

# Elon Law School offers students optimal environment to prepare for bar exam

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Summer Editor

Today, around 1,200 students from across the state of North Carolina will sit down for part two of the bar exam. Yesterday, part one of the exam was given at the Raleigh Fairgrounds.

The bar exam is the test recent law school graduates take in order to become attorneys.

Countless hours of studying take place in preparation of this exam, which has about a 70 percent pass rate.

For about 30 recent Elon law school graduates, preparation for this exam made less stressful, with a one-of-a-kind program.

The Elon Law School offers the opportunity for students to live on campus for free during the end of May and the entire months of June and July.

"I haven't heard any one else doing this," said Damon Duncan, a member of the Elon Law School's charter class.

Duncan and his wife Melissa, decided to take advantage of this opportunity. Damon explained that Elon President Leo Lambert and Gerry Francis, executive vice president, met with a group of law school students to figure out the best way possible for the most students to pass the exam.

"We can completely focus on studying for the bar exam," Damon said. "It's almost like going to boot camp. You go and everything is provided for you and the only thing you have to worry about is training and getting ready for the bar exam."

The bar exam is given twice a year in North Carolina. The first time it was given was in February.

It is a two-day exam and on the first day, 12 essay questions are given. Day two consists of 200 multiple-choice questions.

"It's almost more quantity than competence or intelligence," Melissa said. "Can you learn all of that information?"

Both Damon and Melissa said they have put a solid eight to 12

hours a day since they moved into their new home in Colonnades B on May 25.

Damon said that one of the reasons why people fail the exam is because many people work during the day and do not have enough time to devote to studying.

"If you are working eight hours a day at least, I can't even imagine having deal with this," Damon said. "One of the goals is they offer this to us and we don't have to work during the day. We don't have to worry about paying for meals or anything like that."

The students who have lived on campus throughout the summer have had meal plans as well. Damon said the people who didn't take advantage of this opportunity had family commitments and homes that were established.

"There's a lot of people who do it and get by and pass the bar," Damon said. "The fewer distractions while studying for this, the better. It would be difficult if you had to worry about making money or holding down a job."

In addition to free room and board and free meals, the students were able to receive loans through the university so they could pay for prep classes for the exam. On the days of the exam Elon rents out a room and will provide the students with a free lunch.

If both Damon and Melissa pass the bar exam, they said they hope to open up a branch of Damon's father's law firm, Duncan Law, in Greensboro. It will focus on bankruptcy and civil litigation cases.

"Assuming we both pass, that's the plan," Melissa said. For Damon and Melissa — who both graduated from Elon with undergraduate degrees in 2006 — this solidifies why the selected to attend the Elon Law School.

"This is what Elon's all about," Melissa said. "Taking care of you as a student and a person and making sure that you're not just a number."

# Miss North Carolina dances her way to the crown despite obstacles

## Elon alumna Katherine Southard overcomes difficulties posed by scoliosis

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Doctors told her it would be impossible to dance again, but Elon alumna Katherine Southard ('07) didn't let that stop her. As the winner of the Miss North Carolina Pageant this year, Southard not only has the opportunity to perfect her dancing skills, but also plans to help others who are facing the same challenges she once did.

Since early childhood, Southard has battled scoliosis, a medical condition that causes curvature of the spine. Instead of a straight back, her spine curved to the side, deforming part of her body and making dance extremely difficult.

Southard was only two years old when her mother enrolled her in dance lessons, but it did not take long for her parents, teachers and fellow classmates to realize she lacked the ability to perform like the others.

"(Dancing) was frustrating because I didn't look like the other girls," Southard said. "My back curved and my ribs stuck out. And they all tried to get on me for (dancing) improperly, but I wasn't. We finally realized I physically couldn't dance correctly because of my spine."

Despite the pain and difficulty, Southard continued to dance throughout school and eventually majored in dance at Elon. In 2005, Southard underwent surgery to correct the curve in her spine with potentially devastating results to her dance career.

"I think it's important not to give up," Southard said. "It's hard to realize in the moment, but having gone through this

I feel like I'm a much stronger person than I was before."

Refusing to toss out her ballet shoes, Southard continued to dance after the surgery. Dancing was still painful and more difficult than before, but her passion for the arts proved to be stronger.

"For someone who said I wouldn't be able to (dance) anymore after surgery, the fact that I overcame it gives more confidence and encourages me to overcome obstacles," Southard said.

Before her corrective surgery, Southard participated in the 2005 Miss North Carolina pageant.

"When I (competed) in 2005, it was before I ever had the surgery and after that I thought 'I'm done' because I have to have this surgery," Southard said. "And I had it, and really pageants are just a way I can get back into dance and try to be better."

Southard competed in 2008 as Miss Mount Holly and did better than she had in the 2005 competition. After placing second runner-up, she decided to continue training and preparing for the 2009 pageant as Miss Raleigh. After three years of participation, she was finally crowned Miss North Carolina.

"I think it's one of those things where you're in the moment and you don't even think," Southard said. "I remember looking at my family. My sister was jumping up and down and my dad had a blank, shocked look on his face."

Southard's responsibilities range from fundraisers and pancake breakfasts to working with the United Service



PHOTO COURTESY OF WWW.MISSNC.ORG  
Katherine Southard, who graduated Elon in 2007, was crowned Miss North Carolina after three years of participation in the competition. She first competed in the pageant in 2005.

Organization in support of troops and addressing the North Carolina House and Senate on the issues of scoliosis.

"(I'm working on) getting information packets to children so parents can learn how to screen their child for scoliosis themselves," Southard said. "It's unbelievable how many people have contacted me. I had 180 friend requests on Facebook, many from girls who didn't know that (scoliosis) is an issue."

Southard plans to travel to Las Vegas in January for the Miss America competition. She said she looks forward to the different atmosphere and the possibility of being crowned Miss America despite the handicaps and challenges she has faced.

"You need to embrace adversity instead of running from it," Southard said. "Embrace the good things or the bad things that come along."

## Lambert stresses experiential learning in university education

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and with follow-up work during the school year," Lambert said. "It's hard not to have your heartstrings tugged watching young students in Elon Academy."

Along with Deborah Long, the director of Elon Academy, Professor Thomas Arcaro and his work on Project Pericles also earned praise from Lambert.

"More than any other project, it underlines what it means to have a deepened sense of civic understanding," Lambert said.

Echoing his sentiments against one-shot service, Lambert highlighted Project Pericles' focus on long-term investments in social problems through years of study and academic application.

Although he valued his education out of the classroom during his collegiate days, working on the student paper and serving as the co-director of a swimming program for the handicapped, it was not until he was at the University of Vermont in Burlington that the importance of experiential education came to light.

As the assistant director of the Living Learning Center at the University of Vermont, a series of residential learning communities featuring faculty and students living and working alongside one another, Lambert had the opportunity to work with students outside of the classroom.

"It was powerful to see students take charge of their education," Lambert said, noting that many students, although not continuously hitting the books, were nonetheless investing themselves in their areas of study throughout the day and well into the night.

As for the future, neither Lambert nor Elon is looking to rest on its laurels.

"Experiential learning is one of the great hallmarks of the university," Lambert said, and as such Elon is looking to build off of the projects that, in Brumbaugh's experience, have other schools wondering just how the university does it and how they can do the same.

Lambert wouldn't divulge any specific details about the university's upcoming projects, but he did hint that the university's new strategic plan, which will be revealed in October, will shed some light as to where Elon will be in 10 possibly award-laden years.