

# Computer viruses preventable by student use of common sense

Ashley Feibish  
News Editor

AOL Instant Messenger and e-mail allow people to connect instantly, sharing files and communicating with friends. But technology is not without its flaws. A negative impact of this advanced technology is viruses that can attach to files and replicate instantly.

Viruses are software that attach themselves to programs. If the program runs on a computer, the virus then runs and reproduces. It can even ruin the computer. E-mail viruses have the capability to automatically mail themselves to addresses located in the user's e-mail address book.

AIM viruses pop up frequently in users' profiles; some of the more common ones read, "Whoa look what I found, click here ...", or "I can't believe I found 'yourScreenName' picture here." A more recent AIM virus automatically sent a message to everyone on the user's buddy list, disguised as an Osama Bin Laden game.

Junior Jay Loden, a student computer technician at Elon's Student Computer Services, said most of these viruses are related to ads.

"The viruses turn your computer into a billboard," said Loden, who authors his own virus removal tools. He said he tends to hear about the viruses when they first come out because he works so closely with computers.

"On one given day," said senior Brett Pladna, also a student computer technician at Elon's Student Computer Services, "our peak for repairs was 56. Overall, we've fixed hundreds of computers."

Most of the viruses are preventable with updated virus software. Also, not clicking on links in AIM messages or pop-ups can prevent computer viruses.

"They are not hard-core viruses, mostly pop-ups that put things in people's profiles," Pladna said.

When it comes to e-mail viruses, the "Mydoom" worm continues to cause big problems. According to the Web site titled "How Stuff Works," the virus is estimated to infect approximately a quarter-million computers daily. Worms are pieces of software that use computer

networks and security holes to replicate themselves. One defense in preventing e-mail viruses is to avoid downloading attachments with extensions such as .exe, .com or .vbs.

Fred Melchor, director of PC Support, said his department works to prevent and eradicate viruses.

"Elon protects against e-mail viruses. You get a shell of the virus, not the actual virus. Our server catches and strips the viruses to prevent them from spreading."

Melchor also suggested students keep their operating systems up-to-date by patching their systems and frequently checking the Microsoft Web site for updates. He also warns not to open attachments. Worms take up memory and network bandwidth when they replicate.

Basically, Melchor said, "They choke up the network with traffic. You want to have a virus program such as McAfee or Norton."

It is important to safeguard your system and be cautious when using the Internet, especially if unknown sources are involved. Most virus Web sites offer free trial ware and programs that help detect and erase viruses.

Viruses are not made to take down networks today and no longer do a lot of file destruction, said Melchor. "Like a parasite, viruses don't want to kill their host."

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## vital Stats

PC Viruses cost businesses an estimated \$55 billion in damages in 2003.

source: [www.computerworld.com](http://www.computerworld.com)

At its peak infection rate, about 1 in 12 emails on the Internet were MyDoom Viruses

source: [www.message-labs.com](http://www.message-labs.com)



Lindsay Porter / Photographer

SGA officers smiled following their victories Wednesday night. Top left: Chris Morse, Shelby Peterson, Bob Koons and Cheryl Borden.

## SGA elections yield new officers, low turnout

Lindsay Porter  
Copy Editor

New SGA executive and class officers were announced Wednesday night following two days of elections. Only five hundred and six ballots were cast this year, about half of last year's total according to SGA adviser Jana Lynn Patterson.

Chris Morse and Shelby Peterson were elected executive president executive vice president, respectively. Bob Koons will serve as treasurer, and Cheryl Borden as secretary.

For a complete list of winners, visit The Pendulum Online.

Morse said he's committed to strengthening relationships between

members of SGA and their constituents.

"I don't want to be that guy who just speaks at Convocation," Morse said. Instead, he said he wants to focus on SGA inclusion in the Elon community.

Although admittedly disappointed with voter turnout, current SGA President Mark Gustafson said he's confident in the capabilities of the new officers. "They've got a lot going for them, most importantly experience," he said.

A complete look at elections and recap of new officers will appear in next week's issue of The Pendulum.

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## Cuban author to speak about dual cultural identity, immigration

Jay Dorne  
Asst. News Editor

Author Cristina Garcia will address the Elon community at 7:30 tonight in McCrary Theater with a lecture titled "Cuban-American Identity." She will focus on the issues of dual cultural identity and immigrant experiences, two issues she has helped introduce to American readers through her novels.

Garcia was born in Cuba but came to the United States when she was



Cristina Garcia

2 years old. After growing up in New York City, she established a reputation as an important voice in Latin American literature.

Her debut novel, "Dreaming in Cuban," explored the cultural identity of the del Pino family in the context of the Cuban revolution. It was nominated for the National Book Award in 1996.

Garcia further explored these issues in her next novel, "The Aguero Sisters," published in 1997. Newsday described it as, "a deeper, more profound

plunge into the mysteries of loyalty, love and identity."

her latest novel, "Monkey Hunting," which was published in 2003, explores the issues of culture and identity of a Chinese-Cuban family. Garcia also edited "iCUBANÍSIMO!," a collection of works by Cuban writers.

"Garcia has a unique perspective due to her journalism and creative writing background," said Brooke Barnett, associate professor of communications. Barnett has been involved with planning Garcia's visit.

The lecture is being sponsored by the Liberal Arts Forum, which also sponsored a visit this month from Peter Singer.

Anna Earles, president of the Liberal Arts forum, said the forum is pleased to have Garcia speak about the cultural messages and diversity she addresses in her books.

Garcia is scheduled to visit university classrooms throughout the day and host an hour-long question-and-answer session at 2:10 p.m. in Whitley Auditorium.

The evening lecture is free and open to the public. Following the speech, Garcia will be available for book signing.

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