THE YEAR OF THE ALUMNI

On March 11, 2014, we celebrated Elon’s 125th anniversary in grand style. What was remarkable and special about this year’s Founders Day was the inclusion of thousands of alumni in the celebration, mostly brought about through the power of social media. The Twitter hashtag #ElonDay trended nationally for a time and alumni shared creative photographs about how they were celebrating in their workplaces and homes all over the world through Facebook and Instagram. Alumni also set a record for participation in giving to Elon on that day.

In many important ways, our quasquicentennial year has been the “Year of the Alumni.” We opened the Martin Alumni Center in the fall, staffed with several new alumni engagement officers. Attendance at Homecoming hit an all-time high. The New York Evening for Elon at the Plaza Hotel in September attracted more than 700 alumni and friends of the university who enjoyed the premiere of the new alumni video produced by Tim Johnson ’09 and Max Cantor ’10. Similar events are being held all over the country this year, including a recent gathering at the Sony Pictures Studios in Los Angeles. Thirty-two alumni professional networking events were hosted all over the nation in January, proving that The Elon Network is robust and thriving. A new alumni committee of the Board of Trustees has been formed to ensure that Elon is doing everything it can in support of one of the key pillars of the Elon Commitment strategic plan—building a vibrant, active alumni network.

As part of our continued emphasis on alumni development, more than 2,400 of you took the time to respond to an alumni survey about your relationship with Elon. A detailed analysis of the survey results was shared with the Alumni Board and the Young Alumni Council in March and I am pleased to share some highlights with The Magazine of Elon readers:

» Alumni are overwhelmingly pleased with the quality of their Elon education, and rate particularly highly their “ability to interact with persons different from themselves,” “commitment to lifelong learning and development,” “preparation for a successful career,” “preparation for professional leadership” and “global perspective and cultural understanding.”

» Alumni are overwhelmingly proud of their affiliation with Elon and are proud of the ways the university has grown in recent years.
While only 33 percent of alumni from the 1970s reported having received scholarships or grants while students, that percentage had increased to 63 percent of respondents for alumni graduating after 2010. Speaking of support for students, alumni giving is on the upswing as alumni give back to support those experiences on campus that were so personally meaningful to them as students. More than 90 percent of alumni in this survey said they had made a gift to the university or intend to do so soon. Alumni highly value the Elon Experiences and give especially high marks to their study abroad, campus leadership and internship experiences. Alumni affinity is rated most highly with the university overall and with faculty and staff. The next most highly rated affiliations are with academic programs, student organizations and fraternities and sororities. Alumni are living farther from campus; the typical young alumnus lives 400 miles from Elon. Alumni told us how important it is for Elon to continue to invest in regional alumni chapters, activities and networking events all over the world. The Elon Network is growing in importance in the lives of alumni. Alumni use LinkedIn and report alumni networking events are important resources for career development. Elon alumni enjoy The Magazine of Elon and read it regularly. Alumni have also embraced social media to stay connected with Elon, but challenged us to build a consistent brand across all communications channels. Alumni want to stay involved and help out the university in specific ways. Most cited were mentoring current students for career success, recruiting new students to Elon, networking to assist fellow alumni with a job change or geographic relocation, attending reunions with affinity groups and providing internships and career placements for recent graduates.

From my vantage point, we have crossed an important threshold in this “Year of the Alumni.” Today, it feels like alumni are an omnipresent part of daily campus life, our campus mindset, and ongoing institutional planning and decision-making like never before. And beyond the campus, The Elon Network has gained significant traction, and alumni are connected to helping current students and each other in professional advancement in new and powerful ways. This is pivotal because, as I have stressed often this past year and believe with every ounce of conviction, Elon’s future reputation rests upon the accomplishments of its alumni. Based on the creativity and drive and innovative spirits of the alumni I know, that future will certainly be bright.

Leo M. Lambert
President

New edition of book detailing Elon’s rise to prominence released

In connection with Elon’s quasquicentennial, Johns Hopkins University Press has re-issued George Keller’s classic book, Transforming a College: The Story of a Little-Known College’s Strategic Climb to National Distinction. The new edition includes a foreword and afterword by Elon President Leo M. Lambert.

An eminent scholar in the field of higher education planning, the late Keller was impressed by Elon’s progress and analyzed the university’s strategies, producing a compelling case study that has been cited as an example of institutional transformation by college faculty, administrators and trustees around the world. The book, which was first published in 2004, is in its sixth printing and has been translated into Japanese, Korean and Chinese. For the new edition, the publisher asked Lambert to detail the university’s continuing progress in positioning Elon as a top-ranked liberal arts university and a national leader in engaged teaching and learning.

“George Keller’s incisive analysis of Elon’s strategies and the university’s transformation has proven to be a valuable resource for trustees, faculty and administrators,” Lambert said. “I am pleased to contribute to this updated edition and help readers understand what has happened at Elon in the past decade, including our accomplishments, the challenges we have grappled with and our plans for the future.”

The book is available in paperback and electronic book format.

A RECORD NIGHT

Elon performing arts students teamed up with student-athletes for a record-setting “Night of the Phoenix” event in February. The seventh annual event, which is a fundraiser coordinated by the Phoenix Club Advisory Board, featured a program of sports-themed musical numbers. Talented Elon vocalists and dancers, who normally delight audiences in McCrary Theatre, donned Phoenix uniforms and performed Broadway musical hits in Alumni Gym, including “Go the Distance” from Hercules and “Team” from You’re a Good Man, Charlie Brown. Student-athletes personally thanked donors and helped with the silent auction of sports memorabilia. The event raised more than $162,000 in support of athletics scholarships.