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identity on changing campus

Elon has grown and is continuing to grow to reflect that."

For his part, Bosch holds confidential meetings with students struggling with gender identity, visits classrooms when invited to speak on LGBTQ issues by professors and helps focus the attention of the Presidential LGBTQIA Task Force, a 14-person collaboration of students, faculty, staff, senior administrators and alumni, co-chaired by Bosch and Leigh-Ann Royster, director of inclusive community wellbeing.

Already, Elon University has established a three-pronged alert system for students to report incidents on campus — anonymously, online, in-person or over the phone. All reports of bias are filtered through Royster's office.

But not all of the problems facing LBTQ students on campus are tied to homophobic slurs and other issues of bias, though they have occurred in the past. In September 2013, a depiction of male genitalia was found scrawled on a whiteboard in Colonnades D, along with a swastika and the letters "KKK."

Though the September incident wasn't thought, at the time, to be promoting homophobia, Bosch said it's important to remember that all discrimination is tied to each other — that acts of hatred against religion or race are every bit as demeaning as LGBTQ epithets.

In the wake of that incident and others, including one April 2013 where students living in an off-campus apartment found a handwritten note that included a racial slur referencing hip-hop and rap music, then-SGA President Welsford Bishopric and President Leo Lambert announced the formation of a committee designed to further Elon's intellectual climate.

Bosch said the progress made in the time since has been remarkable, and Wilkes agreed.

"Since [Bosch] came, there have been such strides made between us and the administration," he said. "It's crucial for someone who can devote all of their time to helping people like me be given the position he has. There have already been noticeable changes in Elon policies, like the name change option, that has made me feel more comfortable here."

Elon's 5,599 undergraduate enrollment is on the smaller size nationally, but it's still surprising how few incidents of bias have occurred in the nine months Bosch has been at the university, he said.

"It's surprising to me how few bias incidents there are in the grand scheme of things," he said. "When people hear about an incident of bias happening, there's this immediate response, and that can highlight

when things go wrong, but it's good in the sense that people aren't afraid to report and shows the amount of allies we have on campus, the number of people who really care."

People who identify on the LGBTQ spectrum can be their greatest advocates, according to Bosch, but that doesn't mean the responsibility of educating others should or does fall on their shoulders.

"People who have the experience of it are always going to be the greatest educators," he said. Wilkes said he's used to fielding the kind of innocent questions children ask — about whether he's a boy or a girl, the kind of question not intended to be offensive, only curious.

"It happens with kids all of the time," he said. "Yeah, it's kind of uncomfortable being asked who I am or what's wrong with me, but it's a whole lot different being asked by a child why my hair is so short if I'm a girl, than being asked what gender pronoun I prefer in front of the whole entire class."



The Gender and LBGTQIA Center contains a social space, a lending library of books and DVD's, a quiet study space and multiple student volunteers.