

Changing intellectual climate is in students' hands

In the weeks leading up to an intellectual climate summit at Elon University, the issue of students' intellectual experience has been discussed in-depth across campus. In the past two decades, Elon has risen to prominence in terms of admissions standards and national rankings, consistently bringing in high-caliber students with growing ambitions and skill sets. Despite higher incoming GPAs, stronger SAT medians and impressive national rankings for the university as a whole, students still feel that the intellectual climate on campus does not meet their expectations, according to a SGA report.

Although the university has continuously demonstrated efforts to stimulate intellectual conversation outside the classroom, the overall efforts seem to be lost on a majority of the student body. Only 13 percent of students say they frequently partake in intellectual discussions according to the report. It is disappointing for students who expect intellectual conversations to extend beyond classroom walls and guest speakers.

It is a paradox in which ambitious, bright students come in to Elon with high expectations — but then join a campus culture that seems to stifle the inherently intellectual outside the classroom or small intellectual bubbles within the community. Outside of the small select groups within the larger community, such as the fellows programs, specific student organizations and guest speaker forums, students' expectations are not matching up with their perceived intellectual stimulation.

The on-campus trends, according to the SGA report, demonstrate that the percentage of students whose intellectual expectations are not met increase as they progress from freshman year to senior year. This is completely within the control of the individual students. If students' expectations are increasingly not met as they rise through Elon, they must take it upon themselves to seek out intellectual situations to bring their experience in line with their expectations. This issue is completely in the students' hands.

Although the SGA poll offers insight on the overall student perception of the intellectual climate at Elon, the university's efforts

seem to be lost in the shuffle.

The administration, faculty and a select group of students within the Elon community have worked tirelessly over the past two decades to lay the foundation for a climate and environment where intellectual discussion can flourish. Simply put, students are not engaging at the levels they are capable of.

A movement of building a stronger intellectual climate on campus exists at Elon, and, encouragingly, it is primarily student run. After a group of students noticed that Elon lacks opportunities outside of the classroom to have deep, intellectual conversations, they partnered with a group of faculty and administrators to form an intellectual climate working group. From this working group comes two incredibly beneficial programs that will help those seeking deep

intellectual discussions: Coffee Klatch and Book Club.

But these efforts will be for naught if students choose to ignore them. If the students can learn to take advantage of the intellectual opportunities at Elon they will be able to reach the potential that so many see in us. Students have to ask themselves what type of people they want to be in college. The Elon student body controls the narrative of their experience here at Elon, but as a campus students are not reaching their potential.

The intellectual climate movement is something every student is capable of taking part in that would benefit each and every one of us. If students actively seek out this intellectual stimulation — the deep conversations on the sidewalk, attending discussions that delve further in to important

topics — students can reach the expectations they have for themselves.

Collectively, Elon students demonstrate the potential to make their college experience something special and beneficial that will help prepare them for the real world ahead. Clearly, the student body recognizes that the intellectual climate around campus does not live up to its expectations. This important issue is in students' hands. The university has made incredible progress in the past two decades, but only proactivity and a renewed sense of engagement will allow the campus to attain an intellectual climate that lives up to the high expectations the Elon community hopes for.

A campus-wide dialogue on intellectual climate will be held at 4:30 p.m. today in Whitley Auditorium.



Students who engage in intellectual conversation outside the classroom help forward the movement to improve the intellectual climate at Elon.

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