

# THE PENDULUM

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## Blue lights aim to prevent crime at cost to university

Michael Bodley  
News Editor

A walk across Elon University's campus in the middle of the night is never completely pitch-black, thanks in large part to the 31 blue light emergency response systems that illuminate the darker reaches of campus.

The blue lights, which cost \$5,000 to install and have yearly electricity fees, are a necessary crime deterrent on campus, according to Dennis Franks, Elon University police chief. The systems function on a distress button that immediately calls police to the scene, with the goal of a two-minute response time.

Though the blue lights have been pressed accidentally twice and have never been used for a real emergency in the two years since Franks has been at Elon, he said statistics can't accurately reflect the number of potential crimes the system has prevented.

"To me, it's a good deterrent that if something happens around those blue lights, the person knows they have access and can get emergency services there quickly," Franks said.

Even in places without blue lights, though they are few and far between, someone is usually watching. In a move to increase campus security and safety, the university, under the guidance of the Elon University Police Department and others, approved a substantial increase in the number of cameras around campus, from just over 200 to more than 300 cameras this year.

The department maintains a 24/7 call center in its Oaks area office. The police precinct also features a video dashboard that flicks between the 300-odd cameras around campus, many of which are located in parking lots and other areas off the beaten path.

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J.R. Goode is a level-one engineer at the Elon Fire Department. Goode said every fire-related alert received at the station is treated as an emergency.

Katy Canada  
Managing Editor

The Elon Fire Department responded to 216 calls from Elon University in 2013, and each one of them came at a price. Each time the fire department is dispatched, it costs the department \$400 to \$500, according to Elon Fire Chief Eddie King.

The trend shows no signs of stopping. In January 2014 alone, the department responded to 21 false alarms.

Each time the fire department reacts to a triggered alarm, multiple fire trucks from around Alamance County are required to report to the site of the incident. Fuel, manpower and maintenance of the depart-

ment's vehicles are expenses the department takes into account.

"It's coming out of our budget," King said. "The university gives us a contribution each year, but that's just for normal fire and medical protection. What we're seeing with these false alarms is that it's going over a normal expected amount."

Donations from the university, along with the Twin Lakes community, the Town of Elon and Alamance Rural, comprise the budget for the Elon Fire Department. The department was promised \$560,391 for the 2013-2014 year. Elon University's contribution made up only 8.9 percent of the total budget.

In 2013, the Elon Fire Department re-

sponded to a total of 466 fire alarms in Alamance County, 46 percent of which were set off on Elon's campus. The department spent anywhere from \$86,400 to \$113,000 responding to calls from the university alone. This exceeds the university's \$50,000 contribution by as much as \$63,000.

Each piece of equipment dispatched to the scene of a fire alarm has its own price. A single fire truck can cost as much as \$124 for one hour of use, according to the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

Captain David Wright, who has served at the Elon Fire Department for 22 years, said the department has done its best to

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