

CAMPUS VOICES

Is Elon's commitment to diversity fact or fiction?



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To the class of 2022, I'd like to welcome you. For some of you, the road to Elon was filled with challenges. Having to break stereotypes, challenge antiquated ways of thinking and push through various boundaries is nothing new to you. And unfortunately, those challenges do not stop here. For those of you who identify with adversity, the reality is you will inevitably face more during your next four years at this institution.

As I'm sure you all know, Elon prides itself in its commitment to diversity with Phoenix Fusion Weekend, the Odyssey Scholars program and other features on campus seeming to display that. But what seems to get lost in translation is the distinction between the university promoting diversity and an actual campus climate that is inclusive.

I'd like to take a step back and say Elon does make a good attempt to accept a more diverse student body and hold events geared towards various groups and communities on campus. But there also seems to be little done about the way people on campus interact.

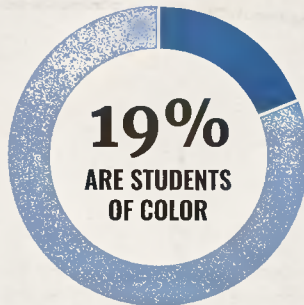
The problem with so little

variation among students is those who do not fit the "typical Elon" mold can easily become victim to tokenism and feel like they are lost in a student body that does not accept them as an equal and more as a product of Affirmative Action or scholarship opportunities.

Some students will self-identify as "woke," trying to push conversations towards their majority experience with a token minority friend to display how they are true warriors for the greater cause of social equality. They won't always listen to your experiences as a minority or appreciate your opinion. But that doesn't mean to quit sharing them. It doesn't mean you don't have every right to get angry. And it doesn't mean all Elon students are similar to either of the spectrums I just described.

You will find genuine people at this institution who care about your experience, who care about you as a person. You will find your voice and your outlet. Because no matter how many Vineyard Vines polos, blonde tresses, or Lilly Pulitzer dresses you see, there will be someone who finally looks like you.

DIVERSITY OF THE CLASS OF 2021



- Students of color
- Caucasian students

SOURCE: OFFICE OF ADMISSIONS
MEGHAN KIMBERLING | Design Chief

It might take a walk from KOCB to the Comm School, but it'll happen.

Underrepresentation on campus is not solely visual as diversity is not solely visual. But according to the university's first-year profile for the class of 2021, only 19 percent are students of color. To break that down for you even further, there are about 94 black identifying students and 31 Asian identifying students. We also have an underrepresentation of low-income students, students with varying political affiliations, citizenship statuses and gender identities/sexual orientations.

Again, we have resources on campus for these groups, but the climate is not always accepting of these varying factors among students.

So now that you see diversity at Elon is both "fact" and fiction, what should you do to contribute to a better campus climate as an incoming first-year student? For my underrepresented groups, don't be afraid to speak out. You have a voice, and you can find an outlet on campus in which to share your experiences and find community. Not speaking up is probably the worst thing you can do because there are people who are willing to

mentor you and direct you to resources where you can find community.

And if there's not one on campus? Make your own.

For those of you looking to be an ally for underrepresented groups, genuinely listen to their experience. Be a shoulder for them when they're frustrated, and don't push behavioral (or any, for that matter) stereotypes on your new friends. Just be genuine, and express genuine concerns for their struggles. And for the love of everything, learn the difference between empathy and sympathy. Good luck, class of 2022.

CAMPUS VOICES

Do not be afraid to lose yourself in college



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I'm going to tell you a secret: you're going to lose yourself these four years. Multiple times, in all likelihood. It may not happen your first semester or even your first year, but inevitably one day you'll look in the mirror and realize you no longer recognize the person staring back at you. It can be scary when it happens.

I've come to understand feeling directionless is commonplace. For good reason, too. As college students, we're caught in a purgatory, teetering between establishing our independence and relying on the shelter our family continues to provide. During this transition, personal accountability skyrockets, resulting in incredible expectations from professors, relatives and the little voice inside that never forgets to ask, "Am I enough?"

I believe this phenomenon of losing yourself is directly correlated with a fear of vulnerability, this concern that if you're not sure of yourself you are a failure and falling behind your classmates. Perhaps this fear is rooted in the fact that up until this point, we seldom have had the chance to identify ourselves as anything other than our academic and professional achievements. Sure, you may have played a sport or performed on a stage in high school, and there are plenty of people who find their identity in their craft. But I'd like to counter that perception. Your craft is what you do. Not who you are.

Academic and professional accomplishments are undeniably

important. But my advice to you, class of 2022, is to remember investing in your spirit and character is of equal, if not greater, significance. It's easy to forget this when a 10-page paper is due the same night as a group project, which coincidentally is the same day you have to work a five-hour shift. I know it's not realistic to never stress and never worry, to always be sure of yourself and that everything will work out. I also know if you always stress, always worry, you'll slip away from who you are inside. The longer you let it happen, the harder it is to find your way back.

I suggest taking advantage of little moments to ground yourself. Notice how the sun falls on the bricks as you walk to class. Listen to the ambient bustle of Historic in the morning as Elon wakes up. Meet people on your hall and spend time with them. Treat yourself to coffee from Irazu or an extra taco from Tangent. Ask professors about research they're conducting or the book they're writing. Sit on the grass outside Lake Mary Nell, and notice how the earth smells and feels in the afternoon. Volunteer anywhere. Spend time with your roommate outside your residence hall. Smile and thank the dining hall staff for your meals. When speaking with someone, listen to hear, not to respond. And, if just for a moment, forgo the pursuit of the biggest house, the next promotion, the nicest car and invest in your inner peace. Your future self will thank you.



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