



PHOTOS SUBMITTED  
Assistant professor of psychology Amy Overman, right, records alumni Brian Smith's brain activity through an electrode cap.



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Associate professor of English Jean Schwind's research includes how art shapes culture.

## Going behind the scenes of FACULTY RESEARCH

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College is akin to the production of a play. The students spend months learning their lines and rehearsing. As the final performance nears, they begin to frantically cram, spending night after night surviving on caffeine alone.

Finally, the big moment arrives, the curtain is raised and the audience prepares to judge the performance. The limitation of the audience, though, is they miss out on 90 percent of the process, as they only view the finished product.

Just as a student's knowledge cannot accurately be garnered from the final exam grade, the work of a professor cannot be assessed from their time spent in the classroom alone.

Students are aware of the "teacher" role their professors play, but what often goes unrecognized is the months of research faculty members conduct.

### WHY SHOULD PROFESSORS PURSUE FACULTY RESEARCH?

There is a widespread belief professors must either choose to teach or do research, but they simply cannot engage in both simultaneously. For EARL HONEYCUTT, a marketing professor and the 2008-2009 Distinguished Scholar at Elon, this is completely inaccurate as he said he believes research forms the basis of a university and promulgates the growth and development of both faculty and students alike.

"I truly don't think there can be a university without scholars, and you do not have scholars if research is not being done," Honeycutt said. "Professors need to be maintaining their own knowledge in order to profess knowledge to their students, and the best way to do that is to remain active in academic endeavors."

Honeycutt said he also sees research as the best tool for progress, particularly in fields that are constantly changing.

"If I don't stay abreast of the changes in my field, I will get left behind," Honeycutt said. "The greats are never complacent, they are always working toward improvement, and I think that should be the goal of every professor at Elon. There is no better way to accomplish that than through doing research in your field of study."

According to Honeycutt, the benefits of faculty research extend beyond the personal realm of the professor and spill into students' lives, as well.

"Students whose professors have taken on research questions are getting the most current knowledge from professors who are truly excited about their discipline," Honeycutt said. "These individuals are the ones who go the extra mile to learn as much about a topic as they can and are more likely to have gotten input about their teaching methods from other colleagues. This is nothing but beneficial to the students."

Honeycutt finished his fourth book last fall and is currently working on several articles, including one on attempting to reduce turnover in the sales force.

Most college professors spend very little time thinking about high school, but for JEAN SCHWIND, associate professor of English, it is a subject that is on her mind daily, especially its representation in American film and fiction.

"Art not only reflects our culture, but shapes it as well," Schwind said. "Portrayals of high school in film and fiction also shape how we view secondary education and teaching, which as a teacher is a subject I am very interested in."

Schwind's research subject is a fairly new topic to be included in fiction, since children served mainly as income contributors before the Depression, and high school was something only wealthy families could afford. This led Schwind to choose to use cultural materialism and new historical criticism to examine this phenomenon.

"I am looking at published documents that discuss things such as how a high school should be designed, both in terms of curriculum and architecture," Schwind said.

Currently, Schwind is still debating what the finished product of her research will be. In the past, she has written a series of articles as she goes along the research process and then compiles them into a book to market once she is completely finished.

"Right now I am working on an article about the role of the foreign exchange student in film and fiction regarding high school," Schwind said.

Most of Schwind's research is individual. But she does teach an upper level GST course on American adolescence every other year, and she said students often undertake research projects that help her with her own.

Surveys are created by the dozen to evaluate how effectively students were prepared for college. But what often goes unanalyzed is how students feel their college curriculum equipped them for the dreaded "real world."

HAL WALKER, a leisure and sport management, plans to change that.

Though Walker is currently writing a textbook, he has also undertaken a second research project with the goal of creating a valid and reliable tool to measure how prepared college seniors feel to venture into the workforce.

The idea stemmed from a simple survey conducted among the leisure and sports management majors to assess what their career paths would be. Walker decided to expand the project to conclude what courses were most valuable to Elon students and how the curriculum could be adjusted to best suit the needs of future leisure and sport management majors.

"My plan is to write appropriate questions to measure the topic and have them reviewed by five or six experts in the field before it is disseminated to students," Walker said. "I will ask the students to answer the survey twice, waiting about a month in between each set of responses to ensure that their answers remain consistent. The long-term plan is to try and catch up with the same set of students four or five years down the road and ask them to re-evaluate the effectiveness of their college curriculum from the perspective of the workforce."

Walker reiterated Swimelar's sentiments of not merely doing research for research's sake, but wanting his results to help further develop the direction of the leisure and sport management major and the students. He said he appreciated Elon placing an emphasis on combining teaching, research and service in the classroom.

"I have always been interested in applying research because I am a pragmatic person," Walker said. "Maybe I am just an idealist, but I feel that my job as a professor is to always be thinking about what is best for the program and our students. Understanding the strengths and weaknesses of our curriculum and adjusting accordingly will certainly benefit students down the road."

SAFIA SWIMELAR, a political science professor, has long been a believer in the power of images and films as teaching tools, as she said they can help illuminate difficult topics more clearly for students. Now she is putting her theories to the test as she studies how feature films are useful in an International Relations course.

"I am not going into this study assuming that the films will be useful, but rather attempting to determine if they are and how so in order to learn how to better use films in college courses," Swimelar said. "I think that film is used often in the classroom, but perhaps not always to its fullest extent. I think all professors, including myself, could benefit from having a deeper understanding of how films can enrich the classroom experience and engage students more in the learning process."

Swimelar's classroom has become her laboratory as she involves her current international relations students in her research.

Throughout the course, students will watch five feature films, and produce film responses within 24 hours after seeing the film. Though Swimelar said she is not currently reading the responses for anything other than grading purposes, she will review them after the completion of the course and utilize what students gained from each film for her own research.

Essays written during the semester, as well as classroom discussions, will also be valuable to her research at a later stage.

"I am not doing research just for research sake, but for the purpose of helping professors become better teachers and students to become better learners," Swimelar said. "Research forces you to be more aware of how you teach and how students learn, which is what I am always aiming to improve upon."

Elon offers a variety of programs for professors to set up specific times to work on research, such as the course release program, which allows a couple of professors in every department to drop one course for the semester and spend that time researching.

"Elon promotes research aimed at improving teaching, whereas a lot of schools only want pure academic research," Swimelar said. "I think Elon is unique in the fact that it values both and recognizes that opportunities must be given to ensure professors can produce quality research."

## University officials begin Night BioBus discussions

BIOBUS  
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Jackson, vice president and dean of student life, Keith Dimont, director of automotive services, Justin Peterson, Student Government Association president, Duggins and others to discuss the proposal's feasibility.

"We had one meeting, but a really good meeting," Jackson said. "(Miller) made his presentation. No decisions were made. This was more of a listening, framing the question (meeting)."

Jackson said the administration would continue to look at the issue of student safety after 7 p.m., when the BioBuses stop running.

"We didn't make any firm decisions," Jackson said. "We might do some of (the proposal) or we might not. There are no clear timelines."

Extensive planning, discussion and logistics need ironed out before they can try even a test-run of the system, he said.

"I think it's a logical plan that the university should consider if one of its priorities is the safety of its students," Duggins said. "However, I'm not sure that we'll see the BioBus late at night just yet. There are numerous obstacles that must be overcome before a proposal like this takes place."

She said Miller raised an important issue about the university needing to do more to provide transportation either through a BioBus or by further supporting SafeRides.

Jackson said he wasn't aware SafeRides did not have enough manpower or efficiency to transport all of the students who call in.

"We have a (new) 15-passenger vehicle right now, with six wheels," Jackson said.

He said volunteers would need to go through training to drive bigger vehicles if they will be used. Currently, SafeRide's only performs a license check.

Jackson said he may confer with the SGA to turn over more student opinion on the issue.

"Peterson said he thinks SGA would want to help with this," Jackson said. "I suggested we do a student referendum."

Jackson said it's up to students to decide how they want to spend their SGA money and fund such an effort.