

# HYPOCRISY EXPOSED

*Pendulum staff questions sincerity behind university's pursuit of free speech*

**An editorial written by The Pendulum**

The guise of meaningful exchange and public discourse has been ripped away to expose Elon University's true priorities when it comes to free speech on campus.

We've seen a special College Coffee, discussions and forums, the creation of a Speakers' Corner and the Elon administration make free speech and the First Amendment rights of students a matter of high importance. Yet in the last week, the university administration has bluntly put an end to this dialogue by punishing a student for speaking candidly about a serious campus problem.

The Pendulum's only wish is for the Elon administration to stick to its own word.

Smith Jackson, vice president and dean of Student Life, spoke at this month's First Thursday Forum and said, "Obviously we choose not to restrict free speech on campus."

Less than 24 hours later, Elon sophomore Hilary Stevenson was sent an email stating she could be charged with violating the Elon Honor Code based on her statements in last week's edition of The Pendulum. In the article, "As Tap House thrives, security issues increase," Stevenson said she had a fake ID that made it easy for her to drink underage. Stevenson was offered the opportunity to speak anonymously and chose to have her name published. Her statement was part of a larger story that focused on the lack of security at this popular nightspot and the prevalence of underage drinking at the bar.

Despite Elon's commitment to an open exchange of information and students' right to free speech, the administration has hypocritically chosen to stifle the student body's voice through a blatant act of censorship.

The Pendulum is a public forum that encourages, supports and demands honest dialogue from students, faculty and staff. The administration's decision to pursue charges against one of our sources is not only narrow-minded, but also counterproductive to its overarching goal to limit underage drinking.

Police cars from both Campus Safety and Police and the Elon Police

Department were stationed outside of Tap House Thursday, one of the bar's most popular nights. Before entering the bar, students were given a new set of rules, which included a new membership requirement for entrance. These are positive steps taken by the management of Tap House and local law enforcement agencies. Some may chalk it up to coincidences, but we strongly believe these changes are in direct response to the recent Pendulum article.

It's these positive changes the university seems to not only ignore but also devalue in its pursuit to punish one student. If the university is truly concerned with upholding the Honor Code and curbing underage drinking, then it would allow The Pendulum to do its job without inference by reprimanding students who choose to speak candidly about important issues.

"If what you want is for people as a community to come together and talk frankly and honestly about what problems exist and how to fix them, then you have to recognize punishing people who admit to violations that are over and done with will actually result in the perpetuating of the problem you're seeking to eliminate," said Adam Goldstein, attorney advocate at the Student Press Law Center.

What is just as concerning is the lack of comment from President Leo Lambert on this sudden and hypocritical turn in administrative policy, as a figure who has been at the forefront of this semester's discussions.

If the university administration truly cares and strives for free speech and an open exchange of ideas, it must drop the threat of charging students for partaking in that exchange. We are a community that must listen to one another, even when that dialogue is one not necessarily easy. The Elon administration has made a grave mistake and The Pendulum will not stand for it.

Elon must not create an environment where students are scared of repercussions and become unwilling to speak to The Pendulum or any other news organization.

Elon administration has the responsibility to respect the integrity of those who choose to come forward as honest participants in this so-called open dialogue.

## Student investigated for comment published in The Pendulum

Kassandra Cloos  
News Editor

For the first time in Elon University's history, a student is facing a Student Conduct investigation because of a comment published in The Pendulum. While there is no precedent, members of the administration said it should not come as a surprise.

In the Nov. 30 edition of The Pendulum, sophomore Hilary Stevenson was quoted saying she possessed a fake ID and had used it to drink while underage at College Street Tap House. It wasn't long before she received an email from Jodean Schmiederer, assistant dean of students, telling her to set up a Student Conduct meeting to address the admitted Honor Code violations. Stevenson declined

anonymity when interviewed for the article and would not comment on the potential charges.

Smith Jackson, vice president and dean of Student Life, was not involved in the decision to potentially charge Stevenson. But he said he thinks students should anticipate the consequences that accompany attaching their names to such charged statements. Instead, they should

more seriously consider remaining anonymous.

"If students are violating policies or laws, I think it's certainly better for them not to give their names or put themselves in these situations," Jackson said. "Would the story have had a bigger impact for me as a reader if you said 'a sophomore

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