

REVAMPING THE RETREAT

Student Government Association Executive Vice President Evan Davis planned the retreat this year, which included an Elon-only senate trip Friday to Celebration Station in Greensboro.

"It was strictly for our senate to bond, have team building activities and just for us to be a little more comfortable with each other," Davis said.

While SGA's annual retreat is normally budgeted for \$4,500, SGA President Justin Peterson said his organization is scaling back their spending since many other student organizations on campus are being forced to cut theirs.

The second part of the retreat included the seminar, which has not happened in previous years. In total, the entire two-part retreat cost about \$2,000, Peterson said.

"I would definitely encourage future executives to continue along with this initiative," Davis said. "If we're persistent with it, I think the seminar will grow each year."

SGA hosts state seminar, works on plans to refresh organization

Andie Diemer
Editor-in-Chief

On Saturday afternoon, Elon's Student Government Association held a Student Government State Seminar to connect, network and share ideas with other student government associations from neighboring colleges around the state to learn more about how each can improve their programs.

The seminar, which SGA President Justin Peterson said was a pilot, attracted representatives from Catawba College, High Point University, North Carolina A&T State University and Peace College, as well as all of Elon's SGA senate.

Students spent most of the daylong session in Koury Business Center getting to know each other, hearing from each school about their program, attending leadership workshops and having a general discussion.

Communications professor Tom Nelson, and Director of the Multicultural Center Leon Williams served as the two keynote speakers for the seminar, touching on the importance of giving as much back to community

as was given to the socially privileged group of individuals in attendance. They also emphasized students need to show responsibility and use their power for good instead of individual gain.

Each school gave a short presentation on the culture of its school and structure of its governing program.

Peterson said his group took back many ideas from the session that could impact the future of SGA, including how its funding is structured, an SGA symbol and installing a judicial branch to ensure checks and balances.

"It's amazing to see how these other schools run their organizations," Peterson said. "They're so different and yet so similar from our university, and we ended up learning a lot just from the presentations."

Peterson said the idea of a judicial branch has been previously tossed around, and it would ensure organizations are spending their money responsibly and make sure any appointments he makes as president are legitimate.

Walking away from the conference helped him reaffirm some of SGA's previous ideas.

"I think right now we have

a very narrow perspective on how SGA is supposed to work, because 90 percent of the people have not been exposed to other universities' student government associations," he said. "We think what we do is the only way, (but by) only reading through other SGA's bylaws and constitutions on the Internet, we had our eyes opened."

Mary Kathryn Willis, the student body president at Peace College in Raleigh, N.C., said at a small college her organization is always striving to get the word out about who they are and what they represent.

"It was also great to meet and hear from campuses that were similar in size and structure," Willis said. "If you constantly immerse yourself with larger universities, you will eventually get overwhelmed."

Willis said the seminar allowed her to network with neighboring schools and was an innovative way to let students' voices be heard. Her team also left with ideas about programming, advertising and meeting structure.

Peterson said every public and private school that could be contacted in the state was invited and that a lot of interest was generated, but many were

not able to attend because of funding or transportation issues.

He said he is still in contact with several institutions and is continuing to learn more about other student government associations across North Carolina to make Elon's stronger.

"We do realize what has happened to this organization over the past few years has been bad, with no checks and balances and little involvement," Peterson said. "One of the significant points (of the seminar) is that it symbolizes our recognition for our need to change."

Peterson said each school that attended expressed interest in making the seminar an annual activity, and after the formal portion was over, some of the visiting schools' representatives toured Elon's campus and SGA office.

"I loved that we could bounce around ideas and have a chance to hear from everyone," Willis said. "I would definitely recommend this seminar again in the future. We talked the whole way back to Raleigh about how motivated we were and how we were planning to use the information we took away."

EXTENDED BRIEFS:

Student participation still needed for 2010 Winter Term trips to Hawaii, Guatemala

Trip leaders for the GST 258 Hawaii: Nation or State are in danger of not being able to embark on their Winter Term journey because of lack of enrollment.

Led by Jeffrey Pugh, professor of religious studies, and LD Russell,

lecturer of religious studies, the trip is an exploration of the history, culture and political situation of the Hawaiian islands. This will be the eleventh year it has been offered.

"It's just an amazing experience," Pugh said. "The first year I did this class, I had no idea what to expect ... but every year I meet someone there who educates me about the realities Hawaiians face."

Pugh and Russell hope to provide students with many opportunities to grasp the complexity of Hawaiian life.

"The situation in Hawaii now is actually very interesting because of a piece of legislation called the Akaka Bill that is before Congress right now," Pugh said. "The response to the bill is entirely mixed. Some see it as the best or worst thing to happen to the Native Hawaiian people in a long time."

The fate of Pugh and Russell's trip relies on additional students enrolling in the course. The course satisfies the general studies experiential learning requirement and partially fulfills the advanced studies credit in civilization and society.

Guatemala: Culture and Service is led by Aaron Peeks, assistant professor of sociology. The trip serves as an opportunity to learn about the Guatemalan culture, while assisting with the construction of a healthcare facility.

Students will have the opportunity to observe the healthcare of indigenous Mayan families with an emphasis on pediatric care, engage in home visits with indigenous Mayan families and visit two women co-ops and coffee plant Finca Vista Hermosa.

"Students can do something that will not only change their life," Peeks said, "but it will change that Guatemalan community forever."

The course satisfies the general studies experiential learning requirement, counts toward the women and gender studies minor and partially fulfills the advanced studies credit in civilization and society.

Currently, both trips do not have a large enough group to run the course.

The deadline to apply for either trip is Sept. 21. Sign-up online on the Isabella Cannon Centre Web site, www.elon.edu/international, or at the office in Carlton.

FIND APPLICATION INFORMATION ON THE ISABELLA CANNON CENTRE FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDIES WEB SITE

Professor's book examines overlap between science and religion



Pranab Das
Physics Professor

Elon physics professor Pranab Das has edited a book that includes essays on various approaches to science and religion called "Global Perspectives on Science and Spirituality."

The book, with topics ranging from Daoism to Eastern orthodoxy, gives better insight into non-Western approaches to the overlap of science and religion and can be used as a

textbook for both subject areas, Das said.

The diverse essays touch on topics such as mathematical physics, robotics, biosemiotics and new schools of theoretical biology, embryonic stem cells and cognitive science.

The text includes submissions by researchers from more than 10 countries, most of whom are held in high regard by some of the globe's best research institutions.

They each bring their own perspectives to the table regarding science and spirituality dialogue and also take multicultural perspectives into account.

"We feel very strongly that this long, challenging project was successful at raising the quality of scholarship, introducing fresh perspectives from non-Western sources and massively increasing the level of dialogue between science and the religious/spiritual traditions of the countries where we worked," Das said in a statement.

Das is the principal investigator for the Global Perspectives on Science and Spirituality program, which are two different projects that support the work of the top scholars, research organizations and institutions in Asia and Central and Eastern Europe in an effort to support leading thinkers worldwide and bring new perspectives on the issue.

These are topics that are normally dominated by Western scholarship, Das said.

"My projects were among the very first major efforts to internationalize this dialogue," Das said. "The highly competitive process winnowed down an applicant pool of more than 150 teams in over a dozen countries to seven final groups who conducted major research projects, undertook large-scale activities like conferences and public events, and have helped shape public awareness through media outreach, debates, dialogue and teacher training."

Biannual book sale in Burlington continues to benefit students, volunteers

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Libraries since its creation in 1985.

"We used to have the (book sale) in the mall," Roberts said. "We only had a month to set up all the books, sell the books and then clean. It is great we can have the sale here."

Roberts said the money raised from the sale will go to different programs in the library and The Friends of the Library have committed \$50,000 to go toward the new Elon Library, set to be complete in 2011.

"(The money raised from the book sale) is important because it enhances things that the tax dollars can't do," Gant said. "We are like the icing on the cake. We partner with other organizations who are interested in literacy."

While the book sale happens twice a year, every fall and spring, few Elon students may be aware of the long-standing book sale tradition.

Cobbs said there are many textbooks for \$3.00 and a range of reference, history, classical and poetry books students would find useful. She also suggested that students majoring in education could find a variety of children's books "perfect for starting a personal classroom library."

Ashley Lewis, a junior and creative writing major, was one of the few Elon students who was at the book sale opening day.

"I'm from Alamance County so I have been coming for years," Lewis said. "I'm an avid reader and you can get some really good finds. Plus I read they are giving money to the Elon library so that is a really good cause."

The book sale is entirely staffed by volunteers. Jan Antoniewicz said this was his way of giving back.

"All children know now are TV and video games," Antoniewicz said. "Kids need to pick up a book and use their imaginations."

The book sale will be going on until Sunday, Sept. 20. From Wednesday through Friday doors will be open from noon to 7 p.m. On Saturday doors will be open from 9 a.m. through 4 p.m. and on Sunday from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. Those looking to go to the sale should use the Davis Street entrance. For more information contact the May Memorial Library at 336-229-3588.