

Opinions

Social etiquette shouldn't disappear in college



Jennifer McAllister
Columnist

Let's set up a scenario: I was sitting on my bed, he was sitting on my chair, and it was late on a Saturday night. The set up was perfect; my roommate wasn't in the room, and the conversation had gone from why we

had come to Elon, to laughing about how awkward it was to be a freshman again. We were smiling, laughing, sprinkling in some flirtatious touching to the arm and hand, and I was absolutely positive that in about five minutes, the conversation would end and would lead way into,

well, something else. I leaned in, he leaned in. I smiled, he smiled. Then he said, "I really hope that me and my girlfriend stay together while I'm here."

I felt like someone had literally punched me straight in the stomach. Had he mentioned it before he walked me home? No. Had he mentioned something on the dance floor earlier that evening? Positively not. Had he ever shown some inkling of a chance that he had a significant other? Never. All I want to know is, since when has it become appropriate to come back to a girl's room, stroke her hand, and never mention the presence of a girlfriend who lives in a different state? Hello, common courtesy, it's time for you to come back and smack some sense into the college population.

I know sometimes college doesn't feel like the real world, and sometimes "home" does seem

millions of miles away. But I really don't care if your girlfriend or boyfriend lives across the world; you still have one and if you don't want one anymore, you can break up with him or her. We all understand that college can be a time of experimentation, mistakes and nights when you wake up and wish you hadn't done something, but you still can't pretend like anything outside of college doesn't exist. It's not right, and it's definitely not attractive.

But the lack of college etiquette extends to so much more than the occasionally forgotten significant other. I've heard many people say "there are no alcoholics in college," either. You drink one to two handles of vodka a week? Fine, as long as you get to class. I mean, it doesn't matter if you're hungover and sleeping through it, right? What many students fail to realize is that 6 percent of college students can

be diagnosed with alcoholism, and 31 percent can be recognized as alcohol abusers. Can you really tell me that there are no alcoholics in college? What happens to the people who get out of college and continue to drink as they did in school? Is it really that easy to immediately switch to being a "grown-up" in the "real world"? Probably not. But it's seemingly accepted in college, where our transition into the "real world" is supposed to begin.

Yes, we're still young, so we can make mistakes, but recognize that full social abandonment is probably not the best idea when the people you're going to spend the next four years with will surround you. So please, just take a second and realize that the mention of a girlfriend is not going to ruin your entire college experience. We're all here to have fun, but common social etiquette still applies, no matter where you are.

To stand up or to stand by when academic integrity is in question



Caitlin O'Donnell
Columnist

It's nothing new for students to be using their laptops for something other than note-taking in the middle of a class. But a few weeks ago, I was

particularly distracted by the frantic Google searches taking place on the Mac beside me.

The next thing I knew, a complete essay was being crafted before my eyes as the student obviously pulled quotes, paragraphs and ideas from the first links that popped up. It turned out, as the student explained during a brief lull in the class, that the assignment was a major research project due in his or her next class.

I laughed to myself. I laughed at first because I thought the student was joking. But then, I realized, I didn't really know how else to react, whether to say something or to act like it didn't matter.

The situation I found myself in was one that many Elon University students can relate to. According to TurnItIn, an organization that works to address plagiarism, 80 percent of college students have admitted to cheating at least once. So, chances are, you know someone who has. But is it the job of peers to admonish one another, or should it be left to the administration?

The Elon Honor Code clearly outlines honesty in academics as an integral component of Elon's community values, specifically charging all students to "be truthful in your academic work."

But in many cases, educators are unaware of the steps their students take in order to get a grade and can't necessarily take action against it.

Consider, for example, a recent article in "The Chronicle of Higher Education," which tells the story of a writer who works for a custom-essay company, doing assignments for students. These assignments range from the first paper they write for freshman English through their senior thesis.

"You would be amazed by the incompetence of students' writing," the writer, under the pseudonym Ed Dante, said. "They need help learning and, separately, they need help passing their courses. But they aren't getting it."

While professors have tools available to help fight cheating, such as online plagiarism checkers, it's not always easy or practical to spend valuable classroom and work time searching for academic dishonesty.

Rather, it's up to students to demand and strive for ethical practices in the classroom, both from themselves and their peers.

That may not necessarily mean directly addressing the issue in a classroom, but it means leading by example and holding oneself to a higher standard. It means when confronted with the issue, to not act like it doesn't matter, because it does.

When a university such as Elon graduates students who can't formulate their theses, support their ideas or even spell correctly, it reflects back on the school and the learning that takes place there. All students should want their school to be respected for high academic values and solid learning and they should actively work toward it.

Immigrants bask in benefits of US open door policies



Rachel Southmayd
Columnist

Last week, grocery stores emptied their stocks of canned pumpkin, turkeys were slaughtered by the thousands and Americans made their way by trains,

planes (with copious amounts of patting down) and automobiles to fight over who gets to break the wishbone and who can eat the most mashed potatoes. It's all a part of the grand American tradition we refer to as Thanksgiving.

But before all of the leftovers are eaten and the Black Friday sales begin, it's important to reflect on what the first Thanksgiving-ers were appreciative for. The Pilgrims came to America in search of a better life, a brighter tomorrow, free of persecution and with opportunities limited only by their will to work.

Since the era of the Pilgrims, countless people have made the same move to this country, with the same goals in mind. But suddenly, in today's age, this practice has come under attack, and every few months, an event spurs opposing sides to take up arms once again and take on the issue of immigration.

On Nov. 15, the California Supreme Court ruled that students who came to the United States illegally can qualify for in-state tuition, trumping a previous decision that said these students would be treated as non-residents. This decision affects hundreds of thousands of students in the state, including 433,000 in the California State University system.

The very next day, it was revealed through an anonymous tip to a newspaper that Fresno State University Student Government

President Pedro Ramirez is an illegal immigrant who came to the U.S. when he was a toddler. Although Ramirez never shared his status with his constituents, he has been serving without pay, since he is not allowed to receive a paycheck.

The administration of Fresno State has supported Ramirez although others have not, including his opponent in the election, Cole Rojewski. He said Ramirez should step down because he was not forthcoming to voters, although legally, thanks to this ruling by the Supreme Court, Ramirez has done nothing wrong. He has said he is living his own little piece of the American dream, living life in the U.S. as a normal citizen and working to be a good student.

According to the Chronicle of Higher Education, illegal immigrants in North Carolina are allowed to enroll in community colleges starting next year. They may also enroll in the University of North Carolina system under strict limits - they have to pay out-of-state tuition without qualifying for financial aid, must graduate from a high school in the U.S. and cannot take spots from legal citizens.

In celebration of Thanksgiving, I would like to point out some pieces of this story we should all be appreciative of. We should be thankful that there are people who care enough about their fellow students to run for student government president. We should be thankful that there are people who think everyone deserves an education, no matter his or her birthplace. But we should also be thankful there are people who care so fiercely about their country's resources that they fight to preserve them for those that fall within the letter of the established law.

Above all else we should be thankful that for many, the lives we lead are still enviable, still worth risking imprisonment, persecution or worse. We should be thankful we have something worth pursuing.

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