



Members of Elon's club baseball team come together after the "Gathering of Friends" dedicated to their former teammate Breslin Wiley who died Saturday, Oct. 28.

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STAFF EDITORIAL

Come together in the wake of tragedy

Two years ago, Elon News Network published an editorial following the death of Elon University student Demetri Allison. The piece opened with, "There's not a lot to say."

Two years later, there still isn't. What do you say to someone who lost their child, classmate, teammate, brother or friend? There is nothing any of us can say to make Breslin Wiley's passing easier. There is nothing we can say in response to this to make it any better. There is no way for us to make sense of this tragedy.

There is plenty, though, that we can do for each other.

Wiley's passing is the fourth student death to shake Elon's campus in the last three years. After Trent Stetler took his own life in January 2015, we were stunned. After Allison died, we promised that we would open conversations about mental health on campus. Following Derek Winton's drug overdose in the fall of 2016, we wondered what more we could do.

Now we are in the same situation and we have to face the facts — student deaths are a strong possibility

on college campuses, including ours. The sad reality is that we cannot guarantee that this will not happen again. It can, and it has, but we must do whatever we can to try and mitigate tragedies that are preventable.

We may not be able to heal, but we can remember. We must remember Breslin for his smile, his kindness and his light.

Breslin Wiley was — and still is — loved deeply by those who knew him. He has been described by his loved ones as a vibrant, caring, positive young man and friend. You may not have known him, but he was a part of our community, and his passing will inevitably leave an irreparable hole in our campus and our hearts. And he was loved more than he knew.

In the wake of his passing, it is vital that we support one another in our grieving. A tragedy like this can bring up depression, anxiety and general mental unwellness within the community.

Each year, organizations at Elon host events, forums and talks that aim to shed light on the epidemic of mental illness on our campus. Just a

few weeks ago, SGA hosted a Town Hall discussing mental health. Orientation leaders and Elon 101 professors touch on mental health and share the resources that are available to students. Student run organizations such as Active Minds and SPARKS discuss this topic regularly and yet, the issue remains.

While it may seem like the issue of mental health is too salient to break through, we cannot give up on supporting our students, and in turn, hopefully ensuring that our community never suffers a loss like this again. Even if we feel as though our campus is doing enough when it comes to discussing mental health and supporting one another, we still need to be doing more. Doing more does not necessarily mean campus-wide initiatives and new programs — it starts with the community.

Ask your friends how they are and mean it. Do not take, "I'm fine, how are you?" as an answer. Pay attention and listen to how they are feeling. Engage in conversations about stress and heartbreak, sadness and fear. Tell your friends you love them. You do not need a reason to — just say

RESOURCES

Counseling Services
(336) 278-7280

Campus Safety and Police
(336) 278-5555

Student Life administrator-on-call
(336) 278-5555

it. Smile as you pass strangers across campus. See a counselor — even if you feel you do not need to. Talk more and listen more.

We need to do more and we need to come together. None of us can get through this difficult time alone, and that is perfectly OK. We have all likely heard this time and time again, but the sentiment rings true: It is OK to not be OK. It is OK to grieve. It is OK to lean on others.

The loss of a member of our community is beyond hard for everyone, especially for those of us who knew him. Take however long you need to grieve in whichever way you need to. And please remember — you are not alone.

Focus on the present, not your four-year plan



Melissa Beck
Columnist

Transitioning is the strangest feeling. One day you're enjoying the summer and spending time with your friends, loving the familiarity and calmness of it all, and then suddenly everything changes. Life takes a 180-degree turn and you're in a new state or town, in a world with different people and a foreign atmosphere. It's almost as if you've been transported to another planet.

Then, before you know what hit you, you're presented with a four-year plan — your very own map to guide you through the journey that is the next four years at Elon University. But how can you understand the map if you don't even know where you are?

For a freshman, a four-year

plan is one of the most intimidating things to be shoved in your face within the first six weeks of college. Most of us are still frantically searching our way around campus for different buildings, figuring out the lingo and making sure we're not the only ones completely discombobulated. Though Elon isn't the biggest school, it can still feel like a gigantic maze. And let's be honest, we're all still learning how to find our way around.

The four-year plan is exactly what it sounds like, a full college plan with all the courses, potential majors and minors and internships laid out for you on a simple piece of paper. This paper plummets you into the future, forcing you to imagine where you want to be in four

years and what you hope to accomplish here at Elon.

Most Elon students complete their four-year plan within the first few weeks of coming to campus. Too often, this plan can feel more like a binding contract than a suggestion. And now, with registration coming up, the pressure to complete this plan is more visible than ever.

I'm sure many freshmen take this as a joke. How can a professor or even the university expect us to have any clue of what major we're doing, let alone if we're going to study abroad once or twice or what internships we would be interested in?

Some might even look at the list of majors and randomly choose the most bizarre ones,

simply because they see no point. But is there some truth to the madness? Why would our Elon 101 advisors guide us through this plan if it wasn't meant to actually improve the four year experience for undergraduate students?

What if we all just stepped back and took a breath before diving into the future. There is a valid point in that we need to be prepared for what's ahead, but what about what's happening now? I have loads of homework, am still making friends, finding extra curriculums and still figuring out who I am as an Elon student. How can I do all of that while also envisioning what my next four years will entail? It's important to plan, but all this planning could be taking away from our

current experiences.

We must go into this plan with an open mind, trying our best to explore different fields we haven't tried or perhaps seem interesting to us. As freshmen we must trust that the faculty at Elon have our best interest at heart and want us to have the most successful, enjoyable time here at Elon and beyond. We must find a way to take what we're learning on a daily basis as we navigate through the maze, and transfer that into how we will eventually find the exit. In the meantime we must strategize to find the most efficient route, while still taking in each moment and recognizing that plans can change. In turn, we'll be ready to take on the greatest four years of our lives.