Committee evaluates leadership

Caitlin O'Donnell
News Editor

Under one of the facets of the 2011-2012 institutional priorities, a committee has been charged with reviewing the current structure of leadership on Elon University's campus and making recommendations as to how to strengthen academic connections and opportunities for leadership development.

During the fall semester, the committee has studied the current leadership development programs on Elon's campus, as well as those at other academic institutions. In response, specific plans and recommendations will be formulated that are not clear at this point, according to Robert Moorman, professor of business leadership.

"I would like to see us expand our leadership development programs so that even more Elon students choose to become involved in them," Moorman said. "We do a great job providing (those) programs here, but we may be involving a smaller percentage of our student body than we would like."

Ideally, he said, programs that develop leadership would be a part of every student's experience at Elon.

"I am convinced all our students will lead in some way or another," he said. "Why not provide them with as many ways as possible to guide their growth as leaders?"

Some of the specific objectives in the committee's charge include visits to other campuses with "exemplary leadership programs," review of the Isabella Cannon Leaders Program and solicitation of feedback from students, faculty and staff.

A final report must be submitted to Provost Steven House and Smith Jackson, vice president and dean of Student Life, by March 1, 2012.

"Leadership is a process we can use to put our knowledge to work," Moorman said. "Acquiring knowledge along is a lot like collecting — the acquired may look pretty in a display or on a shelf, but the real value of our knowledge is how to use it to change hearts, minds and actions."

The study of leadership can serve as complementary knowledge to information learned about arts, humanities, science, business and communications, he said.

"We expect Elon students not only to be experts in their fields, but to be leaders in their fields as well," he said.

Senior Claire Healy (right) participated in the Occupy Wall Street protests in New York City during Fall Break with Eliza Shaw and Molly Shaw.
PHOTO SUBMITTED

Plans launched for Occupy Elon

Caitlin O'Donnell
News Editor

A movement that began in New York City and has included the involvement of numerous Elon students is becoming even more local.

Occupy Wall Street, launched Sept. 17 in New York City's Zuccotti Park and currently popping up in locations worldwide, might soon become a movement on Elon's campus.

The idea for an Elon-specific branch began in a Nov. 3 First Thursdays Current Issues Forum, which included information about the Occupy movement in general. Four individuals from the Occupy Greensboro camp were also in attendance.

"We discussed the possibility of starting an Occupy Elon," said junior Lauren Clapp, who traveled to New York during fall break to participate in the protests. "Probably not a physical occupation, but weekly General Assemblies to discuss our concerns as they relate to Elon's campus."

From there, Clapp and other students began circulating a Gmail account for Occupy Elon and eventually created a Facebook page for discussion, which currently has 77 members.

While no final plans have been made for meetings, participants are now discussing their options moving forward.

"We're hoping to increase interest on campus so that something can hopefully come of this," Clapp said.

Safia Swimelar, assistant professor of political science, said she is not surprised the movement has left New York City and expanded not only around the nation, but around the world. With a high wealth gap and wages for the middle class falling, she said she believes they are justified in their concerns and protesting.

"Despite the diversity of concerns and demands of the protestors, there is a clear thread that runs through them – economic injustice, corporate power and the rising wealth gap in the United States," she said.
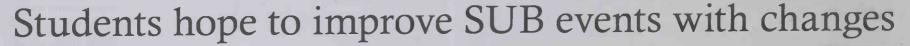
One of the hallmarks of the Occupy movement is a lateral leadership structure, meaning no one person holds all of the power, an aspect that may pose a challenge to the national movement, according to Swimelar.

"While many of the protesters say that they are against 'the system' and therefore don't want to give legitimacy to those that run the country, the fact that they are not trying to use the political process to get elected officials to take on their issues, or at least it does not seem that way, means that the movement may remain marginal," she said.

As far as an actual effect on the political process within the United States, Swimelar said there is a chance candidates in upcoming elections will take on the issues posed by the movement, even if no connection to the protests is explicitly explained.

"Both major political parties have expressed sympathy, but the Democrats have more since they are the party usually more connected with these issues," Swimelar said. "There may also be self-interested political reasons for political leaders to say they support some of the concerns of the movement - since some of the Occupy movement's concerns are supported by the majority such as reducing corporate power and having greater accountability."

Students hope to improve SUB events with changes
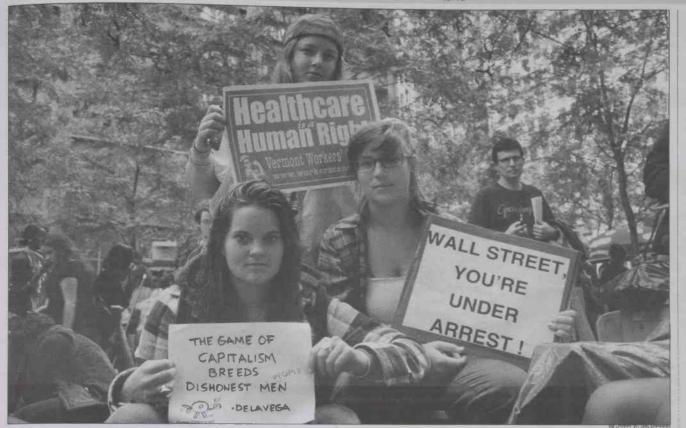
Nick Zanetti
Senior Reporter

The Student Union Board at Elon University has reworked its training and committee organization in hopes of running events more smoothly. Committee executives said they hope the changes will make SUB members more engaged, as well as improve events.

"Overall, I think that students attending our events will notice that they will be better planned and executed," said junior Alisha Bowers, executive chair of the stage and music committee.

SUB executives decided to dissolve the marketing committee, with students joining other committees where they will handle marketing for whichever committee they join.

"Instead of having programmers and marketing people separate, the marketing people will choose one committee to promote," Bowers said. "It will make their work more consistent and cohesive."

In addition to the organizational changes, SUB has launched a new training program for members called PIT, programmers in training. The training lasts four weeks, during which programmers learn the basics of each SUB committee and then may apply to the committee they want to work with.

Before SUB implemented the new training program, students chose which committee they wanted to join right off the bat.

Joining committees that early created the problem of students committing to groups before they were familiar with them. SUB Presidency, senior Amanda Longy, said this created problems for the organization.

"Having students apply without knowing what they are getting themselves into creates an environment where people don't think events are mandatory," Long said. "They don't feel like they have a sense of responsibility to this organization."

Committee chairs will work to inform future programmers of the ins and outs of each committee during the training. They intend to give the programmers a better idea of what they will be getting into.

"Each committee chair and their co-chairs have been doing weekly presentations about what they do and what they're responsible for," Long said. "After we tell them about our own executive responsibilities, we share with them about what it's like to be a programmer."

Long and Bowers said the training will hopefully improve events by making programmers more capable, taking the burden off of committee chairs.

"Before, the committee chairs would end up doing a lot of the work during events because they knew everything better," said senior Victoria Cuza, programmer for the music and stage committee. "Now every person will know how to do more."

In addition to relieving the committee chairs, Long said she hopes the training will make the entire organization more unified, since programmers will have a better idea on what it's like to serve on other committees.

"I hope we will have a more cohesive group, since everyone experiences a little bit of everything," Long said.

Members of the Student Union Board meet in their office on the second floor of Moseley Center.
JULIA SAYERS | Staff Photographer