

# Editorial

## Values of tradition and hierarchy: Elon exposes the consequences of hazing

On Sept. 14, student leaders began attending meetings with school officials to address dangerous alcohol consumption in order to promote hierarchical boundaries.

They met to discuss hazing. According to the Elon University handbook, the definition of hazing is to "annoy any person (or aid or abet) by playing abusive or ridiculous tricks upon him/her, to subject anyone to personal indignity or danger, or to use peer pressure or innuendo to cause involuntary exercises, personal servitude, etc."

The National Collaborative for Hazing Research and Prevention states that "hazing is any activity expected of someone joining or participating in a group that humiliates, degrades, abuses or endangers them regardless of a person's willingness to participate."

Elon is demanding that students take a stand against destructive, irresponsible drinking. While individual cases of over-indulgence in alcohol became apparent during the latter part of last year, the university shed light on the fact that some of those instances were linked to hazing activities. The desire for participation in such harmful activity is not clear, making the end result harder to control. It seems that when attempting to enforce hierarchical rules, students conceded to unnecessary demands to display loyalty.

The administration required leaders from various organizations at Elon to

participate in the meetings. The objective was to hold students accountable for their participating members, to see dangerous activities and avoid them and to respect one another in ways that reflect the university's policies, and of course, the state's.

"The bottom line is the incidents of hazing, particularly those involving large amounts of alcohol, shouldn't be a part of this university," President Leo Lambert said.

So, what of universities all over the country? More than half of the students surveyed in the National Study on Student Hazing performed by The National Collaborative on Hazing Research and Prevention have experienced hazing, and that population undoubtedly includes students from Elon University. According to an ABC News report, a 21-year-old senior at Rutgers University who was friends with sorority members who allegedly paddled a Sigma Gamma Rho pledge said, "Hazing is something that everyone knows is going on here on campus. All the fraternities and sororities use paddles here ... People are just more upset that this girl ratted — she will probably be shunned now."

Though no accounts of this particular type of abuse have been reported on Elon's campus, and some would be appalled if there were, this account is no different in severity in the eyes of our administration. In no way is hazing limited to Greek or

athletic organizations. Religious life, and community service organizations haze as well. Any action done to a student or an action that a student is forced to do to prove his or her worthiness is hazing.

Some subjected to these actions claim there is no harm done, but others are left with remnants of their experiences. The ABC News report told the story of Joanne, a pledge at Penn State Altoona. She said once she switched campuses as a result of being terrorized while pledging, she began receiving hateful messages and Facebook posts from the women she called her sisters. "All the sisters and pledges turned on me. My car was keyed. I was getting threatening text messages every day. The second semester I couldn't sleep because I would have nightmares."

The prevalence of these activities proves the problem is widespread but no less disconcerting. Those experiences cannot be completely separated from the ones that are highlighted on our campus. The tools to perform hazing rituals may be different, but the moralistic rules that stand against it are not.

As a university, our responsibility lies in the ties that bind these organizations together. Yes, the individual must make decisions to protect and preserve tradition, but our university holds the same priorities dear. Both goals can be accomplished, but not if the former endangers the future of our institution.

### LETTER TO THE EDITOR:

To the Editor:

I have no interest in ever flying a plane and crashing it into a building. I don't plan on ever strapping myself to a bomb and jeopardizing other people's lives. To be quite frank, I don't believe in violence. But as a Muslim, this is what I am portrayed as in the media. I have no personal vendetta against this country that I call home. During these times that Islam is portrayed as "un-American," I am here to say that I am a proud American Muslim.

Islam's image in the United States post-9/11 is far different than the faith I practice. The horrible violent actions of that unforgettable day left the world shocked and devastated. Apart from the American family members of those who passed away because of the terrorist attacks, the most affected group of people were American Muslims, left to explain and analyze the actions of the terrorists who claimed their faith. Muslims understand and disassociate the terrorists attacks from Islam. To understand why, one must understand Islam itself.

We believe in "Allah," the Arabic word for God. We, as Muslims, believe that Allah's message was delivered by prophets

also acknowledged in Old Testament history: Adam, Abraham "Ibrahim", Moses "Musa," David "Daud" and Jesus "Issa." Muslims believe the last Prophet was Muhammad. We pray five times a day to remember Allah in our daily routines. During the Holy Month of Ramadan, we fast from sunrise to sundown to practice self-restraint and to understand the meaning of mind over matter. Islam teaches us to love, give and to be peaceful.

Nowadays, the synonyms associated with the Islamic faith are hate, war and violence. Here's the thing: Islamophobia took flight the moment the airplanes crashed on 9/11. Islamist extremists have succeeded in misrepresenting the entire Islamic population, and we have been left defending our faith and answering questions like, "Why do Muslims hate Americans?" There is no right answer. The actions of the extremists were not Islamic actions but actions out of hate for America. If you view the world from what your television screen shows, then your view is narrow and biased against Islam.

What needs to happen is that Americans must start educating themselves. The way to do this is looking for different outlets and ways to obtain news and accurate information. Once

a person understands Islam and its fundamentals, they then understand that peace is a desired normalcy, and that 9/11 is irrelevant to the Islamic teachings. I do also know that burning Korans as a protest will not achieve anything but further the already huge gap of misunderstanding between Islam and Christianity.

As a Muslim, I am proud to be an American. I have patience and believe understanding will occur one correction at a time. I am hopeful that Americans will someday be comfortable with having Muslims in this country again. Although the comfort was disturbed, it was not destroyed. Here at Elon stand 11 Muslim students, the most Elon has ever had. We hope to shatter the stereotypes and answer any questions anyone may have. We are ambitious and tolerant. Although we may never fly a plane, we understand the phrase "The sky's the limit." In saying that, we hope to create a mutual understanding and dispel the misconceptions portrayed about Islam and Muslims.

Sincerely,  
Neima Abdulahi  
Class of 2013

### TO COMMENT ...

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Content will be edited for clarity, length and accuracy. All submissions must include a name and phone number.

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