

# Features

## She's a rarity — black female prof. at Elon

By Vicky Jiggetts  
Staff Writer



Dr. Katherine  
Wallace-Casey

Katherine Wallace-Casey is a rare kind of professor at Elon. The 27-year-old assistant professor of foreign languages has a master's degree from Stanford and a doctorate from Harvard, two of the more prestigious universities in the United States.

She speaks French, Spanish and German with native fluency. Her doctoral dissertation was on the philosopher Walter Benjamin of the "Frankfurt School" of German Marxists.

She's also black — and minority faculty members, whether black, Hispanic, Oriental, or Arabic, have indeed been rare at Elon. (See accompanying article.)

In fact, except for two black members of Elon's ROTC staff — who are not considered permanent members of the faculty — Wallace-Casey is the only black professor at Elon. (Hornsby Howell Jr. is an instructor of physical education, head resident of the Oaks Area, and an assistant coach in football and track.)

So how did Wallace-Casey end up at Elon?

"I found out about it (Elon) in the Modern Language Association job listings," she said in a recent interview. "I was looking for jobs in North Carolina because my husband is a student at North Carolina A&T State University in Greensboro. He had taken a year off and worked in Boston so that I could finish my thesis at Harvard."

"This was the nicest school I had an interview with, although I had some other options," she continued. "I think that the people here were nice and more enthusiastic about me coming."

Nearly two months into her first semester on the faculty here,

how does Wallace-Casey feel — as a woman and as a black — about her relationships with other professors and with students?

"I don't feel uncomfortable in terms of the professors," Wallace-Casey said. "The professors are very nice, and they have been very helpful and supportive. Everybody has really welcomed me; they have done all they can to help me get adjusted."

However, she added, "I think I feel a little uncomfortable in terms of the students, because they feel uncomfortable with me. I'm not sure that any of them may be aware of it. People tend not to have the same respect for me that they would for a white male."

"I think part of it is that I'm so young. I think that if I were a male this age, they would have a little more respect for me. Sometimes I have trouble getting people to do things in class. They're not used to people like me as their educators."

"Black women have been role-cast in this world for certain kinds of jobs," she said. "For example, black women can be nurses and school teachers. But being a school teacher is a whole lot different from being a college professor. I think that a lot of people, both blacks and whites, have trouble with that."

Commenting that many people aren't taking her seriously, Wallace-Casey said, "I think that comes from the fact that people expect the most valuable information will come from white males. It's as simple as that. We (blacks) expect that, as much as white people. That's how it has always been."

"Therefore, when the person with the valuable information is young, black and female, it is a little tougher to deal with. That's the only thing I've noticed, and it takes a sensitive person to notice that."

Her job here is her first full-time teaching job, but Wallace-Casey did bring teaching experiences to Elon. At Stanford she taught a humanities seminar and was a writing instructor. At Harvard she taught in a program called History and Literature, was a tutor and directed senior honors theses. She also was a lifeguard every summer and waited on tables for three years in graduate school.

Surprisingly, Wallace-Casey described her Harvard years as "the most racist experience I have ever had. However, it was a racism of a sophistication unknown in the South. People there are highly educated, and the ways in which they discriminate are so subtle, that I really had to study to realize that it was happening. It took me a good six months to realize what was going on."

During her education she lived in Vienna, Austria, for a year; in Germany for four months; in Mexico for three months; and briefly in Paris. She was studying and attempting to learn more of the languages and cultures.

She has replaced Dr. Mike Taylor as principal teacher of German at Elon. Her goals are to increase the enrollment in German classes and to develop some third-year courses.

## College has had few minority faculty

By Vicky Jiggetts  
Staff Writer

In the history of Elon College, there have been few faculty members from racial minority groups. Unlike state-supported colleges and universities, Elon receives little money from the federal government and thus has not been subject to affirmative action requirements to hire more women and minorities to teach.

But the vice president for academic affairs says the college has been trying to hire more blacks and international professors. "The problem," says Dr. Chris White, "is finding qualified personnel to teach at Elon."

White said there has been a shortage of black Americans for college teaching positions, but that the supply is beginning to increase.

"We've wanted to hire more blacks, but many black professors prefer to work at black universities," White said. "Once we find them, we go head-to-head with other schools who pay more. The schools with the most money get the best personnel."

White also said that the educational level of black Americans is getting better, and they are entering the job market more than in the past.

"I don't think that there are enough black faculty here at Elon," White said. "I'm proud of what we have, but it isn't enough at all. I also don't think there are enough women. The

ratio is 2 to 1 of men to women. We're trying as hard as we can to take care of blacks and females."

He said that the quality of the professors is very important, regardless of race. "We have been absolutely steadfast in this point. We have refused to sacrifice quality," said White. "We want to hire the best we can, whether black or white. That's for the health of the school."

White compared the job opportunities for women to those of blacks. He said, "The woman is going to have a better shot than a man. All other things being equal, the job will go to the woman. The same thing with minorities and whites. If both people are qualified, we accept the minority applicant."

An incomplete list of present and past black faculty includes:

Katherine Wallace-Casey, foreign languages; and Horns-

by (Mike Howell, physical education (1983 to present); Richard Davis, sociology (1980-82); Louis Attah, part-time chemistry (1981); McKinley De-Shields, part-time biology (1981); Regina Bowden, sociology (1978-1980); and Mildred Covington, accounting (1970-72).

Also, black members of Elon's ROTC staff include Maj. Trevathan McCarther and Sgt. Harold Wilson (1982 to present) and Capt. Perman McIntosh (1981-83).

Other minorities on the faculty include Raghavendra D. Rao, biology (1969 to present) originally from India; A.H.M. Golam Azam, economics (1983 to present), from Bangladesh; Gerardo Rodriguez, Spanish (1982 to present) and Ruben L. Gomez, part-time Spanish (1981), both Hispanic; Hong-Sik Ahn, mathematics (1982), Korean; and Rudolph T. Zarzar, political science (1967 to present), Palestinian.

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