

Editorial

THE PENDULUM
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Ten straight years of Lambert's progress Challenges still lie ahead of Lambert presidency

Every organization needs a figurehead. Nations go through elections, endure insurrections and at times search in vain for a figure to embody their beliefs and their aspirations. Individuals attach themselves to politicians, celebrities and philosophers. Elon, over the past 10 years, has increasingly bound itself to President Leo Lambert, both for his vision and his presence on campus.

The success that Elon has enjoyed during his tenure has, in many ways, been rampant and unparalleled. Lambert has overseen Elon College's transformation into Elon University.

"It takes courage to make that change, to live up to that change," said Gerald Whittington, vice president for business, finance and technology. "It's significantly different not just because of the name, but because of the responsibilities that follow, and we lived up to it."

While Lambert cannot be given sole responsibility for Elon's ascension, his leadership and vision, Whittington said, have been essential because they were extensions of the preexisting culture and aspirations and weren't superimposed upon the then-college. Lambert himself has described the transition as part of an "uninterrupted run in Elon's momentum."

"It's really important for a person coming into a culture like this to understand that it's not a one-man band, it's not about the president," Lambert said, in reference to advice he would give a successor.

Lambert hasn't been alone in expanding Elon, but he certainly is the most visible culprit and, in many ways, has become the figure upon which people project the university.

Elon's transformation began beneath the previous 25-year presidency of J. Fred Young, but the numbers from Lambert's first decade in office speak for themselves.

The student body, from 1999 to today, rose from 3,845 to 4,992. Endowment rose from slightly more than \$49 million to roughly \$86.5 million from 1999 to 2008. Elon's net assets jumped from \$132.8 million in 1999 to \$260.8 million last year.

Elon opened its School of Law, Koury Business Center, expanded its presence through academia, athletics and abroad and has still maintained a small-scale appeal that has been at the forefront of much of Elon's draw. Enforcing an attractive dichotomy between a down-home, close-knit community and an

expansive academic worldview has become Elon's calling card under Lambert, but questions must be raised as to how long that can continue.

Tuition increased from \$12,671 in 1999 to \$25,489 in the upcoming semester, with total costs climbing from \$17,524 to \$31,775. At Elon's First Annual Presidential Fireside Chat, Lambert hinted at tuition skyrocketing to \$60-100,000 by 2020, a figure that might just send parents of kids currently in elementary school into shock.

The background of those elementary school kids will also become an increasingly important issue at Elon, with more emphasis being put upon increasing minority representation on the campus. As it stands now, the student body only contains a 10 percent minority population. Progress is being made, with the class of 2012 bumping multicultural representation to 15 percent, but Elon also reports the class is still 75 percent Caucasian.

The EverElon campaign, constructed to raise \$30 million in endowment to support and expand the preexisting scholarship programs at Elon, must fulfill its stated goal "to underwrite scholarships from students from all backgrounds" and serve as a spark for a greater multicultural presence. It also must be ensured that this goal does not combat Elon's mission to use scholarships to increase its competitiveness in its athletics division. With ever-limited endowment funds nationwide, growth in one sector of the university must not come at the expense of another.

With the aforementioned dichotomy comes Elon's reputation as a grand collegiate bargain, with the Princeton Review, USA Today, the Fiske Guide to Colleges and Kiplinger's Personal Finance Magazine proclaiming Elon to be one of the nation's best values amid the competitive field of private universities.

But how long can Elon retain such accolades? Eventually, if it continues on the same path, Elon could soon find itself pushed into that upper echelon of exclusive, expensive universities.

For many, there's nothing wrong with that, with every award Elon receives, since with every adjacent school and building it constructs, each diploma gains value and prestige. But in the same way that the Elon of 1999 would be almost unrecognizable to current students, the Elon of 2019 can be equally alien, for better or for worse.

For more reactions to Frank Turek's speech and an analysis of the Somali pirate crisis, head online ...

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Diplomacy coupled with humility

President Barack Obama is called a fascist, a socialist and a communist. Now, the title of sympathizer can be added to his repertoire.

There have been steady grumblings from both sides of the political spectrum over Obama's baby steps into foreign policy. The complaints grew louder still with the relaxing of relations between America and Cuba, and the increasingly likely chance that within the next few years relations between the two countries will be normalized and the long-running embargo will be mothballed.

Now, Obama's policy in Latin America is reaching a boiling point, with his interaction with Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez. Obama had the audacity to shake Chavez's hand, accept the book "Open Veins of America" and further open American foreign policy to accept the viewpoints and criticisms of foreigners. After the past eight years, this sounds like a novel, albeit contentious idea.

There are many who would claim that opening the country to criticism, by making it seem as if the United States weren't an invincible and infallible behemoth, the rest of the world would try and take advantage of perceived weaknesses.

But it seems the world has been taking advantage of America's stubborn tendencies for years, using the apparent

lack of regard for countless countries when conducting foreign policy as a rallying cry for all sorts of causes, whether they be democratic, populist or military. It's easier to portray America as a foul empire if it acts with a haughty lack of regard for the remaining 96 percent of the world's population. While there will undoubtedly still be contingents who wish to do the United States harm, a declining few will be inclined to join their ranks.

It's a humbling doctrine that will see few immediate dividends. It's a long and arduous process to turn enemies into friends, but by showing blunt honesty, a realistic view of America's limitations and past mistakes, and hopefully maintaining a level head, Obama can mitigate the past eight years of diplomatic failures and start to turn the ship around.

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Letters to the Editor and columns can be e-mailed to pendulum@elon.edu or sent to 7012 Campus Box, Elon, N.C. 27244. Content will be edited for clarity, length and accuracy. All submissions must include a name and phone number.

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