

STAFF EDITORIAL

# Diversify your connections

## HOW WE SEE IT

Now more than ever, civil spaces are needed to address issues that directly affect our campus.

Diversity is important because it encourages dialogue on the numerous identities that exist within a group. Inclusion is crucial because it describes the action of including people within a group. But including people or diversifying a campus does not guarantee cross-cultural intermingling — which is most important for campus growth.

Methods to promote diversity and inclusion have been controversial. For instance, ongoing disputes over affirmative action for college admissions emphasize the need for college recruitment strategies that target underrepresented groups. But what happens after students are admitted? How do they socialize to foster diverse communities?

Here's our answer: there should be a greater push for cross-cultural intermingling once students arrive at Elon.

Multicultural centers like the Center for Race Ethnicity and Diversity Education and El Centro de Español are safe spaces that create a sense of belonging among minority students. But insulating people from outside noise can deter students from strengthening relations with the various identities on our campus. Doing so may increase self-segregation among groups or propagate diversity silos, where students may be reluctant to engage with different organizations or people of backgrounds that differ from theirs.

But what is more significant is the strident banter that can arise from cross-cultural mingling. When students who do not identify with a particular cultural organization attend one of their events, they may not know how to interact or interpret what they learn at the gathering. Discomfort can lead to aggressive behavior, which does not encourage growth or foster mutual understanding. Also, this discomfort should not permit prejudice and discriminatory

behavior. We should all agree that hurling discriminatory epithets is always unacceptable.

We are not arguing that cultural centers or programs should no longer exist. We are arguing for further development of programs like Intersect: Diversity and Leadership Conference — a one-day conference held in November where students can engage in dialogue to create positive change — that encourage all cultural groups to collaborate and intermingle. But, more importantly, we're encouraging you, members of the Elon community, to go outside your comfort zone and attend events that emphasize topics you would not typically pay attention to.

The goal is to understand someone else's perspective rather than assume you understand their reality. But your attendance at these programs should not be singular events that occur once a year. You should attempt to understand someone else's

perspectives by attending multiple events where you will have difficult conversations.

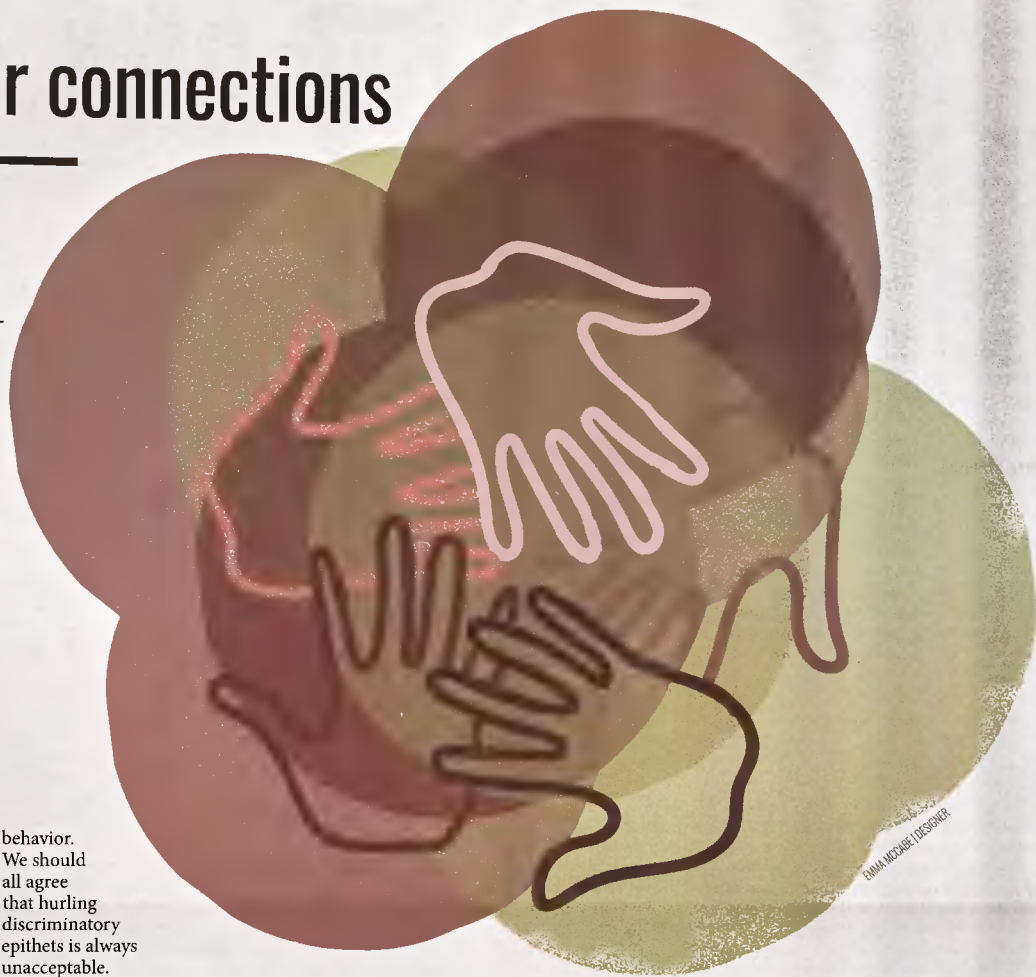
Amid controversy surrounding immigration policies and discrimination against vulnerable populations, we, now more than ever, need civil spaces to address uncomfortable issues affecting our campus.

One strategy to promote constructive conversations is fostering intergroup-dialogue — a framework through which students of different demographic groups work together in a semester-long course to discuss topics and work together on a project. Application of this strategy does not have to be strictly academic: organizations at Elon can offer events that encourage different groups to interact over a meal. For example, the peer education health and wellness

group, SPARKS, can collaborate with the Latinx-Hispanic Union for an event. Other schools have similar programs that have been effective.

These ideas are not beneficial if no one is willing to make them happen. We need students, and especially students who do not identify with minority demographic groups related to race, ethnicity, sexual orientation or religion on campus, to enter spaces where they may be uncomfortable.

Consider attending an event held by the Latinx-Hispanic Union, the Black Student Union and other multicultural groups. Engaging in respectful dialogue with someone who differs from you will expand your perspective and understanding of someone else's experience. And isn't that what college is for?



## Learn to appreciate opposite perspectives, not attack them



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You're scrolling through your Facebook feed when you stumble upon a controversial video shared by your lab partner from your sophomore year of high school. They had received over 40 comments from adversaries who evidently think their opinion is superior and have a little too much free time during their lunch break.

As your lab partner defends a recent political progression, he gets upset when people comment angrily on the link he shared, and he defends his right to free speech. The worst part isn't that he shared something that might make you cringe or that he's partaking in the fruitless comments below it,

but that he is surprised when people challenge his view.

And here's where so many people are wrong.

There's something very admirable about a person who stands up to express what they believe in. But doing this alone isn't the holy grail of achievement because it is missing a crucial element — the ability to look upon the opinions of others that differ from your own and respect them. This can be a flaw in the mind of an activist because regardless of having science, logic and reason for support, to ostracize the opposite side places you above them. It's worse if you write off anyone with an opposing view

because it's not your view.

But it's someone else's view, and to attack someone and put down what they believe in because it's not what you believe in doesn't do any good. The noblest thing you can do is to look upon another's position with respect. The best thing you can do is to merely ask them why they feel that way, how they got to that system of beliefs and weigh how it differs from your own.

You don't get to shun someone's ideas because they are not your own. That's not how the world works.

You can interrogate, try to understand and push others to consider doing the same.

Maybe when we all know all the facts, we can get on the same page. Maybe when we all realize that posting a controversial video only invites discord, with each side either deciding to fight or electing to stay quiet. Maybe when we figure out that your list of Facebook friends, the nation and the world is at a stalemate, with two ardently passionate sides pushing hard in opposition, we can stop lashing out at people with the opposing view. Or even better, not seek out power in numbers but power within ourselves.

Sharing a Facebook post to spread awareness and expression is more than fine, but attacking someone's opinions

and shunning them for having a perspective we dislike will not create progression. This will only slow our advancement.

The world has seen many great revolutions from people outside, marching and holding signs, but no history book details the grand efforts made by people slamming each other in Internet comments. So stop feeling surprised after the videos you share make waves, stop posting statues to egg on the comments of your opponents, and should you find yourself with a unique and different point of view, get out there and fight for it, waving signs and marching tall to make real change.