, we

get institutional approval for participation and inclusion on website and in promotional materials. We then send out formal email invitations to the people on that list (with a letterhead version attached). Once the institutional official (president/provost) accepts the invitation, we'd then add Elon to the website, do a blog post, and promote on social media. We ask the project leader as well to provide us with 2-3 paragraphs on the school, the history, and the project (whatever you're comfortable with). That material will serve as the basis for the blog post.”

- B. Conversation centered around two issues:
 - 1. How to take advantage of the (inter)national momentum behind colleges' and universities' efforts to explore the role of race generally (and white supremacy specifically) in their institutional histories without signaling that Elon/the committee is only interested in issues of race (to the exclusion of careful consideration of other themes that need revisiting—gender/sexuality, religious commitments, etc.).
 - 2. How to situate the work of a USS group in relation to the work of the Commemoration Committee (would the Commemoration Committee serve as the participants of USS, for example; would there be a reporting relationship, if not; etc.).
- C. We ultimately concluded that endorsing best practices vis-à-vis race by joining USS would not preclude our endorsement of best practices vis-à-vis other axes of marginalization.
- D. Though we reached a soft consensus that a USS group would have a different composition than the Commemoration Committee, we did not discuss the process of identifying such a team.
- E. Moreover, Elon's commitment to USS would give the Commemoration Committee assurance that the University was not going to “drop the ball” regarding questions of white supremacy and the black experience at Elon, even as the committee tried to attend to broader questions of inclusivity, commemoration, and memory-making.

IV. Progress Toward Fall Goals

- A. We intend to divide into subcommittees by the end of the fall.
- B. We also have a December goal of making some very preliminary recommendations:
 - 1. That the university join USS
 - 2. That we embrace certain best practices and/or values regarding history and memory across all academic units—to be discussed on November 7.
 - 3. That we indicate plans to solicit community feedback—also to be discussed November 7.

V. New Business: Transparency

- A. While we plan to make a statement in December and, later (late spring or fall 2019?) to begin to establish an ambitious web presence, we have not thus far made our deliberations available.
- B. In keeping with our aspiration of transparency, we resolved to post the charge and minutes at a suitable location on Elon's website.