

Committee on Elon History and Memory
Meeting Minutes, August 21, 2019 (9:30-10:30 a.m., Alamance 213)

- I. Approval of Minutes
- II. National Updates
- III. Elon Updates
- IV. USS Vision
- V. Confirming History and Memory Vision
- VI. Organizational Notes

- I. Approval of Minutes from April 9 and May 14

Approved.

- II. National Updates / Best Practices

- A. *New York Times* “1619 Project” – This ground-breaking project “aims to reframe the country’s history, understanding 1619 as our true founding, and placing the consequences of slavery and the contributions of black Americans at the very center of the story we tell ourselves about who we are.” In this work of “re-framing” a familiar story to be more inclusive, it mirrors the work of the committee.

- B. Selected Updates from Colleges and Universities:

- 1. UGA “has established a fund to study the role of slavery at the university prior to the American Civil War.”
- 2. Rice University (1912) started a major initiative to study the university’s implementation of segregation
- 3. U. Glasgow funds £20 million reparations initiative.

- III. Elon Updates

- A. Inventory (Chrystal) – Chrystal Carpenter submitted an updated inventory of named spaces (buildings and monuments) and artwork from campus.

- B. Curriculum (Charles) – Damion Blake, Brandon Bell, and Charles Irons have made progress implementing a CATL Diversity Infusion Grant, in which they will ultimately both inventory current faculty efforts to teach about Elon’s History and also collaborate with university archives to equip faculty doing history/memory work more generally to use Elon-specific examples.

- C. Campus Conversation (Denise) – Buffie Longmire-Avital and Denise Hill coded the feedback from the Campus Conversation in May, helping to distill out themes about which faculty, staff, and students were most interested. Most of the themes focused on race, but the feedback also offered a roadmap of additional avenues for further inquiry.

- IV. USS Vision

- A. Tentatively christened: “Black Oaks Restoration Project”

- B. **Vision:** The USS Consortium invites participants “to work together as they address both historical and contemporary issues dealing with race and inequality in higher education and in university communities, as well as the complicated legacies of slavery in modern American society.” As members of the USS/Black Oaks Restoration Project at Elon, we recognize that this work must be ongoing. We aspire to learn more about Black people at Elon, who have too often been erased from the institution’s history or not allowed to tell their own story. We hope to develop new and effective ways to memorialize and teach about the experiences of Black Phoenix, to develop systemic mechanisms for the ongoing support of Black people, and to find creative ways to address systemic racism. Our work will supplement that of the Committee on Elon History and Memory, which is also addressing race and racism in Elon’s history and will submit a report with a series of short- and long-term recommendations to the Provost in May 2020.
- C. **Objectives for AY 2019-20:** Our main objective for the academic year is to develop concrete recommendations for the Committee on Elon History and Memory about what ongoing work related to the history of Black Phoenix should look like. Specifically, we will:
- Collaborate with the major stakeholders, especially AAASE and CREDE, to craft recommendations that support and enhance rather than duplicate existing programming;
 - Develop specific new practices the institutions should undertake/encourage (oral histories, naming practices/opportunities, commemorative events/landscaping, etc.);
 - Involve community members (including current and former staff) in the process of discovering and retelling our history in an ongoing and substantial way;
 - Discuss with Jane Sellars possible synergies with her work on Black History in Alamance County;
 - Identify resources the USS/Black Oaks Restoration Project will need to conduct its work;
 - Guide the Committee on Elon’s History and Memory on the desired relationship between the USS/Black Oaks Restoration Project and initiatives focused on other aspects of the human experience (gender, sexuality, religious commitment, etc.). If some equity- and/or justice-oriented academic center is contemplated, address how the parts ought to fit with the whole.

V. Confirming History and Memory Vision

- A. The Committee on Elon History and Memory will concentrate on race/anti-black racism in its report and will make the work a model for how to explore other identities in our shared history. We will be attentive to new processes/procedures (regarding naming, academic programming, etc.) through the “test case” of race.
- B. The Committee on Elon History and Memory will generate a robust report, akin to those produced by peer and aspirant institutions such as Furman. It will contain:
1. Procedural notes regarding our work, to include our statement of values/best practices and a catalog of current history/memory work
 2. A carefully researched section discussing key episodes in the institution’s history that illustrate the complexity of the black experience and the persistence of anti-black racism, not comprehensive but substantial enough to provide a solid warrant for future work.

3. Recommendations for how to tell a more inclusive history, specifically regarding race but with an eye to creating policies and procedures capable of responding to a much broader set of concerns.
- C. The group will sponsor campus-wide events both to solicit additional feedback and to generate momentum behind the initiatives to be proposed in May 2020.
- D. Plan and/or begin development of a robust website to showcase:
1. The work of the committee
 2. Elon's history
 3. Student / classroom projects
 4. Digital humanities initiatives
 5. Relevant university archives holdings
 6. Etc.—sky is the limit