

Law professor appointed to special adviser for young lawyers task force, promotes leadership ideas at Elon law

Kyra Gemberling
Reporter

The North Carolina Bar Association recently appointed Elon law professor Roland Smith as special adviser for its organization Young Lawyers Initiatives Task Force. As adviser, Smith will provide counsel for the task force as they attempt to create a Leadership Academy for young lawyers.

Smith is a Skeens-Watson Visiting Professor of Leadership at Elon's School of Law in Greensboro, and has been employed there since fall 2009. He is a senior faculty member at the Center for Creative Leadership (CCL). He published "The Changing Nature of Leadership in Law Firms" in 2009 as part of CCL's current research agenda focusing on senior lawyer-leaders.

Smith spent his childhood living in several different cities and even another country.

"I was a military kid," he said. "I was born in Kentucky, lived in Germany and grew up in Colorado. I ended up going to Boise State as an undergraduate on a basketball scholarship."

Smith said his first and foremost interest was leadership. With bachelor's and master's degrees from Boise State University and a Ph.D. in Organizational Learning from the University of Idaho, Smith's experience has extended beyond law into studying the skills needed to be an effective leader.

Smith is able to provide assistance in the evaluation and enhancement of Elon Law's leadership program because of his experience in leadership.

The Elon law website mentions an

aim to "prepare graduates to be not only successful lawyers who can excel at the highest levels of the profession, but also leading contributors to the well-being of the region, nation and world."

Because of this emphasis on developing strong leaders, Smith's new position is an example of this ideal.

Eugene C. Pridgen, President of NCBA, said in his installation address that his reason for forming Young Lawyer Initiatives Task Force is "to help new lawyers both navigate a legal profession that is undergoing dramatic changes and connect with the profession's historic ideals."

Pridgen said his idea that lawyers will have a diminished role in society is a significant factor in determining the way Smith will use his role as special adviser.

"We must inspire and develop our young lawyers to become the next generation of citizen lawyers as legislators, community leaders and bar leaders," Pridgen said.

Smith said he agrees.

"The changing nature of the legal landscape is requiring that new lawyers are coming into the profession not just ready to learn but ready to practice," he said.

He said the profession is now requiring a broader skill set.

"The future employers of today's current law students expect lawyers to have the ability to make sense of complexity, to effectively problem solve and make decisions without much direction, to work collaboratively across boundaries, and to make correct



PHOTO COURTESY OF UNIVERSITY RELATIONS

Roland Smith, an Elon law professor, was recently appointed special adviser for the North Carolina Bar Association's Young Lawyer's Task Force.

choices for clients that are professional, ethical and cost effective," he said.

Despite the time commitments involved with his various responsibilities, Smith said he still enjoys time in the classroom by teaching the law school's Lawyering, Leadership, and Professionalism course to first-year students.

"The dean (George Johnson) and I teach the Leadership course together,"

he said. "With the dean involved, the students realize the commitment of the law school and the university to leadership."

This year they have an additional focus on "justice and the role of the lawyer" and will spend a day at the Center for Creative Leadership and two days at the International Civil Rights Center and Museum exploring the role of lawyer leaders.

Latest Elon Poll finds majority of N.C. residents in favor of offshore drilling despite recent sustainability initiatives

Liv Dubendorf
Senior Reporter

Despite the serious implications of the oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico, a majority of North Carolinians indicated that they are in support of offshore drilling for gas and oil according to the most recent Elon Poll.

Last spring, 100,000 barrels of oil seeped into the Gulf of Mexico, covering up to 68,000 square miles. According to the most recent poll, about half of North Carolinians "note that the Gulf oil spill affected their opinion about drilling off of North Carolina's coast."

Despite the recent oil spill, the poll found that 51 percent of North Carolinians polled support offshore drilling for gas and oil. This is in comparison to the April poll, when 63 percent responded that they were in favor of offshore drilling.

Of those surveyed, 40 percent indicated that they opposed drilling, compared to the 30 percent that opposed offshore drilling in April.

"I'm a little surprised that it isn't lower than that," said Kenn Gaither, assistant dean in the school of communications and professor of communications. "Fifty-one percent (in support of offshore drilling) is still a fairly high number in relationship to the gravity of the BP oil spill. I would've expected it to be 25-30 percent."

According to Gaither, the media covers a recent event in depth, but when time passes and an event loses its novelty and coverage drops.

"This sends an inaccurate message to the public that things are OK and they're not," Gaither said. "We're going to be seeing effects of this for years, and decades to come."

He said the media's coverage made offshore drilling a pertinent issue to the public.

"I think it made it an issue for discussion and placed it on people's conscience, otherwise it wouldn't have been there," he said.

Aaron Peeks, professor of sociology, had a different point of view in regards

ELON POLL RESULTS FOR THE FALL OF 2010 CONCERNING DRILLING OFF THE COAST OF N.C.

40 percent of respondents oppose drilling off the coast of North Carolina

51 percent of respondents support drilling off the coast of North Carolina

42 percent of respondents said the Gulf oil spill did not affect their views about drilling for oil off the coast of North Carolina

45 percent of respondents said the Gulf oil spill did affect their views about drilling for oil off the coast of North Carolina

to the public opinion on offshore drilling.

"I didn't expect much in terms of change," Peeks said. "People are superficial. They are distracted by different realities in their lives."

He said because alternative forms of energy have a "huge upfront cost," oil and gas are more attractive to the public.

"Offshore drilling obviously fulfills certain needs that society has," Peeks said. "The environmental movement has always been a movement of the wealthy."

Gaither said the public has been disenchanted with alternative forms of energy.

"What stops up a lot of people is that we've been hearing for decades now about new forms of energy," he said. "When those don't come to fruition, people become immune to the newest energy sources."

Peeks said the society's lack of commitment to sustainability has to do with the structure of our society.

"We depend upon convenience," said Peeks. "What would it take to change? Nobody wants to change. We all benefit from the system. We're taught we deserve what we have."

Admissions gears up for Class of 2015 applications

Becca Tynes
Senior Reporter

High school seniors aren't the only ones preparing for the college application process. Elon University's admissions staff is already hard at work recruiting students and preparing for application deadlines.

"We are working on recruiting a class of 1,400 freshmen that will be representative of Elon's values and plans for the future," said Greg Zaiser, dean of admissions.

Elon continues to strive for enhanced cultural and socioeconomic diversity, according to Zaiser, as multicultural diversity increased from 13 percent to 17 percent this past year. He said this is a microcosm of what Elon would like to see in the future.

"The focus is on greater diversity in the class," Zaiser said. "That's sort of the driving point for us. We'd like to increase diversity and create a slightly larger freshmen class."

Susan Klopman, vice president of Admissions and Financial Planning, said not only do they wish to increase ethnic and socioeconomic diversity, but they also hope to increase geographic and religious diversity.

"What I think Elon is really committed to is bringing students to a campus environment that more closely reflects the environment of the world," Klopman said. "That means much greater ethnic, geographic, religious and socioeconomic diversity."

While the admissions staff's main focus is to increase diversity, they also hope to increase the size of the incoming freshmen class by approximately 40 students.

"We are working on recruiting a class of 1,400 freshmen that will be representative of Elon's values and plans for the future," Zaiser said.

Last year, Elon had an 8 percent increase in applications submitted. Zaiser said although it's too early in the process to tell if that percentage will increase, there's a good chance that it might.

"This year, our visits are up, and when we have an increase in visitors, we typically

expect an increase in applications," Zaiser said. "We think that we'll have another very strong applicant pool."

According to Klopman, the admissions staff is not focusing on changing the academic profile of the Elon student.

"We already have excellent students," Klopman said.

Zaiser said the admissions staff is not focusing on accepting students with higher test scores.

"I think that Elon is at a point where we're really comfortable with who we are," Zaiser said. "The goal is to continue to recruit strong classes of students who will do well here and reflect highly on society. We want to be who we are."

Although the academic profile of the Elon student will not change, the university is making other changes in admissions.

"We have changed our style of the campus visit," Zaiser said. "The campus tour is now more experience-based. The guide shares their experiences from their perspective."

According to Klopman, less time is spent on reciting facts about the university and more time is spent telling current students' stories.

"The campus visit is much more exciting," Klopman said. "We are spending less time on reciting facts and more time on the Elon story. So far, it's been very well-received. It's far more interesting and it's real."

Another major change in the admissions office this year is how submitted applications will be read and reviewed.

"We're going paperless in an effort to be reflective of the values of Elon," Zaiser said. "Our intention is to read our early decision and final deadline applications online. There will be no hard copies."

According to Zaiser, the admissions staff is excited about the new changes being made.

"It just gets better every year," Klopman said. "We are very pleased with the profile of students who are choosing to consider at Elon. I'm excited about making some changes, but the heart and soul of Elon will not change. I'm excited about who we are."