

Elon recognizes first Phi Beta Kappa inductees

Amanda Bender
Senior Reporter

Elon University added its own chapter of the Phi Beta Kappa, Eta chapter. Phi Beta Kappa is a nationally recognized honors fraternity for students who excel in the liberal arts and sciences. Elon is the seventh institution in North Carolina to have a chapter.

"(Phi Beta Kappa) is a sign that the student has achieved a degree of excellence in the study of the liberal arts and sciences," said Russell Gill, professor of English and president of Elon's chapter. "It means that the student is graduating from an institution that is among the very best of the liberal arts and sciences institutions in the United States."

Phi Beta Kappa was founded in 1776 at the College of William and Mary and is the nation's oldest honors fraternity. About 10 percent of the colleges and universities in the United States have Phi Beta Kappa chapters. Each year, only one out of every 100 college seniors in the nation are inducted into the fraternity.

"It is a sign that it is a superior institution offering the arts and sciences courses," Gill said. "It is a sign of excellence, a certification of excellence. The requirements that Phi Beta Kappa makes of an institution help keep it excellent and serve as a standard of continuing excellence."

The other six institutions in North Carolina with Phi Beta Kappa chapters are Duke University, University of North Carolina Chapel Hill, Wake Forest University, Davidson College, University of North Carolina Greensboro and North Carolina State University.

"I think (Phi Beta Kappa) really brings

attention to what Elon is doing, how much it is growing and the quality of academics that they have to offer students," senior Paige Kensrue said. "I think it was a little bit under the radar before. Now I think people are actually starting recognize it as a top North Carolina school."

Kensrue is an exercise sports science major and co-captain of the women's varsity tennis team, as well as a new member of Phi Beta Kappa.

"I think it is a really prestigious honor. I have had so many people come up to me, congratulate me and tell me they had once aspired to get inducted into Phi Beta Kappa," Kensrue said. "I take it as a really big honor, especially to be in the first class inducted here at Elon."

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Kensrue plans to study physical therapy at UNC-Chapel Hill next year. From there, she hopes to find her passion in the field and eventually open her own business.

In total, 47 Elon seniors were invited to join the Eta chapter of Phi Beta Kappa.

Students invited into the Eta chapter were selected from those with the top GPAs in the class of 2010. From there, Gill said the committee choosing the inductees analyzed each student's course load for courses in the arts and sciences, especially focusing on math and foreign languages. They looked at whether they were an engaged student and of good character.

"Do they seem to be active in the life of the mind?" Gill said of the qualifications. "Do they seem to enjoy intellectual and academic pursuits? And how about character? Do they exhibit proper character?"

Legal clinics adjust practices for economy

Rachel Southmayd
Senior Reporter

In Elon University's School of Law, legal clinics serve as important learning tools for students. But many legal clinics are modifying practices because of the economy.

The Elon University School of Law has three clinics that serve different purposes.

The first is the wills clinic, which works with lower-income families.

Margaret Kantlehner, an associate professor of law, the director of the externship program, and the faculty advisor for the wills clinic, said more students are participating in the clinics in these tough economic times.

"Students need experience and it's harder to find summer and part-time jobs," she said.

The needs of the client are also changing.

"We're finding we're having to become more flexible with appointment times," Kantlehner said. "(The clients) are reluctant to take off work."

Across the country, legal clinics are experiencing opposition from legislators. The state of Maryland has passed legislation mandating the University of Maryland's law school clinic to release information about its clients, finances and cases. If they do not, their funding will be cut.

Conflicting interests have arisen as the University of Maryland law students take on large cases, such as the suing of one of the state's largest employers.

Other states are experiencing similar problems in their public institutions.

So far, the University of North Carolina Law School has

not experienced any legislative backlash according to Tom Kelly, associate professor of law and faculty advisor of UNC's Community Development Law Clinic.

"We have always had tremendous support from both the law school administration and the legislature," he said.

Kelly said he believed the United States does a "shameful" job providing low-income citizens with legal counsel. Constitutionally, the government is only required to provide legal counsel in criminal cases, not civil cases. The only organizations that can help are law school clinics and state legal services.

"Without a doubt, the strain on law school clinics and state legal services is increased during tough economic times," Kelly said.

He said that many fundamental rights are often at risk in civil cases, and that sometimes pursuing these cases involves attacking powerful people and organizations. These people then work to take legal clinic funding away.

"The day could come when we make someone really mad and they could take away our funding. But that day hasn't come yet, and hopefully it never will," Kelly said.

At the Elon University School of Law, these issues don't apply. Since the institution is private, the ramifications are different because it is not publically funded.

Kantlehner said she understands the conflict schools like Maryland are facing.

"I hate for clinics to not be able to pursue justice issues," she said. "But it's going to be more difficult at a state school."

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