

The Pendulum seeks to inspire, entertain and inform the Elon community by providing a voice for students and faculty as well as a forum for the meaningful exchange of ideas

Editorial

Serious consideration necessary for potential smoking ban at Elon

A quick snap of the lighter. The pull of smoke. The small, red ember brightens at the end of the cigarette.

To some, smoking is a disgusting habit that has no place in the public sphere. To others, it is a leisure activity and stress reliever. It is an addicting and unhealthy habit, but there is no question it is a legal activity performed by consenting adults across the nation.

Before spring break, Dean of Student Life Smith Jackson sent a survey on behalf of a student leadership team working with the Office of Substance Education. The survey's intent was to gauge student's understanding of the current smoking policy on campus and to "gather student, faculty and staff opinions on whether Elon should become an entirely smoke-free or tobacco-free campus."

Is smoking on campus a problem at Elon? This question can only be answered by the student body. If there is a concern, students should strive to make their voices heard regardless of what position they hold.

The real question is this: how will enacting a smoking ban be any more effective than the current policy? If non-smokers on campus find smoking to be a problem, then it surely means proper enforcement of the current smoking policy is not taking place.

Whitney Gregory, coordinator of Judicial Affairs, said there have only been five or six smoking cases brought to Judicial Affairs during the entire school year. She said a majority of those cases were students who smoked in the residence halls. If students are smoking too close to the buildings and causing a problem, there should be more reports coming through the Judicial Affairs office.

Resident assistants are in charge of keeping smokers 30 feet away from buildings. Brian Collins, associate director of Residence Life, said at the beginning of the year there are more violations of the policy, but it "is not a big problem."

"We have some smoking near the building, and we let them know they can't smoke that close," Collins said. "We give suggestions on where they will have shade or shelter out of the weather. Most of our efforts have to do with reminding students of the policy. But we don't have a lot of policy violations, and once a student is asked to step away they are more than happy to move."

He said that in his own walks around campus he doesn't see a

lot of smoking compared to other schools. According to Lauren Martin, coordinator for substance education, only 12 percent of Elon students smoke daily and another 8 percent smoke socially.

Evan Heiser, assistant director of Residence Life for North Area, said he's had six write-ups on smoking violations this year. But he said there are students who complain of other students smoking too close to the building. As many as two or three in a day, he said.

So it seems there are more violations than the higher disciplinary authorities are seeing. Thomas Bowie, the assistant director of Residence Life for the Oaks, said it is a mixture of students not knowing the policy and lack of enforcement.

"It is one of those policies that isn't strictly enforced," Bowie said. "They can document it, but it is one of those ones that aren't strictly enforced." As to why, he said he "didn't know."

Martin said she has spoken with several students who do not know the current policy.

"Two things could happen," Martin said. "If the policy is not being enforced and we don't go smoke-free or tobacco-free, we could do a much better job of advertising the policy and making sure all students know about it."

Those suggestions should already be occurring. The policy should be currently advertised and student smokers should be aware of where they can and cannot smoke. There are some signs on academic buildings, but they are not on all residence or dining halls. Flyers have not been placed around campus. In Elon 101 classes and hall meetings the focus is on drugs and alcohol, not smoking.

Instead, a small percentage of student smokers unknowingly break the rules — sometimes repeatedly — before an RA informs them of the policy, and it brings discomfort to residents in their homes who choose not to smoke.

"The easy thing with going completely tobacco free or smoke free, it doesn't matter where you are standing," Martin said.

Elon: before choosing the easy option, evaluate the ill-publicized policy. Decide if everything has been done to make smokers aware of the current rules. Decide if students have been told whom to report smoking violations to. Decide if RAs are diligently enforcing the current rules before restricting the campus with a tighter harness. Before taking a rash step, take a deep breath and think about the future of this university and the freedoms that will be lost if this policy changes. Now, exhale.

THE PENDULUM

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The Pendulum is published each Wednesday of the academic year. The advertising and editorial copy deadline is 5 p.m. the Friday before publication. Letters to the editor and guest columns are welcome and should be typed and e-mailed with a telephone number for verification. Submissions are accepted as Word documents. The Pendulum reserves the right to edit obscene and potentially libelous material. Lengthy letters or columns may be trimmed to fit. All submissions become the property of The Pendulum and will not be returned. You can reach The Pendulum by e-mail at pendulum@elon.edu. If you have questions or concerns about an article, contact a section editor. Please do not respond to reporters directly.

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Community Colleges

Total: 21 out of 57 (37 percent) N.C. community colleges are tobacco free.

Including:

- Alamance Community College
- Cleveland Community College
- Guilford Technical Community College
- Wake Technical Community College
- Davidson Community College
- Randolph Community College

Universities/Colleges

Total: 14 out of 57 (25 percent) N.C. accredited colleges and universities are tobacco free.

Including:

- Gardner-Webb University
- Greensboro College
- Montreat College
- Wingate University
- High Point University
- Barber-Scotia College

Sources: College Foundation of North Carolina, www.tobaccofreecollegesnc.com, U.S. Department of Education

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