

Editorial

Take advantage of free events offered on campus

They say there are only a few days during each academic year at Elon University that nothing is on the calendar.

There is so much culture within just a few square blocks that one would think Elon students would be the most refined, educated, well-rounded group of young people ever to walk the Earth. This is, of course, a rather incorrect assumption.

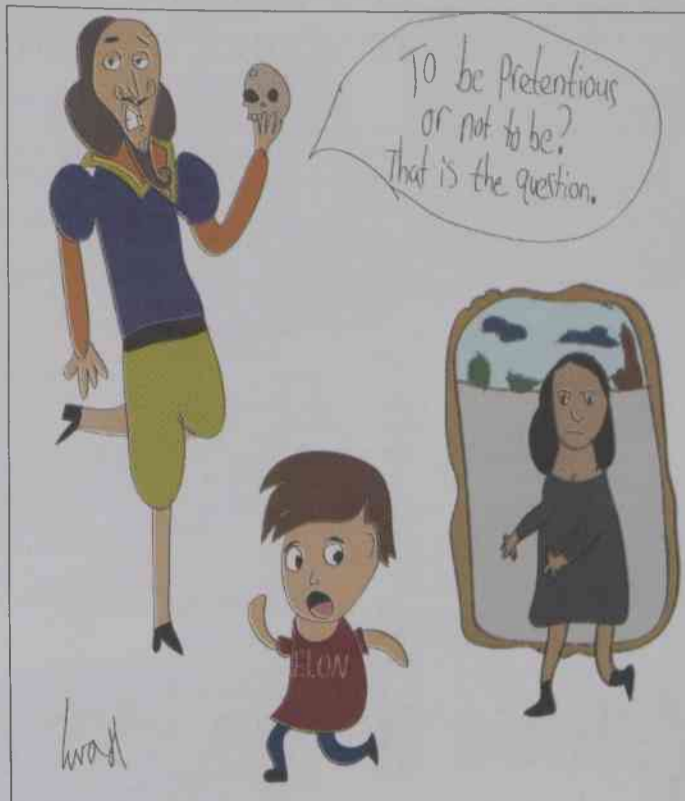
Sometimes it feels as if there is too much going on at Elon. Is there a speaker coming who seems interesting, but you have a paper to write, a quiz to study for and a group meeting? Oh, just catch the next one. But then the next event rolls around, and the next, and the same workload issues arise again.

In fact, it is probably a good bet that a large number of students in attendance at most cultural events are there because it is a class requirement, like for a Global course or for a journalism reporting class. This is all well and good, because attendance is

attendance, and simply being at an event indicates some level of education will probably occur, even if it is reluctantly.

But we shouldn't settle for unenthused audiences. Groups of young people tolerating brilliant intellectuals or talented performers aren't enough. Elon students should embrace the opportunity to learn and grow, personally and professionally. They should have a thirst for knowledge and seek out these events that could enhance their lives or broaden their perspectives.

Jeff Clark, executive director of cultural and special programs, said the school is working to increase the number of performances students generally come to in crowds, like comedy. But Elon shouldn't compromise. We are in an academic setting, and if students don't take advantage of the one time in their lives when they'll have free access to an extremely large number of enriching free events, it is their own fault and loss.



EVA HILL | Cartoonist

Court made the right call in funeral protest case

The message may be deplorable, offensive and appalling, but the Supreme Court's decision to protect the Westboro Baptist Church's right to speech and to assemble was the correct course of action.

The 8-1 decision, announced March 2, provides the hateful but peaceful protesters the right to picket service men and women's funerals and promote their anti-gay agenda.

This is not in any way an endorsement of WBC's ideology. The small Kansas-based congregation spews a message of hatred and its picket signs thanking God for dead soldiers turns the stomach of many Americans.

Yet the press must be thankful the Supreme Court has not interjected itself into this messy conflict and defined what speech is acceptable. There are other methods of combating these radical protests without limiting the speech the authors of the Constitution meant to protect.

Towns have the right to enact ordinances barring all protestors a predetermined number of feet away from funerals and cemeteries, and that's as far as the restriction should go.

But in the spirit of civil discourse, citizens angry and frustrated with WBC's message should engage in a counter-protest. The messages of hate can easily be overshadowed by a group of determined individuals bent on providing a message of love.

In January, when the church sent four members to "re-educate" American University students, they were met with hundreds of students counter-protesting and flaunting homemade signs of their own.

Last December, when 10 church members came to picket at the funeral of Elizabeth Edwards, wife of former Sen. John Edwards, in Raleigh, a group of 200 counter-protesters formed a "Line of Love" to challenge WBC's message.

These counter-protests are the greatest example of American civil discourse and show how a nation's people will not allow this renegade group to run wild. WBC's voice should not be silenced. But it can be a minor note in the chorus of open debate and protest.

The First Amendment was never meant to protect the mainstream, common or established voice. The ugly, unpopular and, in this case, extremely hurtful voice is that which must be protected. For the sake of free speech and discourse, messages such as this must remain.

As Chief Justice John Roberts wrote in the court's majority opinion: "Speech is powerful. It can stir people to action, move them to tears of both joy and sorrow, and — as it did here — inflict great pain. On the facts before us, we cannot react to that pain by punishing the speaker. As a nation, we have chosen a different course — to protect even hurtful speech on public issues to ensure that we do not stifle public debate."

MORE ONLINE: OPINIONS

The semester is nearly halfway done. How are you holding up to the commitments you made to yourself back in January? See how five Pendulum staffers are doing at:

pendulumresolutions.wordpress.com

Sometimes our thoughts just can't wait until Wednesday. There's always more to read on the Opinions blog. Check it out at:

www.pendulumopinions.wordpress.com

On the website, read an editorial about next year's meal plan system and see what columnist Robert Wohner said about the suspending of BYU basketball player Brandon Davies and how its Honor Code gives it a clear identity.

TO COMMENT ...

We appreciate original responses to Pendulum articles. Feedback of 500 words or less can be sent in several ways.

Letters to the editor and columns can be e-mailed to pendulum@elon.edu or sent to 7012 Campus Box, Elon, N.C. 27244

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

A message board also accompanies each article online at www.elon.edu/pendulum where commentary can be quickly posted.

THE PENDULUM

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The Pendulum is published each Wednesday of the academic year. The advertising and editorial copy deadline is 5 p.m. the Friday before publication. Letters to the editor and guest columns are welcome and should be typed and e-mailed with a telephone number for verification. Submissions are accepted as Word documents. The Pendulum reserves the right to edit obscene and potentially libelous material. Lengthy letters or columns may be trimmed to fit. All submissions become the property of The Pendulum and will not be returned. You can reach The Pendulum by e-mail at pendulum@elon.edu. If you have questions or concerns about an article, contact a section editor. Please do not respond to reporters directly.

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