

DIVERSITY

from cover

"I was ultimately persuaded that the way to move forward is to secure the middle," Fuller said. "That's what we are doing with the associate chaplain position."

According to the 2013 university fact book, almost 35 percent of Elon students identify as some denomination of Protestantism, 26 percent identify as Catholic, and 5.5 percent identify as Jewish.

In order to better reflect these demographics, the position and the entire chaplaincy structure will undergo major changes next year.

Starting next fall, there will be three associate chaplains and one assistant chaplain. Under Jan Fuller, there will be an associate chaplain for Protestant life, an associate chaplain for Jewish life and an associate chaplain for Catholic life. The assistant chaplain position is open to a person of any religious affiliation.

The search committee will interview candidates for the associate chaplain for Protestant life and the assistant chaplain positions this semester.

Father Gerry Waterman, the Catholic Campus Minister, will become the associate chaplain for Catholic life. The Hillel Center is currently interviewing candidates for the position of Hillel director. This new hire will likely become the associate chaplain for Jewish life.

This arrangement follows the staffing structure laid out in the 2010 strategic plan. It also follows the model set by interfaith initiatives at other schools, such as Brandeis University, which has chaplains representing Christianity, Islam and Judaism.

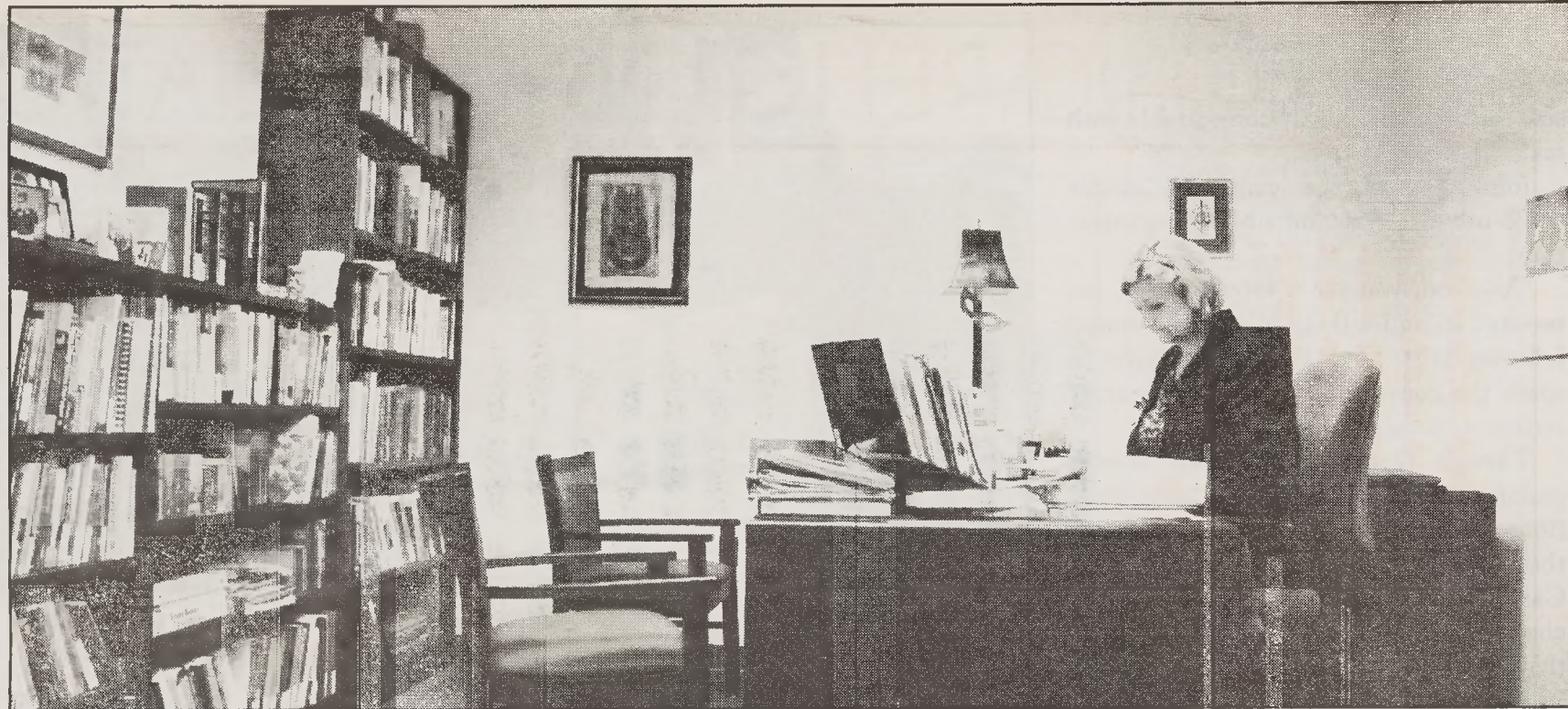
Fuller said this structure will make her job easier, because it takes some of the administrative and office work off her shoulders.

"I'm compelled by this structure, and I see how it is going to clarify the roles and make the job doable," she said.

Expanding minority resources

Many students come to Elon expecting to engage with people of many different faiths, but often this is not the case unless students seek out these opportunities.

"I wanted to come here because the school was trying to promote diversity — especially



CAROLINE OLNEY | Photo Editor

In the time since Jan Fuller took over as University Chaplain two years ago, she has pioneered several university initiatives.

religious diversity," said sophomore Shelby Lewis. "I figured out within the first few months of being here that they're really still working on it."

As co-president of the Interfaith Community at Elon (ICE), a member of the Better Together multi-faith Living Learning Community and a religious studies major, Lewis has had plenty of opportunities to engage with the university's interfaith initiatives.

Despite her involvement with campus religious life, Lewis said she sees some problems with the diversity initiatives.

"We are on the right track, but we need to work on our implementation in order to improve the authenticity of the message," she said.

Fuller said it is hard to know how to allocate resources when promoting diversity. On the one hand, providing resources for a student population that represents a small fraction of the campus population may be seen as a waste of resources, but on the other hand, students from that religious faith will not be attracted to Elon unless those resources are available.

"Do you wait until you have the critical mass before you supply the resources? Our perspective at Elon is that we err in the direction of having provided the resources first, rather than waiting for the critical mass of students," Fuller said.

Elon's Jewish population has doubled

since the establishment of the Hillel Center.

Iliana Brodsky, a freshman, said the resources for Jewish students were what initially attracted her to Elon. After spending a gap year in Israel, she realized that a strong Jewish community was essential to her college experience.

"Both the Hillel House and Numen Lumen Pavilion are brand new, quite functional and beautiful. When I first got here, that alone really excited me," Brodsky said. "I also immediately got the feeling that the university was making serious efforts to expand religious and spiritual life."

Brodsky said the staff within Hillel and the Truitt Center made her feel safe and welcomed at Elon.

"I knew that Elon was a place that cared, and a place that wanted me to be a part of the building process," she said.

Similar resources will soon be in place for students of underrepresented faiths.

Elon recently hired Eesaa Wood to serve as the campus Muslim coordinator. He worked on the Four Weddings and an Understanding series, in which the Truitt Center staged marriage ceremonies from different religious traditions.

A large part of bringing in diversity is creating a hospitable campus climate, and this includes educating the campus about faiths they may never have been exposed to.

In order to teach students about different traditions, religious studies lecturer L.

D. Russell hosted a "Whirlwind Tour" of world religions, which focused not only on understanding, but also experiencing different faiths.

Fuller said events like Holi and Diwali are important because they show that exploring other faiths can be fun and something the campus can rally around.

"Bringing in speakers and hosting events is starting to plant a seed in peoples' minds, and hopefully people will go to the Truitt Center and get engaged," Lewis said.

Exploring the big questions

However, some students who do not have a strong religious affiliation feel these activities are not directed towards them.

Sydney Lawton, a freshman, said she would like to learn about other faiths, but is sometimes hesitant to go to religious services in Numen Lumen because she is not religious.

"I just always assume they are for religious people, and I feel like I'm intruding," she said.

Almost 22 percent of students are listed as an "unknown" religion in the 2013 survey. These students may come from mixed religious traditions, they may be questioning their religious affiliation or they may be spiritual without a religious affiliation.

"Another way to read it is this developmental movement. Entering college often coincides with psychological and spiritual