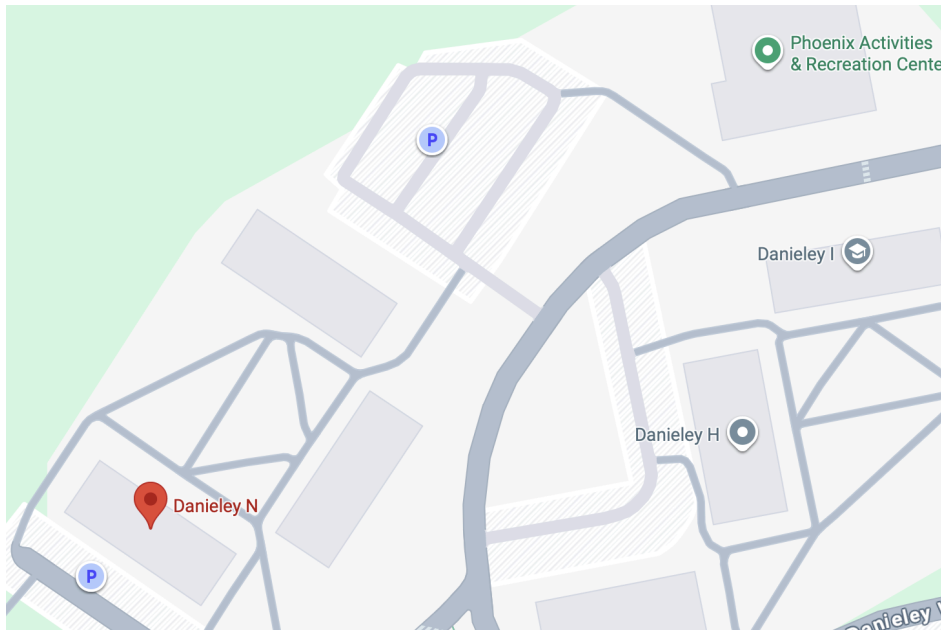


Pickup Basketball Helps Shape Elon Students Experience

By Matt Shiffman

It all started in the fall of 2023, freshman fall for Alex Sterne, Zach Semonds, James Pyndus, and five other housemates.

“I lived in Danieley M my freshman year. I lived with seven other unruly boys, and we lived right by the (Parc) gym.” Sterne said.



Danieley M is not highlighted on the map but is located adjacent to Danieley N

It is at the Phoenix Activities & Recreation Center, also known as PARC gym, where they play pickup basketball.

That fall, the group started playing pickup basketball as many afternoons as possible. They try to gather as many of them as they can before they spend about an hour a day playing.

Semonds told me about how the games usually start.

“We all are in either in class, or doing something completely random, and we’ll get a text in the group chat, just, hoop.” He explained. “That’s kinda the sign.”

Now, as juniors, the group still plays regularly. Especially, Sterne, Semonds, and Pyndas. I asked Sterne why he still comes back to play so often.

“What makes me keep showing up are the people there.” Sterne said. “It’s competing with others.”

All three guys of the group that I talked to really harped on the fact that this is something they all bond over together. All the guys are still close friends like freshman year, and this is one of their favorite group activities.

Pyndus also told explained that the meaning of these games stems back to when he was young.

“Basketball gives us that thing that we can do that brings out that inner childhood in us. We can do something we have all been passionate about since we were kids.” He said.

Despite this, it can still be hard to get everyone together for afternoon pickup basketball games. Between class and work schedules, it can be hard. However, when it does happen, it is special.

“Getting everyone here, onto the court at the same time is pretty special for us, doesn’t happen a ton, but when it does, it’s always something to look forward to.” Zach said.

This does not mean that these games lack in competitiveness. Both Sterne and Semonds talked at length about the level of the competition.

Sterne specifically talked about how the competition is good for the group and helps bring them even closer.

“The competition between me and my companions is fierce.” He said. “And although it has led to several fights that have bled back into our home causing a lot of strife, we have been able to find ways to resolve this strife and further strengthen our bonds in terms of boyhood.”

And strengthen that boyhood they have. The overwhelming takeaway from Sterne and Semonds at the end of our conversations was they will miss playing pickup basketball once they leave Elon.

“Once we graduate, we’re probably all going to move to different cities.” Semonds said. It is sad to say that we might lose a bit of a bond there, but it just makes each game we play after that even more special.”

Sterne echoed that sentiment.

“What I will miss most about playing basketball with my friends, is simply that. Playing basketball with my friends.”

You truly cannot get too old for pickup basketball. There is nothing quite like a game with people you care about.

