

# BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS BIT BY BIT



CONTINUING COVERAGE OF  
INTERNATIONAL FACULTY AT ELON

## Dean of business school ties gap between students and faculty

**Olivia Zayas Ryan**  
Senior Reporter  
@oliviaryan

Each month, Raghu Tadepalli — in addition to his many responsibilities as dean of the Martha and Spencer Love School of Business — has lunch with senior business students to discuss their praises and critiques of the business school.

Tadepalli does not simply hear complaints from students — he listens to them.

At one of these monthly lunches last year, students voiced their frustrations about the reporting portions of the business school's internship requirement. They felt the essays and reflections required in addition to the internship were onerous and redundant.

So Tadepalli made changes. He worked with his colleagues to modify the internship requirements and alleviate some of the work. This past summer, he supervised around 20 interns because he wanted to see first-hand the work students were completing to receive internship credit. Seeing that there were still redundancies in the work, Tadepalli helped revise the program further.

Meeting with and listening to students is not only what Tadepalli sees as the most important part of his job, but is also his favorite part.

"I think a large number of students know my door is open, so people drop in," Tadepalli said. "I think [the students are] really respectful and know that there are also very busy. I'd say that they're quite a few students who feel comfortable dropping in to chat."

Kristin Barrier, director of operations and accreditation in the Love School of Business, sits in an office directly across from Tadepalli and witnesses these student interactions daily.

"Dean Tadepalli has a true open-door policy, and he often meets with students who are looking for help or advice," Barrier said.

## Tadepalli's move to Elon

Tadepalli began his position as dean of the Love School of Business in July 2012. He from Babson College, where he previously served as the Murata Dean and professor of marketing in the F. W. Olin Graduate School of Business.

Tadepalli received a bachelor's and master's degree in commerce with a major in accounting from Andhra University in India. He then went on to complete his master of business administration degree with a concentration in marketing from Arizona State University and earned his doctorate from Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University.

After earning his doctorate,

I THINK A LARGE NUMBER OF STUDENTS KNOW MY DOOR IS OPEN, SO PEOPLE DROP IN . . . I'D SAY THAT THEY'RE QUITE A FEW STUDENTS WHO FEEL COMFORTABLE DROPPING IN TO CHAT.

**RAGHU TADEPALLI**

DEAN OF THE MARTHA AND SPENCER LOVE SCHOOL OF BUSINESS

Tadepalli had several job offers to complete marketing research, but he turned down the offers because he "didn't see much fun in it." Tadepalli wanted to continue doing research, but was more excited by the idea of teaching and interacting with students. This led him to begin working in higher education.

Tadepalli held faculty and staff positions at a few other universities before arriving at Elon almost five years ago. While it has been a long time since he last taught in a classroom, he is still able to conduct research, and will have a new study published in a few months.

No matter what position he held, Tadepalli has always made students his biggest priority. His dedication to students is part of the reason he enjoys — working at Elon; because the university as a whole mirrors that same commitment.

"It's nice to be at a university campus where there is such an undivided attention on making sure that students learn," Tadepalli said. "I think it's a value that permeates everything that we as, faculty or

staff ... that we do. Students are really at the center of what we do. Here, there is no mistake about it: We are about students. We are about what students are learning and how they're learning and how we are helping them develop into leaders for tomorrow."

## Exemplifying leadership

His commitment to listening to students is also reflected in his leadership style. For him, listening to those he is leading is the most important aspect of leadership.

"I think listening is very important," Tadepalli said. "When someone walks into my office, the conversation is about them. It's not about me. So you have to pay attention to

students," explaining that he is always around to meet with students or reach out to them if he hasn't seen them in a while. Listening and staying connected to students is a part of Tadepalli's leadership style.

"His style is certainly very open and almost a backseat kind," Filandro said. "He gives you a chance to figure it out for yourself and then guides you in the slightest of ways. I believe that the whole time he knows where you should be going, but he lets you find it on your own."

## Diversity as a priority

Though many members of the Elon community believe that increasing diversity on campus needs to be a greater priority, Tadepalli recognizes this need and works to bring diverse voices into the business school. He believes that understanding how to manage diverse groups is important to excelling in business and that diversity is one of the business school's core values.

He has worked to uphold that value by implementing diversity education initiatives into various class curriculums and recruiting diverse faculty and staff members. Currently, he said the business school has about 60 faculty members representing 16 different countries.

On a personal level, of the six deans at the university, Tadepalli is the only dean of color; so he sees the need for diversity first-hand. It is not uncommon for him to be the only person of color in a room.

"Yesterday morning I was in a meeting, there must have been ten people there, and I was the only nonwhite in that room," Tadepalli said. "Sometimes, you know I kind of have an out of body experience and I'm thinking, 'Wow if I were looking down upon me, if there was a picture that was taken, how would this look?' And I think, in that respect, I came here from Babson College in Massachusetts, which is very diverse. And so, I'd say, at Elon I think the values are there and the respect for diversity is there, but we need more demonstrable programs in that regard."

Junior Franki Filandro had the opportunity to witness this leadership and work closely with Tadepalli when she brought the business fraternity Delta Sigma Pi to campus.

Filandro said Tadepalli "succeeds in making himself available

## Former Sigma Phi Epsilon president used racial slur

**Alex Hager**  
Web Producer  
@awhager

Elon University junior Owen Gaffney, former president of the NC Mu Chapter of Sigma Phi Epsilon, used a racial slur toward a black Elon senior, according to multiple sources close to the situation.

According to junior William Ellick, current president of Sigma Phi Epsilon, Gaffney and senior Austin Meekins, who is black, had a disagreement at an off-campus fraternity party over academic standards with Gaffney, who is white. While Meekins was outside the party, which took place the weekend of April 13, Gaffney indirectly called Meekins the N-word after he had left Gaffney's vicinity.

The fraternity held an emergency chapter meeting about the incident. Since the meeting, junior Jordon McRae, who is black, left the organization and Gaffney stepped down, both on April 24.

"Three weeks ago, I made a mistake that deeply hurt members of the Elon community and those close to me," Gaffney said in a statement. "Afterward, the only thing I knew to do was to own up to my mistake. Shortly after the event, I personally contacted Austin and apologized to him. I have since resigned as chapter president. I am sorry for hurting my fellow students and my SigEp brothers, and I am committed to better representing my university and my fraternity — which both value a diverse and inclusive campus. To those whom I have offended with my words and actions, I deeply apologize and ask for your forgiveness."

In a statement, Ellick said that "in a moment of anger, Owen chose the most hurtful word he could find, and he unfortunately succeeded in causing deep pain." Ellick said that he and the organization believed Gaffney was remorseful. He also said this incident is not representative of Sigma Phi Epsilon as a whole.

"This incident does not represent who we are as a student organization and member of the Elon community. We're committed to earning back the trust of our peers, faculty and staff," Ellick said in the statement.

Elon's Black Student Union issued a response to the issue in a letter to ENN, saying that the incident threatened the very existence and agency of their community, emphasizing an "unyielding commitment to unity and a perpetuation of resilience." In the letter, which they called a "statement of solidarity," the BSU encouraged students who feel unsafe to speak out.

Dan Fail, director of Fraternity and Sorority Life, said in an email statement that according to his knowledge, "the matter has been referred through the appropriate University channels." Fail said that the incident would fall under the purview of the Office of Student Conduct.

**MORE ONLINE**

visit our website at  
elonnewsnetwork.com  
to see more

**MORE ONLINE**

visit our website at  
elonnewsnetwork.com  
to see more