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Elon's campus

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BRIAN ALLENBY | Staff Photographer
If the smoking ban on campus passes, ashtrays like this one will be removed forcing students, faculty and staff to go off campus to light up.

Smoking survey ignites discussion on campus

Jack Dodson
News Editor

In an effort to better understand the habits of smokers on Elon University's campus, a group of students in coordination with the Office of Substance Abuse recently sent out a survey to students looking at their knowledge and opinions of the current tobacco policy.

The students who created the survey were leadership fellows who worked with the office to look at the current climate of tobacco on campus, part of which included sending out the survey to students, said Coordinator for Substance Education Lauren Martin.

Martin said another survey will be sent to faculty and staff asking similar questions in the next few weeks.

The survey had a two-fold effect, she said, by attempting to educate the student body on the smoking policy and to have a better picture of tobacco use on campus.

"We wanted to see how aware the campus was," Martin said. "Do we need to do a better job of educating the campus on what the policy is?"

She said she didn't think a lot of people on campus are aware of the current policy, which she said is in part because she doesn't think many people on campus smoke.

According to the current policy, smoking is prohibited inside buildings on campus, as well as within 30 feet of all buildings.

Martin said every two years her office puts out a survey to the student body to look at the climate of substance use on campus, but it looks very broadly at tobacco use, not taking into account the various types of tobacco available.

"On this survey, what we wanted to do was actually break it down for students, because sometimes students don't associate cigars or hookahs as tobacco ... to see



BRIAN ALLENBY | Staff Photographer
Freshman John Zurkulchlen smokes a cigar outside of Smith Residence Hall.

what students are using, if anything."

To senior Matt Moroughan, though, the survey represented a bias against the smoking population on campus.

"They didn't really remain neutral in the wording of the questions," he said, citing a part of the survey that asked if smokers could get behind a smoke-free

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Lighthouse to be audited in April

Samantha King
News Editor

Elon University's Lighthouse Tavern is scheduled to undergo a tax exempt audit in April after the use of alcohol at the facility and the property's educational exempt status came into question.

According to the property exempt application Elon completed in 2009, the Lighthouse Tavern is a "Campus Center for students and student activities."

The property came into question when Gerald York, tax administrator for Alamance County, was notified by a citizen's complaint, which York did not elaborate on.

"I wasn't aware that the property was tax exempt," York said.

Most of Elon University's properties are tax exempt because of the university's nonprofit status.

On the tax exemption application, the university cites N.C. General Statute 105-278.4 and 105-278.7, which lists specific reasons the property should be exempt. The statutes say the property will be "wholly and exclusively used for educational purposes by the owner (Elon)."

The university doesn't mention its use of alcohol in the application, something Gerald Whittington, senior vice president of business, finance and technology, said was not asked for on the form.

York disagrees.

The third item on the tax document asks the organization to list and explain the purposes for which the properties will be used.

The document read, "this facility is for Elon students and guests and is not open to the public."

The answer Elon provided on the tax exempt application does not mention how the facility will be used for educational reasons nor the facility's use of alcohol to turn profit.

Robert Dunlap, who is responsible for programming at Lighthouse, said the facility is a tremendous learning tool for students.

"Students are planning and hosting events and gaining leadership experience," Dunlap said.

Students who hold leadership positions often plan for weeks, publicizing the event on campus and finally seeing the event through. Without Lighthouse, Dunlap said, students would be severely limited as to where they could host events.

"The bar is open only 15 hours a week, and even then, some students rent (the facility) for nonalcoholic events," Dunlap said.

ARAMARK, Elon's food service provider, is licensed to sell alcohol, but the university policy states that alcohol cannot be served at fundraising events. Dunlap said most commonly the Greek organizations rent Lighthouse to host events.

The university bought the property in 2008 for almost \$300,000 more than the assessed value from the owner, Grayson Chad Snyder, an adjunct professor at the time. Snyder was arrested for possession and intent to sell cocaine and GHB, a date rape drug.

After fights and drug-related instances became increasingly problematic, the university made Lighthouse into a "hangout" for students and faculty, Whittington said.

"We began to worry about the safety of students," he said.

The application also said Lighthouse would not be open to the public, a practice that has not been enforced, although York said whether it was open to the public, did not matter for tax exempt status.

According to Whittington, a campus committee requested it be made public last summer.

"We didn't know a change had been made," Whittington said. "Effective Monday, March 22, Lighthouse will no longer be open to the public."

Every three years, one-eighth of all properties in the country must be audited, and each property must be approved on a case-by-case standing, York said.

"Every one just assumes that if Elon owns it, the property should be exempt," York said. "That's just not the case."

Whittington said the university plans to meet with York this week to listen to his concerns and decide how to respond to the matter.

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