

LOOKING BACK AT PRESIDENT BOOK'S FIRST SEMESTER

Book looks forward to her next year as president, moving forward with Elon's Master Plan

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Just 65 days into her presidency at Elon University, Connie Book still maintains the same positive energy she showed on day one.

Since March 1 — her first day as president — Book has met with dozens of students, affinity groups and community members, ranging from LGBTQIA-identified students at Elon, to the board of trustees to local children at Elon Elementary. And to top it off, she traveled to Philadelphia to support the women's basketball team at the Colonial Athletic Association tournament and participated in fundraising events in Charlotte, Atlanta and Raleigh.

Book says she loves the high-pace action of the job and makes sure she is mentally, physically and intellectually ready to perform. To do that, she keeps up with her fitness routine and sets aside time every morning to read local newspapers — including *The Pendulum* on Wednesdays — and *The Chronicle* on Higher Education.

She takes this role seriously, and in order to do that, she said she has to be prepared.

"You have to be consistent and keep physical and emotional energy up," Book said. "I need to have enough awareness about all of these issues that impact higher education that I can think about Elon and what's our position."

In March, Book told *Elon News Network* she would "be doing a lot of listening" in her first semester to reacquaint herself to Elon after she spent almost three years as provost of *The Citadel*. Now, as the semester comes to a close, the summer and fall will be her action months.

She'll be attending a workshop at Harvard University this summer, which is designed to help newly appointed university presidents. She hopes the relationships she forms here will help make decisions and formulate ideas for the future.

When Book returns for the summer, she will continue to maintain and improve Elon University's strategic plan in the coming years. The goals outlined in Elon's plan are projected to be achieved in the next 20 years. Book won't be working alone to achieve these goals for the university.

"In strategic planning, you don't often have the answer and how to achieve it," Book said. "You just know this is an area you need to focus on, and then you get a group of smart people around the table and develop a strategy with objectives on how to do that."

Because of Book's previous experience at the university, she feels more obligated to finish Lambert's mission.

"It was very nice to have had relationships in place from that work and leave and come back and see how the work was progressing and to hear people talk about where they want to go next," Book said.

The plan implemented by former president Leo Lambert shows a 5-percent increase in diversity since 2010.

Book wants to be able to gradually increase diversity at the school, starting with recruitment. For undergraduate enrollment of the class of 2022, Book said the goal of the university is to offer more opportunities for financial aid and to recruit students from more diverse cities.

"That's the new plan. So where do we go from here? Where do we need to be? That will be an ongoing critical part of Elon's future because of the cost of private education," Book said.

All revenue beyond operating costs made by the university's new hotel, "The Inn at Elon," will fund scholarship opportunities for students. Book said she expects more people will want to attend the hotel knowing it benefits students directly.

"I do think people will — knowing it goes to scholarship support — people will say, 'Okay, let's all stay there rather than stay at the Hilton or the Hampton Inn,'" Book said.

Donors are one of the most important parts in building the university. Book said she hopes to prioritize growing endowment of the university in her presidency without taking her eyes off the students.

But Book said the key factor in the university's success overall has always been students — both prospective students and current students.

"I will need to prioritize ... that we are recruiting students and that they are our future," Book said. "We want to make sure that it's a good match with the students, that they embrace our mission and our values as an institution."

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CONNIE BOOK
PRESIDENT OF ELON UNIVERSITY



MAGGIE BROWN | POLITICS EDITOR

Above: President Book in her office, discussing her goals for the future.



Left: Book is welcomed by faculty members and families at a tailgate in Jordan Gym.

Below: President Book, accompanied by Vice President Emerita Jo Watts Williams '55, and freshman class President Cam Waddell, plants her oak sapling.

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