

Pervez Musharraf to address Elon at Fall Convocation

by Samantha King, April 6, 2010

Pervez Musharraf is confirmed to speak at the 2010 Fall Convocation, according to Jeff Clark, executive director of cultural and special programs. Musharraf was the president of Pakistan from 2001 to 2008 and the chief of army staff of the Pakistan Army from 1998 to 2007,

Jason Kirk, an assistant professor of political science, whose research is based in the India and Pakistan region, was approached by the senior staff for recommendations on possibly contracting Musharraf. He said Musharraf speaking would present a unique opportunity for Elon University's students to interact with an important world actor and learn more about Pakistan.

"He is a colorful and controversial authority in Pakistan after Sept. 11. He's very important because he was a world player in the history of the last 10 years," Kirk said. "I don't think he's coming just to give a standard speech."

When Clark, who refers speakers to senior staff for consideration, began searching for speakers, Musharraf came highly recommended, namely by Brown University and Stanford University.

"We're always looking for world leaders and international speakers to bring an international perspective to campus," Clark said.

Musharraf was born in 1943, four years prior to India's independence from Great Britain and the Great Partition in 1947.

According to a New York Times article from 2008, Musharraf led a bloodless coup against the Pakistani government and appointed himself chief executive of the country in October 1999. Eight months later, Musharraf removed President Rafiq Tarar from office and declared himself president, promising the return to civilian rule in 2002 for elections.

While president, Musharraf added 29 amendments to the Pakistani constitution in 2002, enabling him to expand his power and dissolve parliament. Musharraf sided with the Bush Administration in the war on terror against the Taliban in Afghanistan, agreeing to give the U.S. three airbases for attacks.

Musharraf was quite controversial, Clark said. Since he used militant force to overthrow the Pakistani government, Clark was more cautious in recommending Musharraf.

"It increased my investigation process," Clark said. "I made a lot more calls than I would for many other speakers."

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