

New Student Convocation welcomes freshman class to Elon

Jack Dodson
News Editor

To welcome the newest class of Elon University students, the school held its annual New Student Convocation ceremony Saturday morning, where senior staff members and faculty from the school offered advice for a successful four years at Elon.

The event included speeches by President Leo Lambert, Associate Chaplain and Director of Religious Life Phil Smith and Vice President for Student Life Smith Jackson, among others.

"Elon University, from its founding, has been a place of transformation," Smith said. "This is a place you may learn from or interact with persons from all walks of life."

After Smith started the ceremony with an invocation, junior Taylor Martin, the Student Government Association executive president, welcomed the class of 2014 with some advice.

"College is not a place to lose control," Martin said. "You've worked too hard over the last few years to throw it away over one mistake."

He also told the class to remember that Elon's campus has a draw to it.

"I don't know what it is about this place, but you get stuck by its charm when you step on the campus," he said.

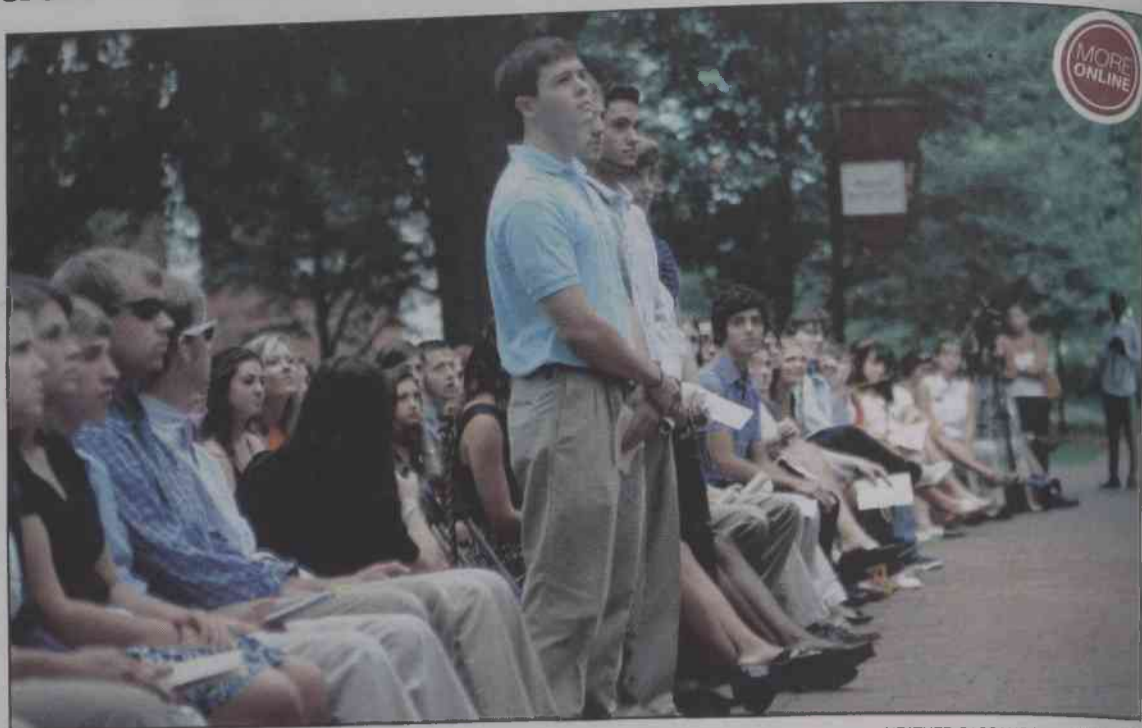
Jackson presented the statistics for the class: 44 states and 31 countries represented and six students from Alamance County who graduated from the Elon Academy, a program geared toward assisting low-income high school students reach college.

Steven House, provost and vice president for academic affairs and professor of biology, followed by introducing the faculty to the new class and the parents, going through their statistics and awards.

"Although these faculty may all look the same to you today — dressed in academic regalia and marching in straight lines — rest assured, they are interesting, passionate and committed individuals," House said. "You will see their uniqueness in the classes they teach, the plays they direct, the art they produce, the polls they conduct, the mock trials and model UN simulations they will create for you, and the many other ways your paths will cross over the next four years."

Lambert then spoke, welcoming the students, talking about his experience as a parent with a student in college and offering some tips for the incoming students.

"I can identify with the tear in mom's eye and the



HEATHER CASSANO | Staff Photographer
Four students out of 1,365 of the freshman class remain at the end of President Leo Lambert's "human bar graph," representing the proportion of people in the world who receive degrees from four-year private colleges or universities in the United States.

lump in dad's throat," Lambert said. "What a privilege it's been for them to help you reach this day."

And with a different take on a New Student Convocation tradition, playing off the China-themed common reader for the class, Lambert led into the annual human bar graph part of his speech by talking about China's relationship with the United States. "China Road: A Journey into the Future of a Rising Power," was required reading for the Class of 2014, written by National Public Radio correspondent Rob Gifford.

To demonstrate the relationship between the two countries, he had 12 rows of students stand up in the back of the audience to represent the Chinese population. Three rows stood up in front to represent the people of the United States.

"The front row owes the back rows almost \$1.7 trillion," he said. "And the back rows manufactured almost all the things you bought at Target yesterday."

After Lambert went through the rest of the human bar graph, referencing the large amount of poverty, illiteracy and small amount of access to college degrees, four students were left standing in the front row representing people with four-year degrees from private institutions.

"John and Quentin and Ricky and Olivia, and the class of 2014," he said, "consider your good fortune this morning."

Lambert highlighted some of the biggest aspects he sees as important to an Elon education including internships, study abroad, undergraduate research and the ability to have a good time without being irresponsible.

At the end of his speech, he held an acorn in front of the class.

"The symbol of promise," he said. "The promise of an education."



HEATHER CASSANO | Staff Photographer
Lucie Miller, a senior orientation leader, helps freshman Lauren Koster from New York during move-in day.



LINDSAY FENDT | Photo Editor
Members of the Class of 2014 move in with the help of orientation staff Aug. 27.

Freshmen arrive on campus, orientation staff assist move-in

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News Editor

With 1,365 new students and 71 transfers all moving in Aug. 27, Elon University was full of new students, parents, orientation and residence life staff as well as physical plant workers all helping students get situated.

Early in the day, Orientation Leaders and Head Staff members joined Residence Life to prepare for the new students.

Orientation Head Staff member Caroline Cronin said there was an early morning rush when move-in started, but after that everything went smoothly. The crowd showed up at North Area residence halls well before the 8 a.m. start time that morning, she said.

"Before sign in, we had at least 30 families lined up," Cronin said. "Out-of-staters are eager."

For the Orientation Leaders and

Head Staff, the day consisted of long hours. Cronin said she woke up around 4 a.m., starting work at 5:30 a.m., and wasn't finished until 1 a.m. The next morning the orientation staff met again at 7 a.m.

Cronin said the afternoon was a little bit of a break from the rush of students coming in the morning, though.

Assistant Director of Residence Life for West Area Richard Baker, who stood by the tent near McEwen throughout the morning, said the move-in process in his area was going smoothly once the early crowd was moved in to their dorms.

Once the first wave of students and parents had come through at the start of the day, Baker said his West Area group had become like a well-oiled machine, with a system to how they were helping the new students.

He said the most important thing during move-in day was to get

students in to their dorms.

"We have to make sure we get them to the right place, answer questions," he said.

New students began moving in Aug. 27 at 8 a.m. Early arrivals were from more than four hours away, so many were coming from hotels to get to campus. Later arrivals, starting at 10 a.m., were from closer by.

"It was a little stressful getting out," freshman Jillian Plotner said. "But it's nice out, and there are a lot of people around to help."

Plotner, from Great Falls, Va., came to campus from her hotel in Burlington. Her dad, Alan, said she was the third — and last — new student moving to college this summer from her family. Her twin had moved in at University of Virginia the weekend before.

"It's been a very difficult summer," her mother Barbara said.

But for some students, the trip to campus was much farther than

coming from Virginia.

For Jason Meerbergen, a San Diego native and the brother of new student Ashley, the move-in process came after a cross-country trip. He drove to Elon with his father during the week before Aug. 27, stopping in various places in the southern part of the country on the way.

"We stopped in Flagstaff, Oklahoma City, Albuquerque," Meerbergen said. "It was a great time."

He said he and his father met Ashley and her mother at Elon to help her move in to her new school. When they were done at Elon they were going to stay at his school, Ursinus College in Pennsylvania, where he's a junior.

Meerbergen said moving his sister in to school reminds him of his early days in college.

"It's cool — it's a lot of work," Meerbergen said. "It kind of brings me back to my freshman year."