

Multiple organizations contribute to Black History Month celebration

Grace Elkus
News Editor

Throughout the month of February, Elon students have participated in a new series of programming inspired by Black History Month. The events were put together by a variety of departments to increase awareness and celebrate the achievements of African Americans.

Although small pockets of organizations and offices have celebrated the month in years past, there has never been a comprehensive set of events devoted to the black history theme, according to Prudence Layne, associate professor of English and creator of the Black History Month Steering Committee. The committee, made up of representatives from key offices around campus and from Elon University School of Law, met throughout the fall to create a theme for the month and a list of goals to accomplish.

The theme they decided on was "black history is everyone's history."

"Black History month is not just a celebration by African-Americans or blacks for black people," Layne said. "It is a part of American history and world history, and it is an invitation for the entire campus community to celebrate the achievements of blacks, not just on this campus but in the country and in the rest of the world."

Planning of the Black History Month initiative was assigned to African and

African-American Studies by Brooke Barnett, the president's faculty fellow for diversity and global engagement. Because there was no separate budget designated to the month's programming, AAASE has supplemented it with their own regular operating budget and other organizations and sponsors have contributed out of their own funding.

The Truitt Center for Spiritual and Religious Life brought in speakers for College Chapel, AAASE sponsored an African-American Read-In Day and Book Sale, Elon's Black Alumni Network held a faculty, staff and alumni mixer and Wall of Famers reception and SUB and SUBLive organized midnight poetry slams, film screenings and live performers.

"Because we have our normal programming that we do, it was how can we work what we already do into the themes that we decided on for Black History Month," said Robert Dunlap, assistant director of student activities and member of the steering committee.

Although Layne has been pleased with the turnout so far, she said she hopes to see more diverse participation at the upcoming events. She said she particularly would like to see more people partake in the Get on the Black Church Bus series, which allows students, faculty and staff to attend a worship service at a featured church.

"I wish I could see more of our white students at our programming," she said. "We wish that more of our

students who have been curious why, for example, Sundays have been called the most segregated day in the United States would just come and see what happens in some of those churches."

The programming has received positive feedback from parents, especially of black students, and from alumni, Layne said.

"(The alumni) are really excited to see this really big push and the presence and the programming, even if they haven't been able to come," she said.

When the month concludes, the steering committee will meet for a debriefing session to discuss the success of the month and begin planning and assembling the new committee for next year.

"There are plans to, as soon as we're done, assess how everything went, how we can do better and how we can continue to provide experience to enhance the cultural experience for everyone at Elon," Dunlap said.

AAASE is not the only department devoted to increasing awareness through a month of events. Women and Gender Studies is coordinating women's history month, El Centro is coordinating Hispanic heritage month and LGBTQ is coordinating a series of events as well, Layne said.

"There is a greater emphasis on making sure the university acknowledges and celebrates in a really tangible way a lot of the different

diverse populations that we have represented on campus," she said.

Upcoming Black History Month events:

Thursday, Feb. 23:

West African Dance Perspectives
4-5 p.m., Yeager Hall

Intersections: A Conversation About Race, Sexuality and Religion
4:30-5:30 p.m., Belk Library

Sunday, Feb. 26

Get on the Black Church Bus: Fourth Sunday
Departs from Moseley 9:15 a.m., returns at 12:30 p.m.

Tuesday, Feb. 28

"Stomp the Quad:" National Pan-Hellenic step show
9:40-10:20 a.m., McKinnon Hall

Black History Month Lunch
11-2 p.m., Elon Dining Halls

Exemption from No Child Left Behind changes authority, not function

Melissa Kansky
News Editor

The end of a law does not equal the end of a practice.

Eleven states have submitted a waiver for exemption from No Child Left Behind, as part of President Barack Obama's proposed return to Elementary and Secondary Education Act, in turn, ending the current policy. Nevertheless schools are still striving to incorporate the same values expressed in the current law. Elon University's education curriculum continues to emphasize the values detailed in No Child Left Behind, said David Cooper, Dean of the School of Education.

The Bush administration designed No Child Left Behind so all demographic groups would be able to succeed, Cooper said.

"At Elon, the education faculty has been offering for some time now a curriculum for teacher candidates that places an emphasis on equality and excellence,



PHOTO COURTESY OF MCT CAMPUS
Barack Obama recently reformed the No Child Left Behind Act.

stressing culturally responsive pedagogy and differentiation to meet individual student needs," Cooper said. "Elon's programs are entirely consistent with the emphasis in NCLB."

States still still demonstrate student progress and equality, but the end of the law provides states with more autonomy regarding distribution of funds, according to Adam Short, lecturer

of political science at Elon University.

The debate questions the role of the federal government in education, more than the role of education for each student, he said.

"The federal role in education has been augmented since No Child Left Behind," Short said. "It is mostly the purview of state and local government. There is still a lot of policy and decision making that happens at the state level, but the federal government has taken a bigger role."

The proposal developed from a realization that most states would not achieve the necessary progress required of No Child Left Behind by the 2014 deadline, which would result in a financial punishment. Of the 11 states that submitted the waiver, 10 have been approved. Although North Carolina did not participate in the first round of waivers, it is expected that the state will submit a waiver Feb. 28 during the second round, Short said.

"In order to obtain the waiver, states

must demonstrate strict adherence to a number of accountability measures that are designed to assure that students are receiving school experiences of high quality," Cooper said. "The waiver does not come with permission to relax."

Previous state education policies and grant money received from Race to the Top, a federal fund dedicated to award states that have demonstrated improved education conditions, and have enabled North Carolina to make improvements expected for the waiver process, he said.

The waiver process facilitates the end of No Child Left Behind without requiring the divided Congress to vote the law forward, Short said.

"(The president) is acting on his own, but acting within the powers given to him by Congress," he said.

Nevertheless, Short said he does not predict modification of the education law will severely influence the upcoming presidential election.

"Education is always going to be a bigger deal at the state level," he said.

Elon students express opposition to drilling plans in NC

Ian Luther
Reporter

North Carolina legislators are considering a bill that would allow companies to drill for natural gas in the state, despite decades of laws to the contrary. Elon environmental studies students are aiming to increase awareness about what they understand to be a dangerous plan.

"The failures of all the energy crises are unfolding into our laps," said junior Keegan Johnson. "There is time still to mediate the problems, but it starts with our generation. All we have to do is get out there and make it happen."

Johnson is leading the charge against legalization, and he's starting with the area around Elon.

The southern portion of the state contains billions of cubic feet of natural gas that are trapped underground by several thousand feet of shale.

Currently, there is no legal means to extract this gas, but that may change this May.

North Carolina legislators are planning to vote to legalize hydraulic fracturing, or fracking, the process of drilling and injecting millions of gallons of water and chemicals into the ground to shatter the shale that lies between the surface and potentially vast natural gas reserves.

This process is currently outlawed in North Carolina, but the Energy Jobs Act, Bill 709, is scheduled to go through the General Assembly May 8. If this bill passes, companies will be able to use

hydraulic fracturing on North Carolina land for the first time in state history.

"I want the surrounding communities to be informed of this cause," Johnson said. "Knowledge of the implications from natural gas will help North Carolina citizens make smart and educated decisions on this issue."

Johnson is not the only opponent of drilling. Fracking is an extremely resource-intensive process, requiring anywhere between one and 10 million gallons of water, an intricate network of service roads and 400 tanker trucks to carry supplies to and from the drill site, according to Johnson.

Junior Lauren Hoerr, an environmental studies major, is also aiming to increase awareness of the issue. She said she agrees that drilling isn't worth the damage it does.

"It's so much more energy-intensive than what you get in the end," she said. "There are just so many factors in terms of toxic chemicals, or known carcinogens, or polluting the water."

While the Safe Drinking Water Act of 2005 currently protects the use of chemicals used in the process, the substances used in fracturing fluids are entirely unregulated and often contain carcinogens and pollutants like radium, formaldehyde and even uranium. According to a 2011 study by the Environmental Protection Agency, these chemicals often seep into ground water reservoirs and contaminate drinking water supplies for entire communities.

Johnson's group is still small, but they're attempting to bring the issue to

the attention of Elon students.

"As of now, we're working to connect with Res Life and SUB to incorporate the documentary 'Gaslands' into an event," Johnson said. "We are also in the midst of (using) social media to promote and connect to other organizations around the state."


The group is also trying to bring Josh Fox, the director of "Gaslands," to Elon. Fox was arrested earlier this month for

attempting to videotape Congressional proceedings during a subcommittee meeting on fracking.


Above all, Johnson said his main concern is informing Elon students of the issue.

"Awareness is the biggest issue at this point," Johnson said. "Knowledge of the implications of natural gas will help North Carolina citizens make smart and educated decisions on this issue."

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