

Physician Assistant, DPT programs to be housed together in newly-named Francis Center

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News Editor

After gaining final approval from the Board of Trustees this month, Elon University will welcome the inaugural class in the Physician Assistant graduate program in January 2013 alongside the Doctoral of Physical Therapy program in the newly renamed Gerald L. Francis Center. Preparations are currently underway to establish a School of Health Science, which would encompass the two programs.

A goal that first began more than two years ago through a science initiative proposed by Provost Steven House and Connie Book, associate provost for academic affairs, will become reality as the program will work over the next two years to gain accreditation, recruit and admit students and build faculty.

In an effort to strengthen the university's science program, House said Elon considered the addition of pharmacy and physician assistant programs and conducted feasibility studies for both options.

"We spoke to people in the community, people in the industry at Duke (University), Alamance Regional Medical Center and Moses Cone (Health Center), as well as students and faculty," he said. "What we saw was, there are jobs available, the new health care plan will add 30 million people to the roll. The feasibility study for a PA program came back favorably."

According to House, the proposal was presented to the graduate council, academic council and faculty, and each responded positively. The proposal was then brought to the Board of Trustees, where the plans were approved.

"At that time, when we brought it forward, we knew you needed about \$2 million to start the program," he said. "We thought we could bring in students by the fall of 2012, but we have now discovered, because of changes in accreditation guidelines, we can't bring them in until January of 2013."

The projected \$2 million cost includes renovating the space, creating work labs, admitting students and hiring faculty and a medical and clinical director.

After fundraising through various foundations, Elon received \$900,000 from the Duke endowment, in conjunction

with Alamance Regional Medical Center and Moses Cone Health Center. House said other foundations have contributed money as well.

After the approval of the program, House said the real question was its location. With a competing offer from downtown Greensboro, where the Elon School of Law is located, the university decided to keep the program on campus.

"We purchased the Francis Center, the former Smithfield Ham building, (earlier this year) and were already moving the DPT program there," he said. "We decided it was good to keep the programs together."

The naming of the building after Executive Vice President Gerry Francis came at the suggestion of President Leo Lambert, House said, in an effort to reward the commitment and excellence Francis has upheld as an instrumental part of making the university what it is today.

Francis, who will retire after spring of this year, said he is not only honored by the recognition, but also pleased to be associated with the health sciences.

"Working at Elon has been a true pleasure and I have enjoyed every day of it," he said. "When all the work pays off like it has in Elon's success, it makes it even more satisfying. I offer a huge thank you for all of this recognition."

The building, which will undergo renovations to accommodate the addition of two programs, should be completed by December 2011, House said, in time for DPT program classes to begin in January of the next year. While the facilities for the PA program will be finalized at that time, the program itself will not accept students for another year.

Mark Archambault, vice chair of the Department of Physician Assistant Studies at Wake Forest University School of Medicine, was selected as the first director of the PA program and will play an integral role in building the foundations of the program before students arrive in 2013.

"We had several very good candidates, but he was a fit for Elon," House said. "His vision for international experience and a service learning component represents all of the things that we really pride ourselves for in the undergraduate departments, and he wants to bring



The newly named Francis Center will house the Doctoral of Physical Therapy and Physician Assistant programs.

them to the graduate program."

Archambault said he has long been impressed with Elon's reputation and believes his personal values align with those of the institution. His initial goals include building a highly qualified faculty and student base and building collaborative partnerships on campus and in the community.

According to House, students of the program will meet the needs of the community through primary health care.

"We hope that a key component will be to serve an underserved area like Eastern North Carolina," he said. "There are plenty of doctors in Greensboro, Winston-Salem and Burlington, but what about some of the rural areas? We're hoping these health care providers can fill that niche."

The 27-month program, which will admit 36 students a year, includes a year of primarily classroom work followed by 15 months of clinical rotations. A clinical director, hired by Archambault, will be responsible for determining locations for clinical work around the region and state.

Accreditation, which must be earned before students can be admitted, will be based on curriculum, faculty credentials, facilities, student work and, most importantly, where clinical rotations will take place.

"The PA program will provide students with a quality education that ensures they are not just capable clinicians, but also humanistic in their approach

to treating all patients as individuals," he said. "The program has the ability to fully embrace the mission of Elon and directly serve societal needs."

Archambault says he will work with Elizabeth Rogers, associate dean of physical therapy, to determine the interactions between the PA and DPT program.

Rogers suggested sharing faculty, facilities and equipment among students of the two programs. A common space in the center will also allow student groups to meet socially, as well as professionally.

"There is the opportunity to create interprofessional opportunities for the students in both programs," she said. "It is expected that many other synergies will be identified, including the possibility in the future for the development of an on-campus clinic in the Francis Center."

The proposal for the creation of a School of Health Sciences will come before the faculty in the spring, House said, prior to the time the programs move in.

"While new programs and curriculum have to be approved by faculty, the creation of a school is the Board of Trustees' idea," he said. "It doesn't have to go through the same channels. It's just packaging, it already exists."

Proposals for a roadway connecting the Center with Danieley Center are also underway, including the addition of a sidewalk along Haggard Avenue, as well as landscaping, trees and playing fields.

A different kind of Smith Jackson e-mail: Working to prevent potential cyber attacks

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Just before the end of fall semester, Smith Jackson, vice president and dean of student life, sent an e-mail to the entire student body warning students about the effects of cyberbullying. Following recent events involving students across the country, specifically the suicide of a freshman at Rutgers University, Jackson said he felt it was important to call on the good will of the student body to avoid cyberbullying, even though Elon University can do very little to regulate it.

"The question comes up, 'can you block it from the servers?'" Jackson said. "And we just feel like if we go down that slippery slope, then are we going to start censoring things? Are professors going to start saying, 'we don't like what students post about us on Rate My Professors?'"

Jackson's Dec. 14 e-mail, which detailed the seriousness of cyberbullying, also noted that publicly writing malicious comments about fellow students is against the university's Honor Code.

"Freedom of expression and civility are not antithetical values," Jackson wrote in the e-mail. "In fact, they go hand-in-hand in our community. While one may express an idea freely, it is unethical to knowingly lie about another person or spread false, unsubstantiated rumors."

While Jackson did not mention

any specific websites in his message, freshman Krysten O'Hara said she was shocked by some of the things she saw the first, and only, time she visited CollegeACB.com, a website known for campus gossip.

"I never even heard of College ACB until I came to college," O'Hara said. "I was genuinely curious."

O'Hara said she first stumbled upon

be funny to make him think she liked him.

"We were all questioning in the months after his death what we could have done differently to prevent him from doing this," Claude said.

Claude, who lived across the street from Halligan, said she never got to know him as well as she knew the rest of his family.

"While we may not agree with each other's expressions, we must take responsibility for what we say and do. Posting malicious rumors anonymously on a Web site instead of censoring this site, we will hold students accountable when we know they are violating the honor code."

- Smith Jackson
Vice President and Dean of Student Life

threads about sororities, and noticed threads asking for comments on the "sluttiest freshmen."

"Once I got to something about somebody I knew," O'Hara said, "I was like, this is a waste of time."

Junior Casey Claude witnessed the devastating impacts of cyberbullying at a young age when Ryan Halligan, a fellow classmate, hanged himself at the age of 13 in 2003.

According to a memorial website created by his family, Halligan spent the summer before eighth grade building an online relationship with a popular girl in his class. He was later rejected by her in person, in front of several of her friends, when she told him she was joking online and wanted nothing to do with him. She said she and her friends thought it would

"It just really didn't seem real to me because I knew everyone in his family except for him," Claude said. "Everyone was in shock and I think the shock lasted for a long time. It made a lot of us stop and think."

O'Hara said the effects can be devastating.

"You see it on the news," she said. "People commit suicide because of stuff people put up online. You don't know everything about people, if they have an underlying condition or if they are depressed, and you have no idea how it will affect them if they end up finding it."

Jackson said he tells students to ignore the comments when they go to him with instances of cyberbullying.

"It's something that may be difficult

to do, but the university can't really control those sites," Jackson said. "Even if we block it from our servers, they're still accessible readily off campus."

According to Jackson, one of the main problems with websites like CollegeACB.com is the factor of anonymity.

"We don't know who's doing it, so it's hard for us to respond with as concrete of a way as sometimes people hope that we would," he said.

Claude encouraged students to not separate themselves from reality when on the Internet.

"It's easier not to have to see their reaction or realize that they're a real person who's going to have some emotion to what you're saying," she said. "I realize that you don't want the confrontation or whatever, but think about how what you're saying is going to have an impact on someone."

Jackson said that even though freedom of expression is encouraged throughout campus, the university is working to establish a speaker's corner on the West Lawn to enable students to voice their opinions openly, and with accountability.

As for the websites, Jackson said he wishes no one would look at the sites at all.

"There are a lot of times when people are criticizing those extreme comments and I think that's positive, but I think the best thing is if people would just say 'I don't want any part of that,'" he said.