

clip floating around on just about every social media and university communication outlet at the end of the last school year. A group of communications students recreated the intro to the classic TV show *Friends*. You might also have noticed that the clip was featured on websites such as The Huffington Post, ABC News, Yahoo and many others, along with Good Morning America Live. If the rest of America (and other parts of the world where the clip was broadcast) were not aware of the skills fostered at Elon University, these communications majors caught their attention. And even if they didn't, maybe Elon's first place award in the national Sprite Films contest did this past summer, which granted graduate Dean Coots '13 a \$30,000 contract to work with Sprite and Coca-Cola executives to develop content and an invitation to the American Film Institute Festival in Los Angeles.

Elon alumni stretch from the west coast to the east, where you can catch a few in Broadway shows such as *Newsies*, *Anything Goes*, *Wicked*, *West Side Story* and *Mamma Mia*, just to name a few. Other Elon alumni in the acting world include Grant Gustin on *Glee* and *Arrow* and Lisa Goldstein on *One Tree Hill*.

Elon also takes pride in students like Delaney McHugo, a junior who recently gained recognition for herself and the university when she submitted a video project to a contest sponsored by the Rape, Abuse, and Incest National Network. Her winning PSA was later featured on RAINN's networks as well as MTV. McHugo represents the many Elon students dedicated to advocating and bringing about positive change.

STUDY HARD, PARTY HARDER?

Accolades and achievements are by no means the only prominent factors comprising Elon's growing image and reputation. As we are all well aware, academics is not the only area people pay attention to when passing judgment on an institute of higher education.

Recently Elon earned a bit of national attention in another prominent component of college life: partying. The popular website Brobible.com featured Elon in multiple articles, including an entire story on "Festivus," the infamous end-of-the-year mud party that usually falls around the time admitted students come to visit with their parents. The article recognized Festivus as one of the best college parties in the nation, and the website itself refers to the story as one of the best ever posted.

Brobible also featured Elon in its "How We Party" column, which ranks universities on various categories that make up an ultimate score on how wild the school is. Elon scored an impressive 7.3/10 after being judged on factors such as house parties, Greek life and annual events (such as "syllabus week," Homecoming and Reading Day).

While its understandable that a university

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-JOE BRUNO,
Senior

develop a culture around its social life, how has Elon's recognition as a "party school" affected its overall reputation? While articles such as Brobible are out of the university's control, are we aware of what perceptions are built surrounding this sort of acknowledgment?

SO WHERE DO WE FALL SHORT?

As much as Elon excels in its academics and student programs, there are still aspects of the university that have been criticized.

Athletics

While our athletic programs may not be where we gain the most attention, it could be argued that where we fall hardest in this aspect of college is student interest. Compared to our neighboring schools in the Triad region like UNC, NC State and Duke, Elon has been criticized for its lack of student enthusiasm when it comes to sports.

Senior Joe Bruno, who announces the volleyball and baseball games, is an avid supporter of the Phoenix. He believes that although student attendance at sporting events has been steadily improving, it could still get better, especially with football. Despite the team's losing season, Bruno says, "I'm still at every game rooting for them because they're our team, and I wish more students would realize that and come together and support them."

Bruno also points out that by not bothering to attend the games, students may not realize what they're missing with Elon athletics.

"Most Elon students are ignorant to the fact that Elon has fun teams to watch," he said. "Not only are they fun to watch, they're pretty good." Bruno cites the women's volleyball team and men's soccer team — the latter of which just won its third straight conference title — as examples of under-supported teams.

One team that may not be experiencing a lack of support this season is men's basketball, which has seen a significant showing of interest.

"I think that we'll sell out every single game, mostly because the players are good," Bruno said. "It's easy for students to get behind a team when they're winning."

Like the academic programs and campus itself, Elon athletics will also be experiencing some major changes. Come 2014, Elon will be moving to the Colonial Athletic Association, which consists of east coast schools like James

Madison University, University of Delaware, William and Mary and College of Charleston. Both Anderson and Bruno said this move will be beneficial in terms of generating more awareness for Elon's name, as we'll be playing within the region most of our students come from.

"I think it will definitely be a growing period for our sports teams," Bruno said. "A lot of teams in the [CAA] are stronger than the teams that we face right now in the Southern Conference, and that's both a good and a bad thing. We're just going to have to adjust and learn their style of play."

Graduate Programs

Although Elon offers over 60 programs of study for undergraduates, only six degrees are offered at the graduate level. While Elon has risen drastically among national ranks over past years in undergraduate study, we are not yet competing at the same caliber in terms of our graduate study offerings. But that, too, is changing.

In terms of where Elon will be experiencing the most growth in the next few years, Anderson said graduate programs would be a main focus.

"The university is following a strategy to grow undergraduate enrollment slowly, but to expand graduate programs," he said.

By doing so, Elon will be putting itself on the map to a greater extent for an entirely different audience, which will in turn only fuel its already rising national reputation.

SO... WHO ARE WE?

We know Elon, because we are Elon. Every student has built a personal connection to the university because every student has walked the brick paths and sat in the classrooms. But how do other universities, prospective students, alumni and people across the nation and globe perceive us? From an outsider's point of view, all it takes is one article or ranking (positive or critical) to form a perception of the university they have never set foot on.

The way others view Elon begins with how we view ourselves. Our behaviors and actions are what ultimately shape Elon's image. The way we represent our university and the way we interact with others determine the way we are viewed as a whole. We, as students, faculty and staff, are the ones responsible for marketing the positive image of Elon to everyone outside of the school.

"I think there's this feeling that somehow advertising or marketing is not being honest, or it's trying to create an image that isn't true, and that's not our intention," Anderson said. "We try to tell Elon's story accurately, and it's a great story to tell. We don't need to hype Elon."

Everyone else will most likely come to think of us as we think of ourselves. So as far as the question of who we are goes, that depends. How do you see us?