

Contributing to the success at Elon: Leaders Kebbler McGhee, Mike Smith

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Features Editor

As McGhee prepares to graduate, she looks back on her college years and remembers her first encounter with Elon.

McGhee, a senior majoring in elementary education, first heard about Elon through a college night at her high school, Person High. The presenter for Elon was L'Tanya Richmond, then the Associate Director of Admissions. McGhee visited Elon 5 times before she enrolled in the Fall of '93.

McGhee says the campus and the class size are what she liked about Elon, as well as the North Carolina Teaching Fellows (NCTF) Program.

"It's the best in the state," she said of the program.

McGhee is not only a Teaching Fellow, but an Isabella Cannon Leadership Fellow and an Honors Fellow.

"It's been one of my goals since I've been here to graduate as those three things," she said. "And I will be doing that in May."

Her accomplishments and achievements have created many memories for her throughout her four years.

"I remember Move In Day; the excitement was everywhere," McGhee said.

Also significant in her memory were the travel experiences with the Teaching Fellows, such as the semester in London and the American Heritage Tour.

"That American Heritage Tour... that was a bus ride I'll never forget," she said with a laugh. "I

think that's where strong friendships began with some of my other Fellows; friendships that will never sever."

As a senior Teaching Fellow, McGhee has a different schedule from most students. Her day begins at 5 a.m., bedtime for many, and she has to be at Hillcrest Elementary School by 7:15 a.m. She teaches a fifth grade class throughout the school day.

"After I leave the school (usually after 3:30), I come home and think about what I have to do the next day." McGhee also has a Senior Seminar once a week.

This may seem as a hectic and strenuous schedule to some, but McGhee views it differently.

"I don't think of it as being a strain," she said. "From the moment my mom called me to tell me that I had been accepted into the program, I've felt it was a privilege... it hasn't all been a bed of roses, but it's what kept me at Elon."

When asked how she liked student teaching, she paused for a few moments and smiled.

"I'm growing very fond of the students I work with," she said. "I foresee great opportunities for learning, both on their part and mine."

As if student teaching and completing her seminar were not enough, McGhee is currently involved in several organizations and societies. She is president of Omicron Delta Kappa, the leadership honor society and vice-president of the Student North Carolina Association of Educators.

She is also a member of Phi

Eta Sigma, the freshman honor society, Phi Kappa Phi, the academic society, and a student ambassador, and serves on the Senior Gift committee.

McGhee has received many awards for her accomplishments. She was awarded the Staff Member of the Year for Community Development Coordinators (CDC), an award that was "a big surprise," she said.

At the annual Awards Day, held in May 1997, she received the Algernon Sydney Sullivan Award, an award that meant a great deal to her.

"That award just makes you aware that you never know how you affect the people you're around everyday," she said.

McGhee still manages to maintain her grades despite the many activities she's involved in. For three consecutive years, she received the Black Excellence Award for the highest GPA in her class.

"I feel that this lets me be an unspoken model for the rest of my African-American peers," she said.

Probably her greatest impact is felt on the students she mentored in the Student Mentors Advising Rising Talent (S.M.A.R.T.) Program.

"Kebbler serves as a spiritual inspiration to me," said Maurice Gardner, sophomore. "During those times when things became hard for me, she always provided that needed word of encouragement."

Because he spent his primary and secondary school years in private institutions, Michael Smith had his preference when it came to choosing a college.

"I knew I needed the same kind of environment, so immediately I ruled out all the big schools," he said.

As he leafed through a magazine featuring southern colleges, Smith said that Elon stood out. He visited one other school in Virginia before he came to Elon.

"When I saw this school, I knew it was the one," he said. "It felt exactly right, and looked exactly what a college was supposed to look like."

Smith is in his third year at Elon, but is graduating a year early due to full semester loads, attending all Winter and Summer terms, and completing his Washington Center internship. He is majoring in psychology and minoring in human services. After graduation, Smith plans on attending graduate school for educational psychology, working in a clinic or conducting research in learning disabilities.

His specialty is working with children.

"I have a strong interest in kids and literacy," he said. "Most of my volunteer work involves reading to or tutoring kids."

Volunteering and campus involvement is something that Smith

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