

Ease of mobility access differs between on- and off-campus residencies

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Copy Chief

Students with mobility impairments who live on campus at Elon University have a special staff to ensure they are able to live and attend classes with ease. But students with these needs who live off campus may lack the same resources.

According to Susan Wise, coordinator of Disabilities Services, the university adequately obeys the Americans with Disabilities Act, or ADA, building codes and minimum accessibility requirements.

"The Oaks and the Colonnades are the newest residence halls to be constructed, and they have elevators," she said. "The vast majority of the residence halls are older buildings and don't have elevators."

For students with temporary or long-term mobility impairments who want to live off campus, easy access and living arrangements may be more of a concern.

Freeman & Company, a real estate company with properties in Elon, Greensboro and Boone, does not have access for individuals with disabilities, according to Sybil Holt, executive property manager.

"We really don't have any access," she said. "But some of the apartments are built on ground level."

Wise said first-floor housing and ramps are ways Elon accommodates students with mobility impairments.

"Typically, a student with a mobility impairment who makes a request for housing will not end up in the older buildings," she said.

Ten to 12 percent of the college-aged population generally has some sort of disability, Wise said.

The university is unable to provide the exact number of students with disabilities, because many choose not to disclose the information, but there are several on campus who require specific accommodations.

"Elon has very few people who have disabilities and are not protected under the law," she said.

John Hagen, a Resident Assistant in Colonnades A, has only been an RA for one semester but has noticed the difficulties for students with physical disabilities to live on campus.

"I lived in North Area first semester, and there is no way a physically handicapped person could live in the area unless they were on the first floor, which completely eliminates the possibility of them becoming an RA," he said. "I feel as though all dorms should be able to accommodate such a situation by allowing disabled persons the exact same housing possibilities as every one else."

As far as access to classes is concerned, the Long psychology building is the only academic building on campus without an elevator.

Becky Olive-Taylor, associate



Junior Jess McDonald gets to class in the Academic Pavilion on crutches. McDonald broke her leg in February.

dean of academic support, said she is unsure whether there are plans to install one in the future.

Olive-Taylor said Elon makes class adjustments for students who have temporary or long-term mobility needs.

"Students who have a temporary mobility concern have their classes located on higher levels moved to the first floor," she said.

According to Wise, the ADA, which has been in existence since 1990,

requires all new buildings to meet the accommodations of individuals with mobility impairments.

According to Holt, Freeman & Company, the local apartment complexes, which include Oak Hill and Sheridan, were built after the ADA was put into place.

"When we built our apartments we didn't have to do the handicap code thing," Wise said. "Now, when you build units you have to have ramps and handicap access."

Elon to be evaluated in 2013 by SACS accrediting body

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decision, that will then be implemented.

"They are not to be involved at this point," Kiser said. "It is meant to be a grassroots movement from top to bottom. It's very important that senior staff has to buy into it because this plan also has to be funded. There are definite expectations on the part of SACS that we

will get the money to make it happen."

According to Copeland, the QEP will touch every student at Elon at some point in their time on campus.

"It might be an experience for first-year or senior students," he said. "It wouldn't (affect) all students at the same time, but it touches everyone at some

point in their academic career."

Examples of other schools' QEPs included focus on critical thinking skills, ethical issues or experiential learning.

Before the SACS team arrives on campus in the spring of 2013, a final QEP must be sent to them in advance for review. While on campus, they will also review Elon's "compliant standards" which include the qualification of course instructors, sufficient funding for programs and facilities for student work.

"These standards are almost like the minimum that needs to be met," Kiser said. "The QEP is the extra part that goes beyond meeting the minimum standards in order to move forward."

If the plan is not approved, Elon will be given feedback to improve the QEP and strengthen it.

"Once the (SACS team) comes and approves the plan, then implement it for five years and they then come back to look at the progress of the plan," Kiser said.

"The idea is commendable that SACS is saying that we not only want campuses to prove they're meeting certain standards, but also constantly striving to improve," Kiser said. "We're that kind of campus anyway. We've never been a campus to sit on our laurels to say 'we've got this thing down pat.' We're taking a campus that is already very striving and adding this thing to it."

Meal plan options restructured, unlimited plan now available

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is the minimum plan requirement for freshmen and sophomores.

"If you have one of the All Access meal plans and just want to get a drink, walk in with some friends to socialize or get a meal in a retail facility and want to go sit in a dining hall, it's fine," he said. "Wherever you live or wherever you are, your closest dining hall is your home kitchen, living room and place to hang out, and we want to emphasize that to students."

Allison Metcalf Woodard, district marketing manager of ARAMARK at Elon, said the Block meal packages, available in increments of 200 and 300, will mirror the current system of meal plans in that meals will roll over from semester to semester and students will be able to swipe for friends and family.

Gazda said both packages will have a two-week change period so students are able to find the best fit and value for them.

Woodard said Colonnades, Harden and McEwen dining halls will close at 9 p.m. starting in the fall and all three will also offer the take-out system currently only offered at McEwen. She said these changes are the results of student feedback that individuals with busy schedules and limited dining time have requested hour expansions and to-go boxes.

Freshman Matt Dowdle said he believes the new meal plan packages, specifically the All Access plan, are not very cost efficient because they limit the number of retail combination meals

available to students.

"I do not like the new meal plan idea because as a student who eats at Varsity and Acorn more than 14 times a week, I feel the new options will limit me in my choices," he said. "I think the All Access plan will force me to pay more money while offering me less choices. I like the current meal plans better because they give me more bang for my buck and allow me to eat wherever I want when I want."

Sophomore Dan Enders said he thinks the new meal plan packages will provide students with more options for less hassle.

"I think overall is it a good change," he said. "It provides better value for meal plans and it encourages the use of the dining halls where healthier options are more available."

Sophomore Greg Gentile, on the other hand, said he feels indifferent about the new meal plans because he will not be required to purchase a package through the university.

"I personally care very little about the new plans because I wasn't planning on buying a meal plan next year anyway," he said. "However, if I were to buy a meal plan, I still don't think I would use the unlimited plan too much because I don't often go to the three dining halls. I'd rather eat somewhere quick for convenience."

Gazda said ARAMARK will be hosting student forums to discuss the changes at 2 p.m. Wednesday, March 16 and Tuesday, March 29 in Moseley 217.

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