



# **Good to Great: New Student Orientation & Elon 101**

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# **ELON UNIVERSITY**

# Presentation Overview

- ▶ Brief overview of Elon University
- ▶ Introduction to New Student Orientation (NSO) & Elon 101
- ▶ Academic legitimacy
- ▶ Elon by the numbers (assessment & eval)
- ▶ Opening of School Meetings
- ▶ “Take-Aways” for your institution

# Quick Info on Elon

- ▶ Founded 1889, private
- ▶ Located 20 mi east of Greensboro, NC
- ▶ Approx 5,000 undergraduates, 500+ grad
- ▶ 40%-60% male/female
- ▶ 60% live on campus
- ▶ Acceptance rate of 42%
- ▶ SAT (old scale) 1220, Elon HS GPA 3.9
- ▶ Student/faculty ratio 14:1
- ▶ 80% do an internship and 73% study abroad prior to graduation.

# NSO Foundation

- ▶ Mission:
  - Aid new students in their transition to the institution
  - Expose new students to the broad educational opportunities of the institution
  - Integrate new students with the life of the institution
- ▶ Collaboration between academic and student affairs to give new students the most seamless transition possible.

# New Student Orientation (NSO) Overview

- ▶ Spring Orientation/Admissions Weekends and Fall Orientation (no summer programs)
- ▶ NSO is directed by Div of Student Affairs
- ▶ Staffing:
  - Director of NSO and 150+ student leaders:
    - 16 Head Staff Members (3 paid)
    - 95 Orientation Leaders (OL)
    - 50 O-Team Members

# NSO Key Components

- ▶ 4 Day orientation program beginning with move-in day
- ▶ Small (15) NSO cohort size
- ▶ 4 Orientation sessions with OL and New Students
- ▶ Group Sessions: Social Issues (300), Transitions Strategies (600), Engaged Learning (30)
- ▶ New Student Convocation (families are invited)
- ▶ Late Night Programming

# Elon 101 Mission

- ▶ Elon 101 supports the transition of first-year students as they become active participants in an academic community. To fulfill this mission, Elon 101 uses a developmental model of advising that:
  - ◆ Designs class experiences to expand students' academic and interpersonal skills.
  - ◆ Provides opportunities to enhance students' confidence and competence.
  - ◆ Encourages students to make informed decisions, exercise social responsibility and demonstrate personal integrity.
  - ◆ Fosters caring relationships and respect for individual differences.
  - ◆ Models passion for lifelong learning.

# Elon 101 Curriculum & Structure

- ▶ Delivered out of Academic Advising (Div of Academic Affairs)
- ▶ Director of 101 & Support Staff...with the assistance of entire Advising Office (6)
- ▶ 101 Curriculum: Elon Honor Code, Academic Advising Information/Activities, & Community Building
- ▶ Other common topics/activities: Service, campus/community resources, “themes”, alcohol, sustainability, low ropes, dinner @ faculty home/other off campus location

# Elon 101 Overview

- ▶ 87 sections this fall, 1semester hour course
- ▶ Class size of 15 (Fellows Sections 25)
- ▶ 10+ themed sections
- ▶ Instructors serve as academic advisors until students officially declare
- ▶ Faculty and Professional Staff teach 101 (all paid)
- ▶ Student TA's for every 101 section (all paid)
- ▶ Community from 1<sup>st</sup> day of Orientation-end of fall semester
- ▶ Weekly student-advisor contact
- ▶ The quest for quality control in Elon 101...
- ▶ Approx 98% participation, not a required course

# Key Connections Between NSO & 101

- ▶ Elon 101 class rosters are used as NSO cohorts
- ▶ Two Elon 101 (Instructor/TA) activities held during NSO
  - 1<sup>st</sup> Class held immediately after Convocation
  - Elon 101 class dinner last night of orientation
- ▶ Elon 101 Parent meetings (94% of parents rate this excellent or above average)
- ▶ OL and TA connection
- ▶ 101 and NSO work together on logistics (locations, budgets, etc.)

# Why Elon 101 doesn't have to fight for academic legitimacy

- ▶ **GST 110. THE GLOBAL EXPERIENCE 4 sh**

This first-year seminar examines public responsibility in a global context. It explores some of the implications created by cultural and natural diversity and the possibilities for human communication and cooperation within this diversity. The course emphasizes student and faculty creativity through active and collaborative learning; the seminar is writing intensive. First-year students only. Four (4) semester hours.

# NSO & Elon 101 Evaluation

- ▶ NSO Assessment: “Meeting your Elon 101 advisor & Teaching Assistant” (usefulness; 4 is the highest):

1	1.28 %
2	8.09 %
3	34.47 %
4	55.74 %
Did not attend	0.43 %

- ▶ Elon 101 End of course evaluation: “I liked having the same people in my orientation group and my 101 class”: 85.97% Strongly Agree or Agree

# **NSO & Elon 101 Student Evaluation Comments**

## **General Eval Comments:**

- ▶ I liked the idea of doing a lot of events with my Elon 101 class because it gave us a lot of opportunities to get to know each other
- ▶ I really liked that we were put with our Elon 101 course. It was really easy to make connections with people that way.

## **What was the most valuable/useful thing you learned during Orientation?**

- ▶ Meeting with Elon 101 Group (mentioned at least 10 times!).
- ▶ Just getting to know my Elon 101 group and advisor was useful because it was more than the meet and greet friendships you're used to during orientation weekend.
- ▶ I met the people in my Elon 101 course, which made me feel very close to the people in the group. We had to spend a certain amount of time with those people, so it was really nice to be able to start your day with people you know.

# Elon Retention & Graduation 1990-Present (it's not all NSO & 101!)

- ▶ Retention: 4 year graduation:  
90-91: 74.2% 90-91: 43.2%  
95-96: 81.2% 95-96: 60.4%  
00-01: 83.2% 00-01: 65.2%  
05-06: 89.0% Most recent: 73.9%  
07-08: 90.4%
- ▶ Over a dozen major building projects completed since 1990 including:  
Student Center/Union, Greek Housing, Science Center, Library, Football  
Stadium, Academic Village (5 buildings), Law School (Greensboro), &  
several substantial residence hall facilities
- ▶ Other major happenings: Vincent Tinto review 1993, GST 110 added &  
Student fitness center opens 1994, Div I athletics & new President 1999,  
University status 2001, Named to Newsweek-Kaplan's "25 Hottest  
Colleges" list 2005

# In tough economic times... Elon 101/Advising (Split Model\*) v. Total Intake Model\*: Cost Analysis

- ▶ To instruct AND advise 1300 freshmen Elon spends approximately \$200,000.
- ▶ Total Intake Model cost would be approximately \$400,000+ to advise AND deliver a first-year seminar.
- ▶ Cost includes: Advisors, Seminar Instructors, TA's/Peer Leaders, Class Budgets, Director of Program(s), Admin Support Staff (1), & Training/Supplies/Misc Costs
- ▶ Does not include any NSO costs-not a fee based program
- ▶ We keep NSO cost low by utilizing student leaders and not having to keep campus open all summer

\*as defined in Academic Advising: A Comprehensive Handbook

# Opening of School Meetings

- ▶ Held late each spring and in August prior to NSO/Opening of School
- ▶ Coordinated by Assistant VP for Academic Affairs
- ▶ We bribe them with food!
- ▶ Over 40 areas of campus represented
- ▶ Sample offices represented: Housing, NSO, Aramark, Campus Safety, Registrar, All Deans, Parent/Alumni/Development, Technology, Athletics, Student Life (all offices), Transfer Advising, Provost/Assoc. Provost, Grounds/Set Up, Student Union/Scheduling, & many others

# Key Components/“Take-Aways”

- ▶ Do you structure your NSO groups strategically? Could you use your freshmen seminar cohorts as orientation groups?
- ▶ Could you utilize freshmen seminar instructors as academic advisors? What would this look like?
- ▶ If you don't have one, would an interdisciplinary seminar work/be of benefit on your campus? What barriers exist?
- ▶ Do you hold large “Opening of School” style meetings to be sure EVERYONE is on the same page?

# “Take-aways” continued

- ▶ Could you save money by utilizing student leaders instead of student staff?
- ▶ Are small NSO and freshmen seminar groups feasible on your campus? Is this cost or resource prohibitive?
- ▶ Can/does your campus focus on “student engagement” (not retention)?
- ▶ Does your campus constantly look for ways to maximize communication and minimize duplication?

# Good is the enemy of great...

- ▶ Good To Great and the Social Sectors & Good to Great, Jim Collins
- ▶ Transforming a College, George Keller
- ▶ Academic Advising: A Comprehensive Handbook, Virginia Gordon & Wesley Habley
- ▶ Achieving and Sustaining Institutional Excellence for the First Year of College, Betsy Barefoot, John Gardner, & Co...