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Communications professor wins Emmy for production work at 2010 Olympics

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Dancers take over Elon's campus

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# THE PENDULUM

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MERISSA BLITZ | Staff Photographer

The introduction of new All-Access meal plans has resulted in increased traffic in dining halls, while retail locations such as Acorn Coffee Shop, Octagon Cafe and Varsity Sports Grille have seen a decline.

## Meal plans get a facelift, but not without side effects

### Decrease in customers at retail locations, as students report crowded dining halls

Kate Riley  
Copy Editor

Elon University student surveys reported the past meal plan system was the best in the region, noted for its variety in food options and dining locations. Elon's former meal plan system was in the top 4 percent in the country, according to ARAMARK representatives, but now, with a new meal plan system enacted on campus, the reaction from students and the consequences for dining locations have not been as positive.

Unlike the previous plan, which provided students with the option of five, 10, 15 or 19 meal combinations per week, the new basic plan for freshmen and sophomores is "all-access," which provides them with unlimited visits to the three dining halls on campus. At an

additional cost, they can purchase seven or 14 combination swipes per week to be used at Elon's retail locations.

While ARAMARK representatives insist the change reflects Elon's mission, retail locations on campus have experienced a sharp decline in weekly customers, while dining halls have become overcrowded.

#### Campus Reality

Max Akhlaghi, manager of Acorn Coffee Shop, has seen firsthand the effects of the new meal plan system.

"When this semester started, I was looking at the numbers and I was concerned about it," Akhlaghi said. "But as time passes, the number of students seems to be getting higher, and I'm not too far from where I was last year."

Despite Akhlaghi's claims,

ARAMARK statistics show that the number of sales at Acorn has decreased so far this semester compared to September 2010. Last year, the number of students who ate at Acorn in a given week was between 3,500 and 4,000. For the first week of September, the number decreased by 436 visits, a trend that has steadily continued. There were decreases of 623 and 872 visits in the second and third weeks, respectively.

These statistics include the number of students using meal dollars, Phoenix Cash and other forms of payment, as well as meal swipes. Some students do not have combo meal swipes or run out and may have to use these forms of payment to purchase a meal.

Akhlaghi said he regularly pays for students who don't have meal dollars, food dollars or meal plans.

"I don't think that students will give

up on Acorn because they ran out of meal dollars," he said. "But if they do come here and they don't have the mean of pay for (a meal), I use my card and pay for them. It's something that I don't want to talk about, but I do it on a daily basis."

Other retail locations, including 1889 Grill Room, Octagon Cafe and Varsity Sports Grille, have all had a decrease in the number of student customers. 1889 has had as much as a 52 percent decrease in students since this time in 2010, Octagon a 34 percent decrease and Varsity a 22 percent decrease.

Statistics show more students are frequenting the dining halls. But not without a disruption. Colonnades Dining Hall has seen as 67 percent increase since the school year began,

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## Elon identifies first-generation students on campus

Kassondra Cloos  
News Editor

For the first time in its history, Elon University identified the number of first-generation college students in the incoming freshmen class. The Class of 2015 has about 89 first-generation students, defined as students whose parents did not attend college, regardless of grandparents' educational experiences.

First-generation students are an incredibly diverse dynamic, according to Lauren Flinn, assistant director of the Multicultural Center. They come from wealthy households, as well as low-income families, may have attended public or private high school and may or may not be minority students, she said.

"A first-generation college student is diversity, because they are bringing

a different perspective, a totally different voice to the classroom," Flinn said. "They, more often than not, tend to challenge the status quo — what is status quo — and that's really important for any institution, any democracy in general, to have those different kinds of voices because they tend to come from very different places."

Becky Olive-Taylor, associate dean of Academic Support, was a first-generation college student when she was an undergraduate and has developed a discussion and support group for first-generation students at Elon. The group, called First in the Family, had its first meeting Thursday, Sept. 22 and two students attended.

Olive-Taylor is working to increase awareness about the group so more students will get involved and a meeting time has not yet been finalized.

"I think this is going to evolve," she

said. "I don't have an agenda, I really want it to come from the kids. So my role initially will be to try to get the word out, and if there's a need, a real need, the students will come. And they're right, food always helps."

Olive-Taylor and Flinn said there are many challenges for first-generation students aside from academics. In Flinn's experience working with first-generation students at Elon, academics are hardly an issue. She said she has seen that their grades are often noticeably higher than those of their peers.

Where first-generation students tend to struggle is with social and cultural norms typical of a college campus they may have never experienced, she said.

"When they get to college, research shows it's not so much that they struggle academically but more in the environment here because of

the cultural norms of the unlearned expectations that are at a college," Flinn said. "This weekend is a perfect example, parent's weekend. When I was in college, I was like 'what is this?' Even our orientation program is very family-focused. Parents stay for a good day and a half."

Although first-generation college students are only identified in the Class of 2015, there are many first-generation students in other classes as well. The Odyssey and Watson Scholars programs are need-based scholarship programs that were recently expanded and many of the students in the programs are also first-generation.

"You might be first-generation or low income but that's not what got you here," Flinn said. "Those things didn't get you here. Your own talent and strength and resilience and hard work, that's what got you here."

