

# Personal Librarian program introduced for freshmen

Hal Rhorer  
Reporter

Belk Library is offering a new Personal Librarian program for students. The service assigns a librarian on staff to every Elon 101 class. Intended to aid students with research, writing and all things library-related, the program establishes a relationship with students that the Belk staff hopes will continue to grow for the rest of the students' careers at Elon.

The program is up and running this year with positive feedback thus far. Lynne Bisko, a nonprint librarian, is leading the program and is one of the 15 personal librarians. Bisko researched and spearheaded the idea after hearing about its success at a few other universities.

"We thought it would be a good fit for Elon and that it would be a great program to start based on the benefits that would come from it and the reaction

from the students," she said. "We just thought it was a really great idea."

New Student Orientation and Elon 101 classes helped publicize the new endeavor by introducing the service during orientation sessions and inviting the personal librarians to come and speak about the service. All freshmen also received an email from their personal librarians informing them of the program.

Freshman Gina Apperson first heard about the personal librarians in her Elon 101 class, where she and her classmates took a trip to the library with their personal librarian, Shannon

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CLASS OF 2015

Tennant, to get accustomed to the new building.

"She gave us an overview of the library, sort of an orientation, and we did a scavenger hunt," Apperson said. "I'll use the program for finding sources that I would need for papers and any other random things I need in the library."

Although the program is new to Elon, the personal librarian staff at Belk Library seems positive that the students in the program will find the service useful.

Patrick Rudd, coordinator of access services and assistant professor, is also a personal librarian and said he has found the student response to be

exceptional.

"I've been actually surprised at the response," he said. "We get asked a variety of questions and respond to all kinds of needs."

Freshman Casey Brown has already met her personal librarian and started using the program. Brown has been very impressed with the program and encourages her fellow students to take advantage of the service.

"If you're really serious about getting help or you are not too proud to say 'Oh, I'm having trouble and I need some help,' it's a really good program," she said. "I am going to continue to use it because it's worked for me so far. When you're in college, you want as many things to help you succeed and utilizing this resource is greatly beneficial to you."

Freshmen aren't the only students included in the program. All Elon students are welcome to request a personal librarian at the Belk Library information desk.

## University librarian reflects on 15 years at Elon prior to departure

Rachel Southmayd  
Opinions Editor

This time next year, there will be one fewer familiar face around the shelves of Belk Library. Kate Hickey, dean of Library Services and university librarian, has announced she will retire at the end of this academic year, her 15th working at Elon University.



HICKEY

Hickey arrived at Elon in 1996, just after the architects for the new library had been selected. Since then, quite a bit has changed and she has been there for it all.

"It's a profession that has not been dull for a minute," she said. "You never know who's going to walk through those doors and what they're going to need."

Hickey said the theme at Elon while she's been here has been "growth with a capital G," even in the library. In the last few years especially, she said there has been major shift from print to electronic technology, and librarians

who were trained in organizing books now must learn everything from Web design to program operation.

And the library doesn't offer just school-related books, but also includes an ever-increasing number of DVDs, ebooks, audio books and fiction.

"That's been a lot of fun and a challenge," she said.

Teresa LePors, coordinator of library public services, said Hickey has been up to the challenge these last 15 years.

"She's great," Le Pors said. "She has an open-door policy so you feel like you can always talk to her."

Le Pors also said Hickey is a very

aware of the needs of her library staff and university students. Senior Kristen Van Fleet, a library assistant, said Hickey will be missed.

"She's a good director," she said.

When Hickey's retirement begins June 1, 2012, she said she is looking forward to resting and traveling with her husband.

"I'm looking forward to flexibility more than anything else," she said.

A committee has been formed to search for her replacement, Hickey said, and that whoever comes in next year will find a great group of people to work with on the library staff.

## Founder of Elon Academy aims to increase access to education

Caitlin O'Donnell  
News Editor

Each year, Deborah Long must complete what she calls a "terrible task." Working with a team to review about 100 applications from low-income high school freshmen in the Alamance County community, she must select about 60 to invite in for interviews before eventually selecting 26 to join other scholars in the Elon Academy.



LONG

"It's really hard, so hard," she said.

Since 2007, Long has served as the director of the Elon Academy, a college-access program she helped develop. But Long's experience with issues of access to education did not originate with her involvement with the Academy.

Raised in a family of five children — four girls and one boy — Long was the only girl who went to college.

"I can identify with students who come from families where the siblings didn't go to college," she said. "My mother and father did but they didn't encourage us to go to college. I identify with students who maybe don't have as much encouragement from home as some of their peers."

### An Unexpected Calling

After graduating in 1970 from Colby College with a degree in psychology, Long said she was unable to find a job. She came to North Carolina on a whim with a friend, rented an apartment and began waitressing.

It was then that Long discovered Teacher Corps, a now-nonexistent program similar to the Peace Corps, that provided federal funding for students to work toward a master's degree while being mentored and teaching in a low-income area.

"When I heard that someone might finance my education, I thought, 'Maybe I do want to think about being a teacher,'" she said. "The idea was that I didn't want to be a waitress for the rest of my life so I'm going to take advantage of this opportunity and maybe it will work out and maybe it won't, but what do I have to lose?"

She entered the two-year program in 1971 and taught in a low-income area in Virginia. It was there that she fell in love with teaching and, most importantly, her interactions with students and their families.

"I felt what I was doing was important and making a contribution, which is what I wanted," she said. "I work with students who are underserved and go to under-resourced schools."

### Foundations for a Teaching Philosophy

After graduating from Teacher Corps, Long taught for three years in Durham schools before moving to South Carolina and eventually Arkansas with her husband, putting her teaching career on hold and planning to start a family.

It was there that she was exposed to the Montessori system of teaching that would later define the structure of the Elon Academy. Though she did not teach in the classroom, she was active in the Montessori School her students attended.

Originating in Italy, the program was developed by Maria Montessori who wanted to provide education for children living on the streets. The curriculum is highly structured and based on the individual learning styles of each student.

"Students in the Elon Academy are on all different levels socially, emotionally, academically," she said. "They come in as unique people, there is no average kid. In public schools, you are forced to teach to the average student. With these students, you're able to individualize more and understand each student, what they need and how to structure their environment."

In 1986, Long re-entered the classroom when Lyon College in Arkansas asked her join the faculty as an adjunct professor.

"I absolutely loved college teaching," she said. "I loved my students, I loved the environment, it was stimulating and exciting."

Though her children were still young at the time, Long said she realized that if she wanted to remain in higher-education, she needed to get her doctorate. She began taking classes part time at the University of Memphis, a two and a half hour commute from her home, while also teaching full-time at the College. After eight years, she earned a doctorate in curriculum and

instruction.

### Discovering a Life's Passion

In 1996, Elon University was brought to Long's attention when a colleague at Lyon mentioned a job opening. While she had never heard of then Elon College, she decided to look into it.

While visiting her daughter at Duke University, she received a call from the college asking her to come in for an interview. Without dress clothes, teaching materials or her research, she decided to go for it.

"When I applied, it was just

an idea, an opportunity but I would be fine whether I got it or not," she said. "Then I got here and I fell in love with Elon and really wanted the job. I thought this was exactly the place for me, with an emphasis on teaching, community support, service. All of those things really resonated with me."

After a long wait, she found out she got the job and moved to Elon in 1996. In 2002, she was named the department chair for education, a position she held until 2006, the same year President Leo Lambert called Long into his office with a proposition that would change the rest of her life.

"Cummings High School had been threatened with closure and President Lambert was concerned with what Elon was doing for the local community," she said.

Lambert asked Long to serve as the faculty administrative fellow and assistant to the president during the development of a college-access program for local high school students that he wanted to see fully functional in one year's time.

### A Mother of Many

Long said her own experience growing up in family that offered little support influenced her interactions today with students and their families, many of who did not attend college and don't understand the process.

"I have a tremendous amount of

respect for families," she said. "Being poor doesn't equal lazy and people make the assumption that if people worked hard enough, they could get ahead. I've seen it and it's not true. Some of the people I see worked harder than anyone I know just to make ends meet."

Perhaps the most significant influence on Long's work with the Elon Academy has been her personal experiences as a mother.

"I want for these students what I wanted for my own children. I think about the interactions, whether to be firm, supportive. Do they need a hug or do they need a little boost? It's the same with your own children."

-Deb Long

FOUNDER OF THE ELON ACADEMY

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Long typically tells people she has 100 children: three that are biologically her own and the 97 students she has worked with through the academy.

"Even when I have tough conversations, I always tell them I wouldn't have this conversation if I didn't care about them, I'd just turn away," she said. "I always look at each child as if I'm talking to my own child. What would I want someone else to be saying to my child?"

### Phases of the Elon Academy

**Phase 1: College Access** - focuses on increasing aspirations and providing pathways

**Phase 2: Transitions to College** - college writing course with a three-day retreat and one-day family program

**Phase 3: College Success** - focuses on ensuring college success with on-campus visits, emergency funds and contact at home

**Phase 4: Alumni Program** - focuses on establishing a network of support for alumni and their families during college years and beyond