

The Pendulum seeks to inspire, entertain and inform the Elon community by providing a voice for students and faculty as well as a forum for the meaningful exchange of ideas.

# Editorial

## Upcoming election will shape Supreme Court Next president will have several seats to fill during term

The 2008 presidential election has brought on the Barack Stars, the McCainiacs and, well, those people who are still holding their breath for Ron Paul.

Key issues like the Iraq War, the economy and health care are heating up as the presidential candidates get closer to Election Day. But among all the fanfare, one consideration seems to be falling through the cracks — the Supreme Court.

The nine justices that make up the Supreme Court are, for lack of a better term, ripe in age. Justice John Paul Stevens turned 88 this year, and Ruth Bader Ginsburg isn't too far behind at 75.

There is a high likelihood that whoever the United States selects as president will get to appoint between one and three judges, depending on how many terms they serve.

But here is where it gets tricky.

The court is currently divided about evenly, with five justices who tend to vote conservatively and four who favor a liberal stance. Though there are often "swing" votes that tip the scales one way or another, the makeup of the court is generally 5-4, favoring the conservatives.

The five justices who generally vote conservatively (Roberts, Scalia, Thomas, Kennedy and Alito) have an average age of 61 while the four liberally voting justices (Stevens, Souter, Ginsburg and Breyer) have an average age of 76. The three judges most likely to depart from the court in the near future are Ginsburg, Souter and Stevens.

The potential of three judges who are ideologically liberal leaving in the next eight years will mean that whoever is elected as president will be able to shape the direction of the court for nearly 30 years to come — and not just by a little.

To be frank, this is a really big deal. Sen. Obama would almost assuredly nominate three liberal justices while Sen. McCain has already stated he would bring in only conservative justices.

Assuming all three justices who are expected to leave do so, a McCain presidency could end in an 8-1 split and an Obama presidency could end in a 7-2 split.

But what might it mean if the balance of the Supreme Court is thrown off?

Well, first think of the landmark cases the Supreme Court has dealt with and think of how they

impact everyday American life.

Consider *Brown v. Board of Education*, which paved the way for integration of the schools. *Miranda v. Arizona* required police to read arrested people their rights before questioning them. *Roe v. Wade* legalized abortion.

The list of landmark cases goes on, but each had a profound impact on the rights and liberties of Americans.

Any of these cases could have gone the other way if the number of liberal or conservative justices on the bench had been different. When there are only nine votes, every single one of them counts.

Whoever America selects in November will be gone by 2012 or 2016, but the justices they appoint will remain with us for decades.

What is decided in our highest of courts shapes how we live our lives, more than any president ever could.

Be wise in voting this November and keep the court that you want making judgments on your behalf in mind.

A wrong decision could bring on decades of regret. No pressure.

## Letters to the Editor

I'd like to offer a differing perspective on the arrival of a new graduate program at Elon.

Your recent editorial worried that the new master's degree in interactive media will drain resources from our excellent undergraduate program.

We've worked hard to ensure that doesn't happen. Our graduate program will have its own physical space in Powell Building, separate labs and edit suites, and separate technology for student checkout. The graduate program will be funded 100 percent through graduate student tuition. We also are adding four new faculty members with expertise in interactive media, and they will teach about half of their courses at the undergraduate level.

As a result, we believe having an innovative graduate program truly will enhance the quality and cutting-edge focus of our undergraduate program.

Paul Parsons  
Dean, School of Communications

I don't think that I'm alone when I say this: I'm fed up with ARAMARK. As a freshman you are required to purchase at least 11 meals a week. Assume that you are paying for September to the end of April (eight months). It costs \$4,004 for 200 meal dollars. The cost per meal comes out to roughly \$10. The math is far from perfect, but my point is that it's expensive to eat on campus.

So what do you get for your \$10?

I have an 8 a.m. class every day, so my breakfast options are limited. Octagon opened late every single day the first week of school. Sure, it was only by five minutes or so, but when you only have a half-hour, time is pressed. On top of that, the service was bad and the employees were rude. The breakfast sandwich was cold, and the ARAMARK employee complained when I asked for a new one.

I know I could list a handful of dining service employees that rub students the wrong way. At Varsity two of the three wraps my party ordered arrived without chicken in them. Instead of getting new wraps, our waitress brought us chicken tenders to put in our sandwiches.

These are just some of the most recent examples, and the worst part about it is that it isn't out of the ordinary for students to have similar experiences.

Ten dollars, let that resonate. It's two foot-long sandwiches at Subway, it's a burrito with all the fixings at Moe's, and it's a few drinks at Lighthouse (if you're 21 of course). Ten dollars goes a long way, and frankly it should get you a lot more from ARAMARK.

Jay Kahn  
Class of 2009

Have an idea or opinion you'd like to share with The Pendulum? Contact us at [pendulum@elon.edu](mailto:pendulum@elon.edu) and we'll print what you have to say. Lengthy letters or columns may be cut to fit. All submissions become the property of The Pendulum and will not be returned.

## University grading scale in need of standardization

The syllabus has become a sacred text for each class taken at Elon University.

Invariably there will be a section about the honor code, office hours and disclaimers about absences, but most students will skip over those sections. They'll look for the grading scale.

At most schools in the United States, the grading scale has become unexciting syllabus type — all students know they are being graded according to a 10-point scale.

At Elon, a student can be graded on a different scale for every class. Those taking Web Publishing and Design need a 95 percent to get an A and General Physics students need a 96 percent to achieve that coveted grade. They compete with the same students who take Strategic Writing and Arabic — it only takes a 90 percent to get an A in those classes.

This competition involves vying for scholarships and honors offered by the university — the Lumen prize, Beta Alpha Psi and various departmental scholarships — and those offered outside of the bubble.

The university should make a standardized grading scale in order to combat this grading injustice.

Two students who receive the same grade of an 83 should not have different grades when they are both applying for the same Isabella Cannon Research Scholarship.

Phi Kappa Phi admits students based on the percentile they occupy based on GPA. To be eligible, seniors must be in the top 10 percent of their class and juniors must be in the top 7.5 percent of their class.

How can that be a fair criterion of scholastic achievement when aptitude is being measured on severely different scales?

The newly established Lumen Prize

requires its applicants to have a 3.8 GPA. This requisite was established without acknowledging the fact that a student may have received a hard-earned 92 percent in a certain class — which according to a six-point scale leaves one with a B for one's efforts.

In many other classes, that same grade would have been a letter higher and they would have a chance to apply for the prestigious scholarship.

Elon University wants the majority of its students to seek further education after graduation, maybe even go to one of the university's own four graduate schools.

Besides recommendations, GRE scores and personal statements, students have to submit a transcript to the graduate schools they are hoping to attend.

These students' grades and GPAs are scrutinized and compared with applicants who had the fortune of a standard grading scale in which the grade earned was consistently assigned throughout the school.

Does Elon want its undergraduates to be disadvantaged when contending for admissions to top master's programs or for Truman and Rhodes scholarships?

With more grading scales than feral cats running around campus, there needs to be a standardization of the methods by which students are graded for their work.

Students with different majors, or just those unlucky enough to have a particularly cruel professor, shouldn't be unfairly evaluated and matched up against Elon and non-Elon students who received a less brutal syllabus.

Administrations and departments alike need to think in the best interest of students and their future.

If so much of collegiate excellence and achievement is based on grades, make it a fair contest.

## THE PENDULUM

Established 1974

The Pendulum is published each Wednesday of the academic year. The advertising and editorial copy deadline is 5 p.m. the Friday before publication. Letters to the editor and guest columns are welcome and should be typed and e-mailed with a telephone number for verification. Submissions are accepted as Word documents. The Pendulum reserves the right to edit obscene and potentially libelous material. Lengthy letters or columns may be trimmed to fit. All submissions become the property of The Pendulum and will not be returned. You can reach The Pendulum by e-mail at [pendulum@elon.edu](mailto:pendulum@elon.edu). If you have questions or concerns about an article contact a section editor. Please do not respond to reporters directly.

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