

Jackson helps Elon run smoothly day-to-day

R.J. Fenn
Reporter

It doesn't snow unless Smith Jackson says it's going to snow.

Across the Elon student body, there is one man who students identify with as being the informative figure for their every-day life. According to junior Matt Green, an Education major, Jackson is the one who informs him of everything from class cancellations to changes in his club sport schedule.

"He is the informational center of the Elon student life universe," Green said. "He plays a vital role in every student's life."

To Jackson, the work he does directing and working closely with students is more than just one aspect of his job, it is his passion.

"By far my favorite thing to do is spend time with Elon students," Jackson said.

Jackson, who has been working as vice president and dean of Student Life for 11 years, is the front runner of all 125 student organizations from Residence Life to orientation and his job runs deeper than just informing students of daily announcements and activities. He is also a faculty advisor for the Acorn Society and a member of four faculty

committees.

"One way to understand my job in framework is kind of like a pyramid," Jackson said. "The basic needs are at the base of the pyramid and until certain things happen at the base others can't happen. If people don't feel safe, secure, healthy, all in the base, they won't be able to achieve their goals."

Student life at Elon provides chances for students to sign up and either be a part of or take a leadership role in a group. According to Jackson, the organizations serve a purpose that give students a sense of belonging and a chance to excel.

"Student-run organizations are for students to form and focus on goals," Jackson said. "They study abroad and join teams and lead groups, so eventually, at a higher level, they say 'I know who I am, I have experience and I know I have a passion for what I'm doing.'"

Brett Crosby, a sophomore at Elon who was an orientation team leader this past year, said that Jackson and his staff did a great job adapting sessions that made students feel welcome and informed of Elon life.

"I thought the orientation sessions were great for new students," Crosby said. "They helped them out a ton and I was very happy to

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make their first experience as good as mine was."

Student life on campus has been growing over the years. Jackson said he thinks it has a lot to do with the moral of the students and really shows how important student life is for a school like Elon.

"It's not only critical but a wonderful opportunity for the students and faculty," Jackson said. "We have a real core set of activities that students participate in and attend, and it is an advantage for Elon because it creates a sense of community. We have added 900 beds since 1997 but that still hasn't equaled the demand for housing. More people want to live on campus than they did five years ago, and that says a lot about the popularity of campus life and how well students are running it."

In the case of campus life there are always

problems, whether they are alcohol or drug-related Jackson said he feels that Elon students have it under control.

"The rate of drinking and drinking-related crime has gone down here at Elon every year," Jackson said. "Our students are very civil, nice, courteous and caring and those who drink are not violent but under control. Alcohol may be in the background but for our students it is not in the forefront."

Of his many projects in student life, Jackson also takes a lot of pride in the work that goes in the Acorn Society. It is an organization on campus that helps all students and faculty give small portions over the year to help fund the constant growth of Elon.

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