

## Blank brings strong coaching bonds as new AD

Justin Hite

Sports Editor

Over the past few years Elon's athletics have begun to rise and garner national attention. New athletic director Dave Blank hopes to promote this growth both with his uncanny ability to raise money and with a special connection with coaches, being a former collegiate coach himself.

Blank was announced on Friday as Alan White's successor as the Elon University Director of Athletics.

Blank, who was greeted with a standing ovation, donned an Elon baseball cap. In his first order of business, he thanked Alan White.

"There are things we want to do, but nothing here is broken," Blank said. "That's the legacy of Alan White."

Before moving to Elon, Blank always hoped to return to the place where he grew up and wanted to become an athletic director on the east coast.

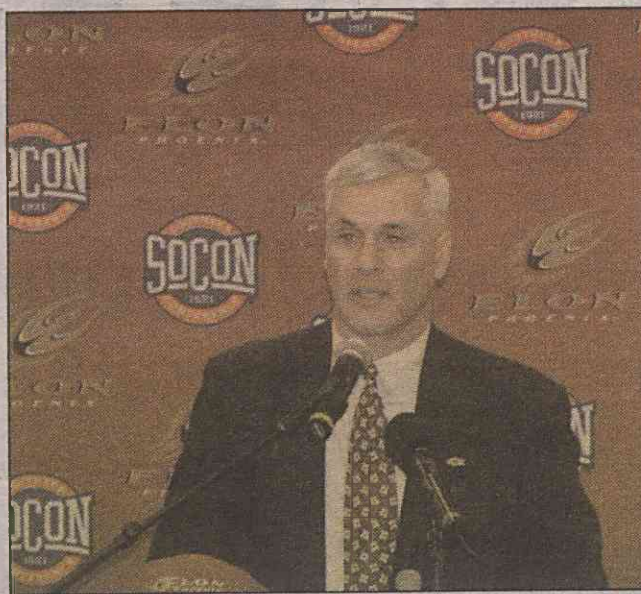
Blank's last coaching experience was as the head basketball coach at Lock Haven University. In Jan. 1995, during halftime of a game, Blank was called from the locker room and to the hospital. His wife was about to have their first son. He knew at that moment that he would be unable to be a coach and would have to be home more. This event propelled him to be an athletic director.

"I've loved being around athletics and it's a natural fit," Blank said.

Elon had narrowed down the search to four possible candidates but settled on Blank because of his coaching background, experience and a gut level fit, according to President Leo Lambert.

"(He is) a person who understands a balance between academics and athletics, and is someone who understands coaching through experience as a coach," Lambert said. "He has a drive for excellence, outstanding administrative experience and the ability to reach out to the community and build support for Phoenix sports."

Blank has a long resume serving as the athletic director for Drake University since 2000. While at Drake, he directed 17 NCAA Division I sports. Drake's student population is 3,900, roughly the same as Elon's. Blank directed a 90 percent increase in the financial support from gifts at Drake.



Nathan Rode/ Photographer

Dave Blank will take over for Alan White as the athletic director for Elon University on June 1.

The biggest financial accomplishment of his career was producing \$17 million for renovations to the Drake University football stadium.

During his entire tenure at Drake the student-athlete GPA was never below 3.0.

"That's one of the things that I am most proud about," Blank said.

Prior to his tenure at Drake he was the athletic director for Coastal Carolina University and set in motion the development of an intercollegiate football program, which defeated the Phoenix this past football season.

Born in Frostburg, Md., Blank attended Duke University and the University of South Carolina. He graduated from South Carolina with a degree in business administration and a masters degree in business administration.

"If you try to tell me who followed John Wooden at UCLA or who followed Bear Bryant at Alabama...you can't," Blank said. "I might be the one who followed Alan White, no one will remember me."

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## Ticket demands for the Wake Forest, Elon basketball

The excitement of a Dec. 3 match-up for the Elon men's basketball team against Wake Forest at the Greensboro Coliseum created frenzy among students to get tickets.

Originally, 500 tickets were reserved for Elon students, a typical amount for any home game in Alumni Gym. But the loyalty of students brought an overwhelming demand for tickets.

"Students flocked to get tickets," said Jeff Blythe, ticketing manager for the Athletic Department. "I mean, within a matter of days they were sold out."

With Elon students still rampant to watch the basketball team play a local ACC foe the likes of Wake Forest, at a marquee venue, Blythe and the Athletic Department went to work.

The process begins with whatever contract agreement is made with the Coliseum regarding the amount of tickets Elon can offer its students.

"The Greensboro Coliseum mandates how many tickets can be available," Blythe said. "Our contract gave us 500."

Two days before the game, to meet student demand, Blythe, Kyle Wills, senior associate athletics director for busi-

ness and operations, and others in the Athletic Department got on the phone with folks in Greensboro to get more tickets. Two days of work garnered an additional 200 tickets.

All the while a steady dose of updates showed up in students' e-mails saying tickets were going fast, then tickets were gone, then more were available and finally the additional 200 went spoken. After tickets sold out initially, some students purchased theirs separately from the Coliseum, unaware that 200 more would eventually be sold. Elon let those who purchased their own tickets exchange them for a free reserved ticket available at the Koury Center box office with a full refund. Other students were discouraged when early signs of a sell out became apparent, opting to find other things to do for their Saturday.

"The game was during a holiday, and I know Wake Forest players had exams, so there was a timing issue as well," said Blythe. "Next year we will ask for more tickets."

Blame the zealous turnout of Elon kids and odd scheduling for the ticketing mayhem.

-Brian Paglia/ Reporter

## To go or not to go?

An inside look at sports with R & H



Nathan Rode – Editor in Chief

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A growing trend is threatening the production of young college football players. With more and more players jumping to the professional ranks after their third or fourth year, education is being pushed further from a priority. Popular players like Vince Young and Reggie Bush have jumped early this year but the lesser known players like Ernie Sims and Ko Simpson are also making the jump.

**R:** Reggie Bush and Vince Young belong in the NFL. They have the talent that will earn them a contract allowing them to be set for life. Players like these deserve the responsibility of making their own choice. If it helps them and their family, then they should declare for the draft. However, for those that are uncertain picks, such as Ernie Sims and Ko Simpson, I believe education should be considered first. It's a Plan B. If they graduate, get drafted and flop then they have a degree to take into the real world. If not, where do they go?

**H:** School should be the first option for every college athlete. The word college and student should always come first. However, it can't be overlooked that most college athletes go to college mainly in hopes of reaching the professional ranks and making the big bucks. I don't want to sound cliché, but you can't be a professional athlete forever. There are a few rare cases when it is alright to skip to the pros, but that only occurs when an athlete can go no higher at the current level and only when he is the unanimous first overall pick. So Reggie Bush and Vince Young, go ahead and go, but a word of advice to all other college guys thinking of making the jump. The chance of a flop is much higher than the chance of success.

**P.S.** LenDale White is a better running back than Reggie Bush.

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