

University expansion affects paperless campaign

Melissa Kansky
Multimedia Editor

As Elon University continues to implement a paperless campaign in an effort to reduce paper usage and increase efficiency within the administration, the expansion of educational facilities is causing a rise in paper usage.

"The objective is a reduction in paper usage for this year or at least no increase in paper usage," said Elaine Durr, sustainability coordinator at Elon.

In the Feb. 25, 2009 issue of The Pendulum, an article stated the university had decreased paper usage from 10 million sheets of paper to 2.8 million sheets since the beginning of the paperless campaign in 2006. Since 2009, it has risen to 3 million sheets, which is about a 7 percent increase.

Chris Fulkerson, assistant vice president for technology, attributes the increase to the addition of computer labs.

"We don't want to negatively affect instruction," Fulkerson said. "But we also don't want to waste paper. It's a balancing act."

Elon encourages the use of technologies that serve as alternatives to printing. Fulkerson suggests using network storage, the digital drop box on Blackboard and a flash drive to reduce the amount of paper usage.

"Now students can share documents through Google apps," he said. "Google docs are the newest technology that would further the campaign."

Older tactics are still in place, such as the print management system, are still in use and aim to reduce paper usage.

The print management system,

installed at the beginning of the campaign in 2006, limits the number of pages an individual can print free of charge. For any document that is more than three pages long, students must use printing dollars or Phoenix Cash.

In 2006, 10 to 12 bags of paper left the library per day, but the number of bags has decreased by 20 to 25 percent. The library now sees an average of two to three bags of paper usage per day.

Fulkerson describes the system as self-check and said he believes students are now hesitant to print an article that is 300 pages.

"What it's saying is 'are you sure you want to print this?'" Fulkerson said. "Before implementing it, students would see an article and print it and then see a better article and print that, leaving the first article to be thrown away."

The campaign aims to raise student awareness about the impact printing has on the environment.

"We want to promote a continual increase in awareness of paper usage, which prompts people to think before they print," Durr said.

An electronic application process has also furthered the university's sustainability initiatives. The provost's office, the human resource office and the registrar office have adopted a paperless system.

"If you think of all the paper we handle on campus and make all those key offices paperless, we can reduce our paper consumption by quite a bit," he said.

An electronic database also expedites data processing.

"There isn't as much data entry because we are taking an online application and just having the data

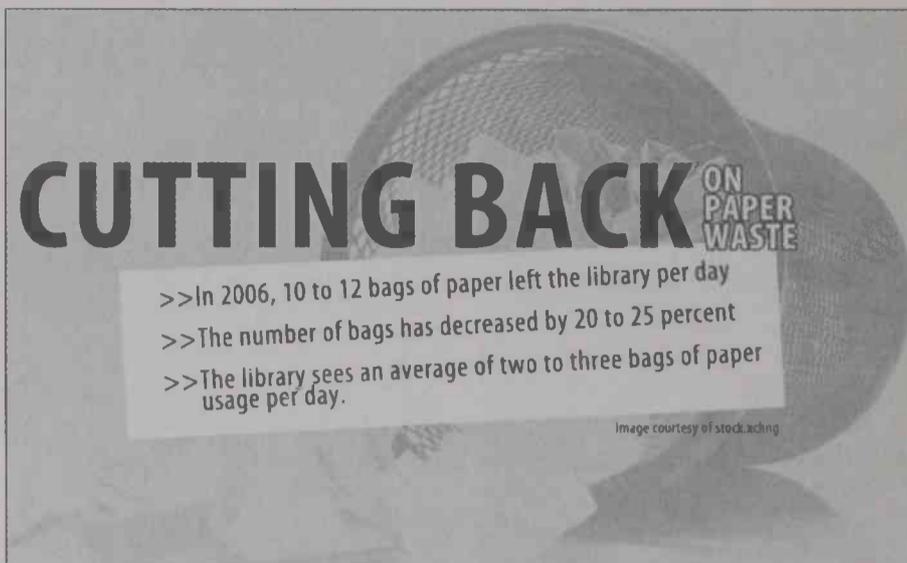


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SARAH BETH COSTELLO | Graphics Editor

flow into the system instead of printing out data and typing into the datatel system," Fulkerson said.

Mail sent to Elon still produces paper waste, he said.

Although scanning and shredding material does not reduce the amount of paper usage, the electronic conversion of correspondence and transcripts reduces storage space needed.

Similarly, the admissions office converts tangible documents into electronic form. Prospective students can still apply to Elon using paper, but the application is scanned and becomes a paperless document.

"Mail in the admissions office gets scanned daily and then routed electronically to the right places," Fulkerson said.

The education department implemented a similar conversion process to reduce the amount of storage space needed. Prior to the paperless campaign, a classroom served as a file room for teacher certifications and records concerning alumni. Those records now exist electronically.

"We converted all paper to electronic documents and converted the space back into a classroom," Fulkerson said.

Although recycling is important, Durr said she does not believe it is the optimal solution.

"Recycling paper that is used is certainly important," Durr said, "but not using it in the first place is the better option. One should think — reduce, reuse and then recycle — in that order."

Elon attempts to balance academics, sustainability

Melissa Kansky
Multimedia Editor

Students and faculty gathered to discuss sustainability initiatives and organize the Student Sustainability Council in Lindner Hall Thursday night.

Members from Green Team Environmental Service Learning organization, Elon's Sierra Club chapter and Sustainable Living Learning Community were in attendance. A representative from each organization described potential projects for this academic year. These included contributing to Timber Lake Farms, creating a compost system and tending to the community garden outside of the Truitt Center. Students not associated with these organizations voiced concerns as well.

The Sustainable Living Learning Community aims to increase awareness of sustainable practices, plan environmental events and create a liaison committee to work with Elaine Durr, Elon's sustainability coordinator.

"The purpose of the Sustainable Living Learning Community is to discuss and implement sustainable practices in our own lives and their community," said freshman Alex Papp,

co-president of the learning community. "We should model how to protect and preserve the environment."

Eliza Gibson, president of the Sierra Club, said the organization strives to promote environmentally friendly practices through the creation of a green fund. The fund would sponsor activities or structures that would benefit the environment.

Students discussed implementing a compost system outside each dining hall and establishing a solar panel work station. Application of the funds or methods to raise funds has not been determined.

"We the people, whoever organizes the fund, can decide what to do with it," Gibson said. "The decisions are up to anyone interested in getting involved."

Papp suggested adding additional fees for practices that deter sustainability, such as bringing a car on campus.

A committee is also looking into bike lanes to encourage people who live off-campus to walk or bike to class, Durr said.

"There was a plan done for sidewalks and bike lanes and lighting," she said. "Now it's in the process of getting pieces of the project funded. It's a step in the right direction, but it's a long way to go to get full access to sidewalks."



JULIA MURPHY | Staff Photographer

Elon's Sierra Club president Eliza Gibson offers her ideas about a possible Green Fund to help support Elon's Sustainability initiatives.

Even if financial support is available, Gibson expects cooperation from the student body to influence these programs success.

"Education and awareness (are large components)," Gibson said. "We don't want a bin of compost and someone throwing trash in it. We need to test that people respect the process."

While student support moves programs toward success, faculty assistance is needed as well.

Those present at the meeting requested an organic food option in the dining halls. Ryan Moore, assistant food service director of ARAMARK, had made strides to appease the request for organic food on campus, but they proved unsuccessful.

"We had tried to do organic fruit and vegetables," he said. "We had to throw a lot of it away. Organic is really good, but the demand is not really there."

If the costs drop and demand is there, ARAMARK can work toward organic products, Moore said.

The Student Sustainability Council aims to continue these discussions.

"Frequency of meeting times is up to the students," Durr said. "My job is to give them a space and to let them have a voice."

Although the council is already in effect, it will undergo new developments to increase its influence.

According to Gibson's plan, the council will be comprised of representatives from already existing student organizations dedicated to environmental preservation. Anyone interested is also able to join.

"In Student Sustainability Council last year there were so many good ideas," Gibson said. "But we need the people to come together. I found that once you start meeting every other week or every few weeks it stopped being productive."

They will meet Thursdays at 4:15 p.m. Location has not yet been determined.

"The purpose of the sustainable living learning community is to discuss and implement sustainable practices in our own lives and community."

-ALEX PAPP
ELON UNIVERSITY
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