

Campus Kitchen plans to reduce food waste at Elon

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Senior Reporter

When the evening meal at Colonnades is over and students leave, employees gather all the food that students did not eat and throw it out. Campus Kitchen, a new student organization coming to Elon University this fall, plans to reduce food waste on campus by packaging the extra food into meals for the homeless and less fortunate in the community.

Campus Kitchen is a national organization with 40 programs around the country, three of which are in North Carolina. These kitchens take any leftover food, prepare it, package it and distribute it to various organizations and individuals in need.

"It is difficult to walk into Colonnades as they are closing and see how much food they are throwing away," said Christina Strader, a junior who helped found Elon's branch of Campus Kitchen. "I am sure this is something that ARAMARK wanted to do something about but had no resources."

Campus Kitchen will partner with ARAMARK, Elon's food service provider, and Allied Churches, an organization that provides food and shelter to the community's homeless individuals. Strader said ARAMARK would provide the food, kitchen and storage space on campus that the organization needs.

Mary Morrison, director of the Kernodle Center for Service

Learning, said ARAMARK may have to adjust how much food is served to Elon students at a time, due to regulations on what food Campus Kitchen can serve.

The meals will be initially delivered to Allied Churches, which Morrison said serves 100 - 150 meals a day. On the weekends, the meals will go to Caring Kitchen, another organization in the Burlington area that provides meals to those who are less fortunate in the community.

"Ultimately, we would like to deliver the individually prepared meals that we create to individuals living at home as well as to Allied Churches," Strader said.

Morrison said Campus Kitchen is not trying to take over other organizations that meet this need but rather help supplement the work that is already being done to feed the Burlington community.

"We will prepare the food, we will deliver the food and frequently our students will eat with the people who are being served, so there will be opportunities to develop relationships," Morrison said.

Campus Kitchen will begin developing its staff this summer. In July, the group plans to hire a staff director and in September, it will hire the student-run executive board.

Strader said they plan to begin with six students on the board and grow from there.

She said there will be a wide variety of needs to be met, including someone to ensure the nutrition of the meals and



A worker at Colonnades Dining Hall prepares a meal for students. A new organization coming to campus in the fall looks to package leftovers for local organizations and individuals in need.

someone working to market and promote the organization in the community. Groups, classes and individuals will be able to volunteer to work shifts preparing and distributing the food.

Strader said this summer four of those involved with Campus Kitchen and the Kernodle Center will be attending a training session in Washington, D.C.

There are many


opportunities for growth, Morrison said. The program can expand to include the Elon community garden by using the food that students grow in the organization's prepared meals and programs where students can teach nutrition classes to the community.

Morrison learned about the program through North Carolina Campus Compact, which brings together colleges working to promote campus

participation in public service, according to its Web site. Wake Forest University presented the success that its Campus Kitchen has had to the members of the Compact.

"I thought (Campus Kitchen) sounds like something that would fit with Elon's values," Morrison said. "We have values around service, values around sustainability and values around student leadership, and it just fit all of that."

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