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The new outdoor pool in the Station at Mill Point exemplifies the ongoing trend by American universities to increase spending on student amenities and services in place of academic resources in order to attract students.

Elon expenses should reflect university values, not promote luxury

Universities and colleges across the country are increasingly building on-campus housing with the amenities and feel of high-class hotels. These frills come with a price tag, one that is anything but cheap.

There is a growing trend toward increased spending on nonacademic areas that has swept across the higher education spectrum, with public and private, Ivy League and community colleges increasing expenses for student services over academic instruction.

This expensive pattern is ushering in a new era of college life, what we believe to be the country-clubification of the American college system.

Suites, outdoor pools and amazing food courts are only part of what some schools are now offering to students as incentives to promote on-campus living.

Elon University has now joined this amenities arms race, as one national reporter described it, with new dining halls and residence buildings springing up all over campus, including the luxurious Station at Mill Point. The Station boasts a clubhouse and private outdoor swimming pool, which is reserved for Mill Point resi-

dents and a limited number of guests. And while some Mill Point residents couldn't be happier about having access to their own pool, for the rest of us, Elon's choice to invest in a private swimming pool is an example of this country club spending mentality. Outdoor pools are "nice to have" items, but are they "need to have" items? We say no.

Jeffrey Pugh, professor of religious studies, said he thinks academia should always be the university's first priority.

"The only problem I have is that Elon should be known and respected for our academic program, not for the amenities we provide," he wrote in an email to *The Pendulum*. "If the latter ever becomes more important than the former, we should probably do some soul searching."

Exclusivity and material indulgence are not ideals upheld by this university. Therefore, what the university spends its money on should be a reflection of its principles.

Elon's choice of constructing a pool and clubhouse that is not accessible to all students is not only expensive and impractical, but is not an accurate representation of its mission

to educate.

From a technical standpoint, it is somewhat futile to maintain a secondary swimming pool that students will only be able use for five months out of the year. Most pools need to close down by October and don't usually reopen until at least late April.

According to permits obtained by the Alamance County Inspections department, the projected cost of construction for this "nice to have" item was initially totaled at \$98,300, while the club house was estimated to cost a whopping \$536,818 (excluding annual maintenance fees, permit costs and major utilities).

Elon declined to comment on the final construction costs, but needless to say, that is a substantial amount of money that could have served a greater purpose elsewhere.

A pool is a luxury item, plain and simple. There is nothing wrong with having nice things, but as an institution, Elon's first priority should be to provide for the advancement of the majority of its students. Buying nice things just for the sake of having them is a waste of money.

Elon's last concern should be the further beautification of its campus:

We've been doing quite well in that department. With the prettiest campus award already under our belt, we should be focusing less on aesthetics and more on academic quality.

How many professors could have been hired or been given well-earned pay raises? Any professor will tell you that they did not choose teaching in order to get rich. The success of Elon's students is dependent on the quality and professionalism of its faculty, and they deserve their due diligence.

How many scholarships could have been awarded to prospective students who couldn't afford to come to Elon? Students whose grades and extracurriculars were all exemplary, who could have propelled our university to a new level of academic prominence. Students who could have contributed hours of community service or spearheaded new leadership programs: all their plans rendered useless by not having enough money to come to Elon.

How many new computers or software programs could have been purchased for students to use for personal and professional work? What else could that money have been used for?

When a university uses its financial resources to promote style over substance, it says something about their priorities and how seriously they take their role as educators.

Elon's priorities have always been geared toward the best interests of its students, both academically and socially, but whose interests are they serving in this case?

The Station at Mill Point and all its lavish amenities are all well and good, but students who live in Mill Point should not always expect such extravagance to be handed to them on a silver platter. The world does not dole out opportunity and reward as freely as Elon does.

We are fortunate enough to belong to such an affluent community, and we as students must recognize that all the perks of being an Elon student are a privilege, not an entitlement.

We must recognize that the greatest benefits of being an Elon student can't be measured in square feet or how many bedrooms your apartment has. No, the greatest benefit to being an Elon student is that our best memories of our college years will be defined by what we did, not where we lived.