Connecting Elon College Fellows:
Past, Present, Future

Dear Elon College Fellows Alumni:

I am Gabie Smith, interim dean of Elon College, the College of Arts & Sciences. I have long and strong connections to the Elon College Fellows Program and am delighted to have this opportunity to greet you in the ECF alumni newsletter. Remember your Winter Term course during your first year at Elon? I was lucky enough to be one of the faculty who led the course for several years. I have also co-taught the sophomore seminar and taught the junior seminar in the Social Sciences branch, as well as worked with a number of fantastic Elon College Fellows. All of which is a very long way of saying that I have witnessed firsthand the transformative power that the Elon College Fellows Program can have on students (and faculty members).

We have another great alumni newsletter this semester. Inside you will read about three of our ECF alumni, Rebekah McCoy ’07, Sarah Neiman ’12 and Dillon Wyatt ’08. While their stories reflect diverse journeys our alumni experience after graduation, in each case you will learn about the importance of the Elon College Fellows program in their personal and professional development.

Read about programming changes that encourage even greater interactions among sophomore, junior and senior cohorts in Elon College Fellows. At our most recent poster presentation session and dinner, we were delighted to have ECF alumni John Kalas ’07 and Katie Hight ’07 join us and share their experiences. If you are able to come back to campus, please remember to let us know so we can invite you to an event or take you to lunch!

We hosted a fantastic Fellows Weekend this year, even with the incredible challenges faced due to the ice storm. We appreciate the flexibility of all our prospective parents and ECF students – not to mention the faculty and staff who assisted us throughout the weekend. Every year when we meet new students who are so passionate about Elon College Fellows, it renews our own energy and commitment to providing a stellar Fellows program.

We are so proud of all of the Fellows, present and past, for what they are achieving and still have to achieve. The world needs Elon College Fellows who are passionate and want to make a difference in the lives of others.

- Dr. Gabie Smith
Rebekah McCoy ’07- “Enzymatic Activity in Hyporheic Soils of Piedmont Streams”

After completing my Bachelors of Science in Environmental Studies in the Spring of 2007, I was all set to head to NC State for graduate school in their soils department. A death in my family changed those plans and I then spent several months at home supporting my family. I knew I wanted to put things back in perspective, so I decided to take a break and ended up moving to Florida and working for the Walt Disney World Company for a year. After working there for almost a year, I took a new position as a Reclaimed Water Technician working for the largest reclaimed water plant in the world. In this position, I became more involved with water quality and was encouraged to pursue my master’s degree. I then started at the University of Florida in their soil and water science department as a distance education student in the fall of 2009, while still working full time as a Reclaimed Water Technician.

During that time, I moved to the Baltimore/DC area in Maryland where I started working for the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Association as a contractor working as an office coordinator, I continued working on my degree and became engaged to my now husband who also graduated from Elon in 2007. After I completed my degree in the summer of 2011 (in record time for a distance education student), I was then able to move to the Environmental Division within my company, Earth Resources Technology, Inc., and gained the title of Environmental Scientist. My work has taken me to a variety of locations, some of which include: the Fort Hancock installation in Sandy Hook, N.J., Fort Stewart Army Base in Savanna, Ga., and Fort Polk in central Louisiana. I am currently working at a site called Spring Valley, which is a massive remediation effort that was started over 20 years ago. It’s located a few miles away the White House in Northeast DC, on the Campus of American University. We are remediating a possible burial area for munitions and labware containing mustard gas and lewisite chemicals that were buried after their development during World War I.

Everything I learned at Elon prepared me well for this journey. It’s not just the coursework, but also being encouraged to pursue independent research that ignited my passion for soil science and gave me an outlet to pursue something new and unknown. Some of the professors that pushed me, I still keep in touch with today and are some of my closest friends and mentors. I wouldn’t trade my experience at Elon for anything. It is where my interest in soil science began, where I met my husband, where my career began, and where my heart will always lie.
Hello from New Mexico! Many of you are probably curious as to what brought me out to New Mexico. I am currently out on New Mexico’s border with Texas and Mexico as part of Teach For America’s 2012 Charter Corps in Southern New Mexico. I teach high school math at Gadsden High School in Anthony, New Mexico. And you might wonder how being an international relations and economics major in the Elon College Fellows Program has prepared me for teaching?

I questioned consistently from the moment I was accepted into Teach For America to the first day of school how doing research on a relatively unknown insurgency in India would prepare me to teach critical need subjects to primarily English Language Learners in a Title 1 school. All throughout summer training, while becoming consumed with learning to lesson plan and how to build effective assessments, I wondered what I was doing. Despite my international relations degree, having studied abroad for a year in high school and for both a semester to Japan and a Winter Term (European Union course), I found myself struggling to wrap my mind around significant issues of diversity, poverty, and critical race theory. My privilege stood stark against that of my students and Elon was a confusing part of that privilege. I am and always will be proud of going to Elon, and proud of the accomplishments I did there, not only completing an Elon College Fellows research project but also becoming a member of Residence Life and Periclean Scholar class of 2012. But by joining Teach For America and being forced to interact with diversity with an intimacy I had not yet experienced, I began to question everything. Why am I so successful as a person? What factors, societal, social, familial, economic, racial, have allowed me to become the person I am and have helped me be as successful as I am? How has the fact that my parents are both college graduates, that I am white, that my parents could afford to live in a county where I could attend a blue ribbon high school, that my parents could prioritize reading to me daily as a child, that my parents could read, affect my success?

These are questions that Elon never forced me to ask myself in a truly radical way. But the Elon College Fellows definitely taught me this; How to frame, ask and find an answer to a question. So I began having serious discussions with people of all sorts of backgrounds, challenge and rebuttal until I can say that I am surely not the same person I was when I left Elon nearly two years ago. I have come to understand that my privilege, whether it is economic, racial, educational or otherwise, poses challenges in relating to people from all sorts of backgrounds, and that I have to be aware of how everything from my confidence to my resume results from that privilege. I have to realize that while I may have walked as many steps over a similar incline as others, my street was paved and theirs was loose gravel. I do not need to feel guilty for what I have been given. I need to work to empower others regardless of what they have or have not been given. Elon got me to Teach For America and Elon helped me understand my position as a teacher of students from a different culture and socioeconomic background from myself. I am not a teacher, I am an activist for empowerment, and I will be that no matter where I go and no matter what I do. I would have never reached this life-altering conclusion had it not been for the skills that Elon College Fellows equipped me with. Ask a question, narrow your focus and ask again.
The interactions I have with the Resident Assistants is one of my favorite parts of the job. I enjoy getting to see them grow professionally and mature into young adults. I also like the time spent with students, whether it’s getting to know them over a videogame or helping them put on a successful event in the hall that they are passionate about. Of course, there are some parts of the job that aren’t quite as high on my list, such as hearing conduct cases and dealing with roommates’ disputes. However, I think the job has helped me understand that you need to take the bad with the good, and that often times student growth can come out of a situation that was originally negative.

Ball State is located in Muncie, Indiana and was not part of my game plan as I approached graduation at Elon back in 2008. I graduated from Elon with a B.A. in Sociology and minors in Business and Accounting. I was an Elon College Fellow and my ECF research focused on Southern African-American social types. Dr. Mould was my mentor for that project and is largely responsible for pushing and pulling me to the finish line with that project. After graduation, the initial plan was to move to D.C. and work for the U.S. Census Bureau. However, the economic downturn in 2008 caused that plan to change. After I graduated, I ended up at an outdoor youth treatment center called Three Springs of North Carolina. At Three Springs, I was a Youth Treatment Counselor and was responsible for getting a group of 13 boys with various social and discipline problems through the day. I was there for about a year before I entered the Masters of Education, College Student Personnel Program at Western Carolina University. My time at Three Springs helped me recognize how much I enjoyed working with young people, even if they did not want to work with me, and I felt that pursuing a masters degree in a related field was a good next step.

In 2011, I was in my last year of graduate school and was searching for my first full-time job in student affairs. I knew I wanted to work in Housing and Residence Life, that I wanted to move to a different part of the country and experience a different type of school than I had at Elon or at Western Carolina. I applied to work at Ball State because I knew of their strong reputation within the field of Housing and Residence Life and their emphasis on creating a positive and successful student experience. I felt I could continue to advance my own knowledge and skills in the field by working there.

When I left Elon, I had no idea I would end up working in student affairs. However as an Elon College Fellow, I had a really good first year experience, living with the same guys I went to class with and having a tight knit community through them. I also received (and witnessed) a huge amount of support and care from the faculty that were part of the Elon College Fellows Program. Seeing them challenge us beyond the normal levels of excellence that Elon demands and then supporting us showed me how faculty and staff members in a college setting can help young people grow. This experience made me want to create those sorts of experiences for other college students. Looking back on my time at Elon, I can recognize how my experiences match up with student affairs development theories, like Sanford’s Challenge and Support Theory and Baxter Magolda’s Theory of Self Authorship. I think I was successful at Elon because of the support system I had, whether that was the professors, my suitemates in Danieley, or my Ultimate Frisbee teammates. These past experiences have shaped my work at Ball State University by pushing me to create a similarly challenging and supportive environment for my staff members and the students in the community.

Dillon is currently working at Ball State University as a Residence Hall Director. Overseeing the daily operation of a 600-bed, upperclassmen, residence hall community. His responsibilities include staff supervision, crisis management and student learning, among other things. He directly supervises 11 Resident Assistants and one Assistant Resident Hall Director.
**Poster Presentation Event Connects Fellows across the Program and Beyond**

A recent program change is a combined event for second and third year Elon College Fellows that also includes several senior Fellows and a Fellows alum. Junior Elon College Fellows continue to develop their formal research proposals in the collaborative context of the branch-specific ECF seminar and under the guidance of the faculty research mentor. Juniors formally present their proposed research in a poster session at the end of the fall semester. The poster session is a required event for second year Fellows and is open to mentors and all Fellows. Second year Fellows are encouraged to view proposed research across the branches and are required to listen to presentations within their own branch. This event gives junior Fellows an opportunity to talk about their proposed scholarship in a professional setting and to explain it to a broad audience. Second year Fellows benefit by witnessing first-hand a variety of interesting research questions and discipline-specific methods as well as the sense of enthusiasm and ownership that is typically conveyed by the juniors.

Following the poster presentation, sophomore and junior Fellows are encouraged to continue conversations about the scholarship journey during a formal dinner in McKinnon Hall. This year the program following dinner consisted of a panel of three senior Fellows moderated by Elon College Fellow Alumnus John Kalas. Prompted by questions posed by Kalas, senior Elon College Fellows provided an overview of their research area, commented on challenges, successes and the impacts of the experience on their intellectual journey at Elon and gave advice to sophomore and junior Fellows. Participating senior Fellows were: Paxton Syrek (double major in psychology and Statistics); Elizabeth Purvis (English literature and Creative Writing); and Alexander Bruch (Chemistry). Elon College Fellow Alumnus John Kalas ’07 was introduced at the dinner by Elon College Fellow Alumna Katie Hight, also from the Class of 2007. A Sociology major, Hight completed a Master’s of Education degree at the University of Georgia and is currently employed by Elon University as the Director of New Student Programs. Kalas attended the poster session, provided opening reflections about how his Fellows experience has impacted his career path and served as moderator of the senior Fellows panel. Following graduation from Elon in 2007 with a major in History, Kalas attended Georgetown University Law School and earned his J.D. degree in 2010. He currently practices law as part of Hollingsworth LLP, one of the nation’s leading litigation firms. His current focus within the firm is in pharmaceutical products liability.
March 2014 - A Fellows Weekend to Remember!

Faculty and staff at Elon start planning for Fellows Weekend a year in advance. As one of the university’s most important and perhaps busiest spring events, Fellows Weekend entails numerous components and details that involve nearly everyone on campus. But, who would have thought that a late winter storm might suddenly bring additional challenges to Elon and to the hundreds of visitors arriving on campus for the March 7 and 8 weekend? Winter Storm Ulysses was particularly hard on Alamance and surrounding counties, leaving the university with significant ice and freezing rain that impacted travel, resulted in power outages and produced debris that made getting to campus and even walking around on campus hazardous. Despite the wrath of Ulysses, hundreds of students competing for places in Fellows programs came with their families, and faculty, staff and students rallied and delivered a modified version of Fellows Weekend that enabled prospective students to engage with faculty and students and learn about Elon and its programs. Fellows receptions, seminars and interviews were cancelled, but engaged learning panels and program information sessions were offered. Online prompts and essays replaced the on-campus seminar. Many thanks to Elon College Fellows Ethan Anderson (senior in Music Theatre), Greg Honan (senior in Political Science) and Susanna Masecar (junior in Biology) for participating in the Elon College Fellows information session that icy Saturday. Honan also served on the Engaged Learning Panel.

The same weekend as Fellows Weekend, an ice storm caused a tree to fall on Belk Pavilion. Luckily, due to classes being cancelled that day, no students were inside the building. Clean up and repair of the building is underway, and should be completed soon.

Phi Beta Kappa Eta Chapter Welcomes 2014 Inductees

Phi Beta Kappa, the oldest and often considered the nation’s most prestigious honor society, inducted 58 students into its Eta chapter at Elon. Each year, the top 10 percent of arts and sciences graduates at these institutions are selected for membership and this year 24% of those students were Elon College Fellows. The fourteen ECF students were:


Fifty-eight Elon University students were inducted into Phi Beta Kappa during an April 7 dinner and ceremony where Jill McCorkle, an award-winning Southern novelist, served as the keynote speaker.
Alison Morrison-Shetlar named provost at WCU

Alison Morrison-Shetlar, dean of Elon College, the College of Arts and Sciences at Elon University, has accepted the position of provost and vice chancellor for academic affairs at Western Carolina University at Cullowhee, N.C. She began her work there Feb. 1. Morrison-Shetlar has been at Elon since 2010, overseeing 19 academic departments, 26 interdisciplinary minors, and pre-law and pre-health programs.

“I am deeply appreciative for the leadership that Alison has provided for Elon College over the past three years,” said Steven House, provost and vice president for academic affairs. “Based on her record of innovation and success at Elon, she will be an outstanding academic and administrative leader at Western Carolina and we wish her the best in her new role.”

House will immediately begin conversations with President Leo M. Lambert and the faculty of Elon College to determine interim leadership and to plan for a national search to select Morrison-Shetlar’s successor.

Morrison-Shetlar said that Western Carolina University’s emphasis on excellence in teaching and learning and its commitment to community collaboration dovetail with her own professional values and experiences.

“I have been interested and involved in Western Carolina University for several years, watching it grow, seeing the impact that the university, faculty, staff and students are having on the economic development of the area through engaged learning activities such as service learning, research and creativity, and community engagement,” she said.

In announcing Morrison-Shetlar’s appointment, Western Carolina University Chancellor David O. Belcher noted her 33 years of experience working in higher education at eight institutions in three countries.

“She garnered tremendous support from the university community during the course of the search process, and I eagerly anticipate Western Carolina’s growth and development under her leadership,” Belcher said.

Prior to her work at Elon, Morrison-Shetlar served as vice provost, dean of undergraduate studies and director of the Faculty Center for Teaching and Learning at the University of Central Florida and as director of the Center for Excellence in Teaching at Georgia Southern University.

Elon College Fellows Lumen Scholars

The Lumen Prize assists Elon University students in the attainment of ambitious and serious intellectual goals during their junior and senior years. Awards may be used for scholarship assistance, research assistance, international study, equipment and supplies, summer stipends, and other approved expenses. Winners of the Lumen Prize receive special mentoring and support in pursuit of graduate fellowships and international awards. The Elon College Fellows who were awarded the Lumen Prize for 2014 were:

Emma Gierman           Megan Sibree
Heather McDonough-Caplan Anna Patterson
Sophie Rupp

Elon College Fellows Lumen Scholars
Meet the Elon College Fellow Faculty/Staff

Dean
Gatie Smith

Elon College Fellows Program Direfor
Dr. Nancy Harris

Branch Directors
Dr. Evan Gatti - Director of Arts and Humanities
Dr. Linda Niedziela - Director of Mathematical and Natural Sciences
Dr. Jason Kirk - Director of Social Sciences

Elon 101 Instructors
Dr. Steve Braye
Dr. Aaron Peeks
Dr. Angela Jones

ECF Living Learning community faculty advisor
Dr. Michael Terribilni

GST 110
Dr. Matt Gendle
Dr. Jeffrey Coker
Dr. Scott Windham

ECF Class Instructors
Dr. Cindy Fair
Dr. Evan Gatti
Dr. Jason Kirk
Dr. Chris Leupold
Dr. Tom Mould
Dr. Linda Niedziela
Dr. Andrew Perry

ECF 111 Paths of Inquiry
Dr. Alexa Darby
Dr. Dave Gammon
Dr. Shawn Tucker
Dr. Sean Giovanello