

Elon student returns after 17 years for higher education

Jennifer Oglesby
Reporter

Adrainne Thompson doesn't expect more out of life than she puts into it, and she doesn't take anything that she hasn't earned. She is one of the 4,000 undergraduate students walking around campus, but she won't blend into the crowd, unless that crowd happens to be full of professors.

Thompson is a 39-year-old single mother of two, who has returned to Elon after a 17-year absence. She first attended Elon from 1981 to 1984, and intended to complete a degree in office administration. In 1984, the beginning of her fourth year, she got pregnant.

"I had dealt myself a whole new unexpected focus and set of priorities," Thompson said.

She has spent the last 17 years going from job to job, trying to make ends meet. At one point, she devoted five years to one job and lost the opportunity to move up the corporate ladder because she lacked

a college degree.

"I had only one more step to take to become a supervisor of the department, and the company brought someone in from the outside," she said. "I knew it was because I didn't have a degree."

With determination and stubbornness, Thompson received financial aid to go back to school. She found grants and scholarship programs on the Internet and submitted letters anywhere she thought she could get financial help, including the Department of Social Services.

"It must have been meant for me to go, because I got huge responses," Thompson said. "One couple even received my letter and granted me \$100."

Once she had the financial help, she applied, explaining what she would do differently the second time to be successful.

After three weeks, the dean wrote her a letter granting her re-admission, but put her on academic probation until she could prove she

could make the grades.

"I am proud to say that I was on the "B" Honor Roll, as my daughter would say," Thompson said.

The number of undergraduate students at Elon who are more than 25 years old is slowly falling. The number has dropped from 214 in 1990 to its lowest point of 19 in 2000. In 2001-2002, 25 nontraditional undergraduates attend Elon.

Thompson says she is thankful she has a second chance to get an education, and she loves going through the process with her two children, who are 17 and 12.

"When it's time for tests or exams, we all call out one another's questions," she said. "We reward one another a dollar for every test over an 85. Actually, it is quite interesting and fun."

Along with the responsibilities of school, this single mother holds two part-time jobs, one at Food Lion and the other at the Elon University campus shop. Thompson is now majoring in human services



Jennifer Oglesby/Photographer

Adrainne Thompson couldn't get enough of Elon, so she came back after 17 years.

and has a genuine love for people.

"I feel that in our lifetime, if we can touch one person in a significant way to where they can look up at you, then that is what makes life worth living," she said.

Thompson is known for her positive energy and good advice.

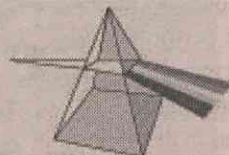
"She always gives 100 percent and is so friendly to everyone she

meets," Sandra Shoe, her Food Lion manager, said.

She gives no excuses for her failures, always putting her own needs last.

"If this story helps people go back to school to do what they think is impossible for them, then I have already honored my major, enhanced my life and filled my soul."

CAREER



FOCUS

Elon Career Center - www.elon.edu/careers - 101 Duke - 278-6538 - Monday - Friday - 8 a.m. - 5 p.m.

Rotaract at Elon

Youth branch of Rotary International
What's there for students?

Business and career contacts
International student exchange programs
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For information about the meetings please contact: Angie Smith at (336)687-6948 or smitha@konica.com or Svetlana Yarmak at syarmak@yahoo.com

Graduation is only 88 days away.

Seniors, do you know where you will be after May 25?

Reminder

Elon Career and Graduate School Fair
Thursday, March 7 - 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. - Alumni Gym
Full-time, Part-time, Summer Jobs, Internships, Graduate Schools

Career Center Resume Walk-in Hours Now Available in March!

The Career Center now has walk-in hours available to help students with resumes. Come to Duke 101 to get your resume reviewed and to put it on the Elon Job Network. Walk-in hours are Tuesdays 3 - 5 p.m. and Wednesdays 11:30 a.m. - 1:30 p.m. during March. Please bring a draft of your resume. Note: This service is provided on a first-come, first-served basis.

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