

**Elon Commemoration Committee**  
**Meeting Minutes – November 28, 3:30-5:00 p.m., Alamance 101**

- I. Approval of Minutes
- II. New and Ongoing Initiatives
- III. Best Practices/Guiding Principles
- IV. Commemoration Committee and Universities Studying Slavery
- V. Brainstorming Mechanisms of Community Feedback
- VI. Tasks and Categories
- VII. Name Change?
- VIII. Progress Towards Goals

I. Approval of Minutes from November 7 (*Attachment*)

Approved, with edits.

II. New and Ongoing Initiatives

- A. We confirmed that the website is ready to go live.
- B. Other individuals are already doing related work, and/or are beginning to let members of the committee know what they have been doing. As we prepare to launch the two processes of inventorying what is already happening and helping to preserve and disseminate high-quality work, it is useful to begin making formal notice of these efforts. For example:
  - 1. CDICE last year inaugurated an annual series, “Lest We Forget,” highlighting key moments in fights for social justice at the University.
  - 2. Stephen Bloch-Schulman is teaching an AMS class in the spring in which his students will study the theory of historical memory and compare five different narratives of Elon history (including books by George Troxler, Durward Stokes, and George Keller, as well as non-print sources).
  - 3. Chris Fulkerson proposes to teach course on Elon’s History in spring 2020.
  - 4. Multiple faculty in strategic planning brainstorming sessions have suggested some sort of a new *academic* center (something along the lines of an “Institute for Institutional Social Justice, Equity, and Commemoration”), which would institutionalize this work and might house AAASE, Latin American Studies, Women’s, Gender & Sexualities Studies, etc.
  - 5. New historical markers are coming up, highlighting buildings no longer part of the landscape.
  - 6. Faculty and staff are organizing to commemorate the role of the railroad at Elon and to campaign for the restoration of a stop at the university.
  - 7. Elon First Baptist Church is a wonderful resource for its own history and the history of the whole Mill Point area more generally.
  - 8. There is an exhibit case outside of the archives in Belk available for future displays on university history.

III. Best Practices / Guiding Principles

- A. The key breakthrough in our discussion about how to communicate our emerging sense of best practices/guiding principles was that we needed to articulate BOTH values as

well as specific goals—and that a winter communication would be an excellent place in which to do both.

- B. We will wordsmith a full version of the draft statement at our meeting on December 5, but the statement of values that will serve as a template represents a revision of that offered on November 7:

The Elon Committee on History and Memory aspires to conduct its work in a way that is consistent with Elon’s values and reflects best practices on work with history and memory. Our work is informed by the following principles:

- Transparency: Create an open process to examine history and memory at Elon University, including defining the purpose of each initiative or recommendation and acknowledging freely even the most unsavory aspects of our past.
- Engagement: Provide opportunities for students, faculty, staff, and community members to be a part of the creation, dissemination, and explanation of the stories related to Elon’s past and present. Plan events that create space for ongoing reflection about our institution’s past in ways that might inform our future.
- Excellence in Scholarship: Require that research is intellectually rigorous, adheres to the relevant technical standards, and includes only carefully vetted sources.
- Inclusion: Tell Elon’s story in such a way that every member of our community can find themselves in our story, and find it with dignity.
- Restorative Justice: Learn of ways our work, our institution, or ways our predecessors have told our university’s story has done harm to others and pursue reconciliation.

#### IV. Commemoration Committee and Universities Studying Slavery (USS)

- A. President Book called a meeting with Charles Irons, George Troxler, and Jeff Stein to discuss the Commemoration Project, particularly the process of joining Universities Studying Slavery.
- B. She was warmly supportive of Elon sponsoring a chapter and even empowered the ECP to make the announcement as part of a winter communication.
- C. The question came up, both in the meeting with President Book and in the subsequent meeting of the ECP, of how to make the selection process for a USS group simultaneously inclusive and democratic, but also focused on relevant expertise. Preliminary ideas include:
1. A nomination or self-nomination process, launched with the winter email.
  2. An informational email to those faculty and staff who indicated relevant expertise in response to the initial announcement of the ECP.

#### V. Brainstorming Mechanisms of Community Feedback

- A. We noted the array of strategies for outreach identified on the Google Doc.
- B. We discussed the kinds of questions we hoped to ask during an initial information-gathering. These included:
1. How have you learned about Elon’s history?

2. What do you want to learn more about?
  3. How may we go about telling a more inclusive story?
- C. We sketched the outlines of an outreach strategy for the next calendar year:
1. Spring 2019 – We intend to gather preliminary qualitative data in conversations with community members (faculty, staff, and students) who are already exploring history and memory at Elon and to inventory existing narratives (in print, the built environment, the pictures we hang, online, etc.) before distributing a variety of survey instruments.
  2. Fall 2019 – As the challenges and existing initiatives come into focus, we will hold a series of listening sessions for advice on how we may better support existing work and on what new projects we might encourage.

## VI. Tasks and Categories (*Attachments*)

- A. We will divide into working groups for the spring, with the default calendar being that each working group will meet once per month and the main group once per month.
- B. We had a vigorous discussion of possible working groups, noting that some of them will likely have different workflows (e.g., “Dissemination” will likely have its workload increase over time).
- C. Rather than staff a larger number of working groups (5-6) with a small number (1-3) of committee members who could recruit up to full strength from the broader community, we chose to begin by focusing our efforts on those tasks we have already identified as most urgent—though we anticipate involving additional members of the community as the work unfolds. **Dissemination** may be staffed initially with a skeleton crew of Keren Rivas, and **Curriculum** with Charles Irons. This would enable us to give attention to three primary working groups:
  1. **Inventory** – Determine how we already tell our story, evaluating building names, portrait placements, existing monuments, displays, etc. (content and process).
  2. **Infrastructure and Advising** – How do the parts currently talk to the whole? Put another way, how might we anticipate the problem of coordination other universities are experiencing? What mechanisms are available to encourage good work and to guard against damaging or false narratives?
  3. **Engagement** – Strategies to involve the broader community in conversations about our shared past (events, changes to the built environment, etc.)—*We anticipate that the tasks will shift from listening to engaging during the life cycle of the working group.*

## VII. Name Change?

- A. We aspire to announce a name change as a part of the winter communication.
- B. The default is the Elon Committee [or Commission] on History and Memory, though we will explore additional possibilities at the December meeting.

## VIII. Progress toward Goals

- A. December rollout? We have not yet fixed the exact date of our winter communication.
- B. Component parts
  1. Plan to join USS

2. Best practices/Guiding principles
3. Tentative plans for feedback
4. Announcement of working groups
5. Name change

Calendar:

- December 5 – Final meeting of semester (Sort into working groups; finalize statement)
- March 14-16, 2019 – Universities Studying Slavery semi-annual conference (Host: William and Mary's Lemon Project). USS will meet on March 14, and the Lemon Project's symposium will occur March 15-16.