

Resident Assistants juggle job, personal feelings

Resident Assistants struggle to balance their opinions, emotions and residence life work

Victoria Traxler and Jake Lennet
Contributors | @elonnewsnetwork

After settling into life at Elon University, students on the second floor of Sloan residence hall foster their community over a table of Chinese take-out.

Sophomore Olivia "Livi" Murray, SGA class president of her grade and second floor Sloan's Residential Assistant (RA), organized this gathering as a way for her hall to take time and talk about their days.

Though they may primarily work behind the scenes, RAs do in fact face unique challenges within the residence halls, primarily balancing



CAROLINE BRECHMAN | PHOTOGRAPHY



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RESIDENT ASSISTANT

their roles as mentors and friends.

Before she set foot on campus, Murray knew she wanted to be an RA — in hopes of acting as an older sister figure to her residents.

"Having that experience is something I had planned on," Murray said. "I've always loved talking to people ... I just wanted to give back to the community."

Senior Annaliese Jaffe, RA for the International LLC on the second floor of Global D, expressed similar motives in becoming an RA for the third

year in a row.

"I look forward to coming home to [my residents] every day," Jaffe said.

Having experienced a close relationship with her RA her freshman year, Jaffe focused on establishing a similar sense of family throughout her residence halls during her time as an RA.

Being an RA for groups of students coming from many different backgrounds can be challenging in ways one wouldn't expect.

Sophomore Aileen Bell, the RA for the College Fellows LLC located in the Isabella Cannon Pavilion, said, "I constantly feel like I'm carrying the emotional baggage of nineteen people who haven't actually unloaded their emotional baggage on me. I just want to make sure they're happy."

While Bell faces the emotional difficulties of being an RA, there are aspects of her identity she finds advantageous.

"My race is an advantage for me," Bell said. "There are some people in my staff who respond better to me and my white coworkers."

Sophomore Abi Mathews highlighted different challenges she faced as both an RA and a person of color (POC).

Mathews, who encounters microaggressions in her hall, believes it is due to some of her residents "having only grown up seeing the world one way."

As their RA and a POC, she's learning to "graciously correct them," but sometimes feels her "voice is drowned out" in the process.

Similarly, Murray discussed concerns present in her POC community of RAs about potential residents with outspoken ideals that could

make other students uncomfortable.

Murray feels being an RA has enhanced her leadership skills and ability in learning how to deal with different viewpoints.

"I wouldn't necessarily treat them any way, it's just making sure that they don't make anyone else uncomfortable by spreading their views" Murray said.

Jaffe expressed similar concerns primarily focused on the issue of her inability to fully relate to students of color who are dealing with issues of microaggressions.

"During the past election I went back to West where I was the RA, and I had two of my residents who were black come up to me and we were just sobbing together ... I wanted to be there for them," Jaffe said. "I don't ever want to overstep my empathizing."

Annaliese Jaffe is the current RA for the International LLC located on the second floor of Global D.

Prospective tour guides face competition, high stakes

A rigorous application process required to become the face of Elon University

Oliver Fischer
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Though more than 200 people apply, only 20 get accepted. A 10 percent acceptance rate indicates the students most fit to represent the school as a tour guide.

Elon University junior and tour guide Andrew McGann admits that the application process can be challenging. "It's somewhat of an intensive process," he said. "There were a lot of different curveballs that went with it that I wasn't expecting."

A tour guide is responsible for introducing themselves to families and, according to McGann, giving them a 60-90 minute walking tour around campus after their initial information session. "A lot of people consider us kind of the first face that students and their families see when they come to visit campus," he said.

Students applying to be tour guides must attend at least one of three interest meetings and provide their contact information. They then receive a Google form to fill out. Based on these, someone from the hiring staff in the admissions department picks a number of students to participate in a group interview pro-



Senior Sophie Bellemare speaks to a prospective family about Elon's campus in the Historic Neighborhood Monday Sept. 25.

cess. Applicants who pass the group interview round must hold a mock tour in front of the group at a randomly assigned location on campus.

Important qualities of tour guides include a passion for Elon, a sense of responsibility and ethics and the willingness to constantly learn.

"We seek students who can passionately convey accurate Elon information in the context of their personal Elon experience," Gsaid reg Zaiser, vice president for enrollment, in an e-mail.

To McGann, tour guides must be personable, knowledgeable and adaptable to make the best impression.

"We throw so much at students and families because there's so much to talk about on campus," McGann said. "There are some days where you are taking five, six, seven families on tour, so you have to be able to cater to all interests of students and families."

Tour guides can personalize their tours to a certain extent because they are not required to give any specific knowledge. General knowledge about buildings and traditions is enough, though specific facts are still helpful.

"There's not necessarily a checklist you have to cover on every tour,"

McGann said. "You can give as many statistics as you think are important."

According to the tour guide interest meeting, tour guides start as a guide event staff members and are required to work at all event weekends, though they may miss one Saturday event. They receive paid training in January or February and are required to participate in continued training and attend meetings on a monthly basis. Tour guides also need to be flexible and be available during busy seasons, such as spring break.

Only after a successful spring semester will a guide event staff member be offered a promotion to be a university guide, who have more control over their working hours and may work regular Monday to Saturday tours.

The online application is due Sept. 30 at 5 p.m. The final decisions will be released Nov. 14. A minimum GPA of 2.5 is expected, as well as a clean student conduct record.

For students interested in becoming tour guides, McGann recommends to be ready for uncomfortable questions.

"Political climate is a really big one that I've gotten a lot on tour," he said. "Sometimes also questions about parties, drug use, sexual assault."

"You don't really talk about them as much on tour, and so when a parent asks you sometimes it can throw you off a little bit," McGann said. "You have to figure out how to give them the information they're looking for and be honest."

TOUR GUIDES BY THE NUMBERS

88

tour guides currently active

200

students typically apply for every hiring round

20-25

Available spots this semester