

OPINIONS



CAMPUS VOICES

We need more socioeconomic diversity at Elon



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College administrations love claiming they want people of all socioeconomic backgrounds to attend their schools. This makes sense as overall trends show affordability has become increasingly important to those searching for the perfect university. This also leads to many universities adding affordability to their list of attributes.

Furman University's website claims students can "earn [their degree] from one of South Carolina's most prestigious universities — for an affordable price." Davidson University encourages students to contact financial aid experts to ensure affordability. Elon University states in the website's cost and financial aid section that "[The university] maintains its affordable cost through a careful strategy."

These claims lead both

current and prospective students to believe their schools are doing the most to achieve socioeconomic diversity on their campuses, but unfortunately, these claims are just that: claims with no real facts or actions to back them up.

Data posted by The New York Times in January 2017 showed that 38 colleges in the nation had more students coming from families with incomes in the top one percent (making over \$630,000 a year) than they had students from families in the bottom 60 percent.

Furman was ranked 34th, with 16.2 percent of their student body in the top one percent and 15.5 percent coming from the bottom 60 percent. Davidson came in 33rd with 17.4 percent coming from the top one percent and 16.4 percent coming from the bottom 60 percent.

So where exactly did Elon fall? In 15th place.

That's right, Elon is 15th highest in the nation for most top one percent students vs. lower 60 percent students, with a gap of 14 percent of students coming from the top one percent and 9.2 percent coming from the bottom 60 percent.

For Elon, this gap has only increased over time, which begs the question: what are schools actually doing to ensure socioeconomic diversity? Actually, finding the initiatives used to increase enrollment of students from low- and middle-class families is incredibly difficult.

With all that said, many people, especially students, ask why socioeconomic diversity is even relevant. In the eyes of many, the lack of low- and middle-income students enrolled in higher education

programs, especially private colleges and universities, isn't even a problem. They ask these questions because they do not know what they're missing out on by not attending school with students of a variety socioeconomic backgrounds.

A piece written two years ago in The New York Times and expanded on by the Association of American Colleges and Universities discusses one of the most crucial reasons this type of diversity is needed. It is often assumed that initiatives that assist low- and middle-income students in attending college is about those students alone. In reality, as the articles state, this diversity is a "favor to us all ... It's a plus for richer students, who are then exposed to a breadth of perspectives that lies at the heart of the truest, best education."

The over 500 students at

Elon that receive Pell Grants have a perspective on life so astronomically different from a student who will never have to fill out the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). This is not a bad thing, not by a long shot. Rather, this is a learning opportunity, a chance for all students to engage in discussions they may not have had until much later on in their lives if at all.

For the sake of all students, colleges and universities, including Elon, need to work harder to provide students with the educational opportunity of experiencing as many diverse perspectives as possible. This starts with ending claims of affordability, recognizing the issues at hand and working with students to find the best way to make this socioeconomic diversity happen at their institutions.

CAMPUS VOICES

We must respect the right to freedom of religion



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Though politics has been dominating the news with midterm elections being next week, the Asia Bibi case is news that needs to be talked about. Aasiya Noreen, better known as Asia Bibi, was convicted of blasphemy by a Pakistani court and has spent the past eight years on death row. On Wednesday, Oct. 31, she was finally acquitted of her charges.

Asia Bibi is a Christian farm laborer who drank from the same cup as a Muslim, which then led to false allegations that she insulted the Prophet Muhammad. Now, there are thousands of Islamic protests happening against the Pakistani government for their decision. The state is currently in a battle with supporters of the Tehreek-e Labbaik Pakistan (TLP), a growing political party whose one goal is to punish

blasphemers.

When reading news such as this, it makes me take a step back and think about how lucky I am to live in the United States. When our founders wrote the Constitution, they were careful to separate church and state so we were guaranteed religious freedom.

Look at Asia Bibi.

This woman has spent eight years in prison because she drank water before giving it to the other Muslims. These were false charges. She spent all that time behind bars — and was almost killed multiple times — because she supposedly disrespected the Prophet.

I know looking now at some of the people in government that it is hard for certain groups of people to feel like this is a country built on freedom. Yes, much of the U.S. is still divided by

discrimination and prejudice, but we are promised the right to practice any religion we choose, whether others agree with it or not.

I can't wrap my head around being imprisoned because I disrespected God. I am surrounded by people with different religious views than my own, and I respect them. The U.S. was created choosing to respect those differences.

We have states in the U.S. where a religion predominantly resides, such as Mormonism in Utah, but no one living in Utah is required to practice Mormonism. See the difference?

To make matters worse, there were riots when she was released. People were so outraged that this falsely accused woman wasn't hanged for her "crime," so they decided to riot.

These protests have forbidden her from leaving the country as she had originally planned to, and the TLP especially continues to try to publicly hang her.

It deeply disturbs me that Bibi's life is on the line because of her religious values. I can't even imagine living in a country where I don't have the right to speak my mind or practice what I believe.

Our First Amendment rights are so valuable. It is why we as Americans are able to protest, pray and preach what we believe without fearing for our lives.

I am proud to be an American, even when I don't agree with the way the government operates. I get to live and practice as I choose without being shamed for it, and that is something we should all be more appreciative of.