

# More collaboration needed among student organizations

With more than 200 student organizations, Elon University's campus life is booming with activities and student-led events. But students often don't know about these events, whether it be from a lack of interest or a feeling of awkwardness.



Josh Kaufmann  
Columnist

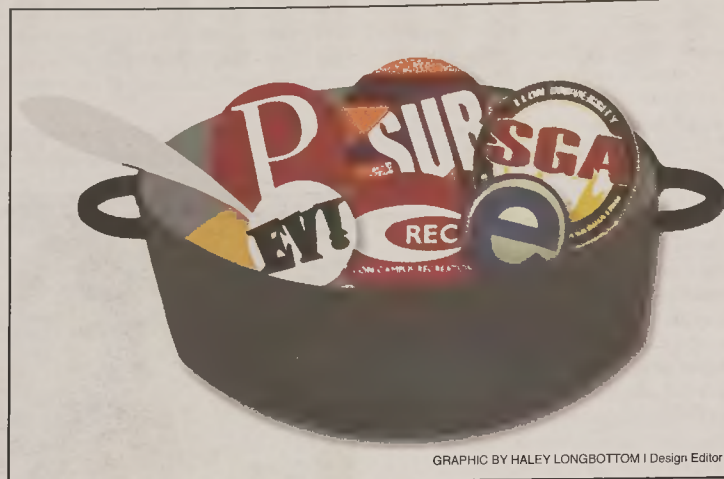
I recently learned about the allegory of the long spoons. There are variations, but, in short, the allegory goes like this: People are sitting

around a pot of soup they cannot reach. They can only hold the end of the handle of a long spoon they are given. The spoon can reach the pot but not their mouth. Chaos ensues until one person extends the end of the spoon to the person opposite. Everyone stares in awe as the first sip of soup is consumed, and all begin doing the same. Every individual is fed in the end, though not in the way they expected.

To build meaningful relationships with others, create successful events and impact the greater student body, collaboration among student organizations is a must.

Though each student organization is unique, many share similar visions and objectives, begging the question of why they do not work together more often.

Collaboration seems to be hindered by two possible explanations, the first being communication. The only means by which collaboration can occur is through effective communication between orga-



GRAPHIC BY HALEY LONGBOTTOM | Design Editor

nizations.

For example, if students were hosting an event they knew other organizations would be interested in being a part of, it would benefit them to form partnerships.

Talking with faculty and staff, skimming through the list of student organizations and not being afraid to walk into a student office and strike up a conversation can help organizations connect.

Forming relationships with other organizations will take the extra time and effort, but imagine how successful events, campaigns and profit shares could be if there were double, triple or even quadruple the amount of students supporting the cause.

This is not to say the more cooks in the kitchen the better. In fact, having representatives from each organization meet separately seems to be the practical way to execute these partnerships. It

becomes a numbers game when multiple organizations are involved in planning an event.

The more organizations involved and the more members involved, the more students on campus will hear about and attend the event.

Another reason that can explain the lack of student collaboration is the territorial perception student leaders have of their organizations. It seems that some organizations place greater emphasis on the fact they are having an event rather than the significance of the event itself.

One male senior reflects upon a time his organization was turned down from working with another student organization.

He said, "We were told our presence would negatively divert attention. The following year, once leadership had turned over, we reached out to the same

organization when we heard they would be sponsoring the event again, and without hesitation they agreed our presence would be valuable."

Elon students place great value on their leadership roles, as they should, but it is not uncommon to see these students become so caught up in their positions that they forget why they hold them in the first place.

Leadership during the creation and execution of events should be about the event itself and not necessarily about the individuals organizing it. Giving credit where credit is due is important, but self-gratification should not be the purpose of student-run events.

All of this being said, there are indeed student organizations that actively collaborate with one another. But there is so much room for growth.

An organization putting its name on another organization's event flyer may be deemed co-sponsorship, but it is not collaboration. The active components of meeting, brainstorming and working together are what is most important.

If we are given long spoons, we need to use them as resources, as means of communication, as a solution to the problem instead of encouraging the problem itself.

To continue with the metaphor, by focusing on feeding ourselves, we are not only damaging ourselves, but everyone around us.

So let's change these habits by challenging ourselves to extend the spoon, extend a line of communication and strive to create a campus culture that encourages the collaboration of student organizations.

# Fitness obsession just as dangerous as eating disorders

We see it every time we turn on our phones, open our laptops or watch television: the "ideal" body.



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Columnist

This concept of unattainable beauty has plagued women and men alike for decades, causing an estimated 24 million people in the United States to suffer from disorders such as anorexia, bulimia and binge eating, according to the National Association of Anorexia Nervosa

and Associated Disorders (ANAD).

The majority of those suffering from these disorders are teenagers and young adults, who are far more likely to be swayed by the messages given out by media outlets. The eating disorders induced by these messages lead to death in roughly 4-5 percent of cases, according to ANAD, which is far too great a number to be ignored.

Alongside the messages sent by these media outlets, social media and blogging sites such as Pinterest and Tumblr have also created havens for these unhealthy habits. The trend "thinspiration," or "thinspo," fills pages with pictures of emaciated women with protruding hipbones and ribs.

These images support the fabricated ideal of thin, dainty women, and they cause young women to believe that they should try to attain these body types through whatever means necessary, even those that could hospitalize them.

Another trend has emerged recently, and although its message can be helpful and positive at times, the underlying mes-

sages can be just as harmful. The "fitspiration" or "fitspo" trend displays lean, muscular figures with abdominal definition that few people can realistically obtain.

When young media consumers spend hours each day scrolling through sites that feed them these unrealistic bodies, they begin to believe this is the normal body for any in-shape person.

With messages such as, "Would you rather be covered in sweat at the gym or covered in clothes at the beach?" people become discouraged by the appearance of their own body. If you cannot be comfortable with your body as it is now, however it may be, what makes you think you will be more comfortable just by "getting fit" or "getting skinny?" Healthy looks different on everybody.

As someone who jumped onto the "fitspiration" bandwagon for a month or two, I can attest that these images and messages can cause unhealthy relationships with food and exercise.

People who view these messages too often become obsessed with what they eat and how much they eat, and some even consider a day to be good or bad based on whether they made it to the gym. Counting calories eaten and burned can become an obsession to many of those who undertake "fitspiration" as a lifestyle change.

The "fitspo" trend affects men as well, sometimes more so than "thinspo" does. These images depict men with almost zero body fat, washboard abs and numerous other physical attributes which rely heavily not just on hard work and clean eating but often, favorable genetics.

Although coverage of these topics rarely address the body issues presented to men, they are certainly present, and they are just as dangerous to them as they

are to women.

Some may believe that an obsession with fitness does not pose as terrible a threat to the minds and bodies of young people as an obsession with thinness does. They say that so long as people strive to become athletic, there can be little harm in their behavior.

But, as with any obsession, the "fitspiration" drive can cause people to choose athletics over social activities, academics

and friendships, and it becomes commonplace for them to ignore signs of injury or illness in an attempt to perfect their bodies no matter the cost.

When the drive to become fit swallows up any other thoughts, surpassing all other aspects of life, it cannot be considered "getting healthy." There is so much more to physical health than achieving that "perfect" body, and there is no reason to forsake mental health in pursuit of it.



Junior Alex Battaglia exercises at Elon University's Koury Athletic Center.

LANE DEACON | Staff Photographer