



ELON

ELON
2012
Commencement Program



THE TIMELESS APPEARANCE OF ELON UNIVERSITY

by Walt Steele

And a new semester begins at Elon University. With a graduation ceremony in the rear-view mirror and classes stretching out on the horizon, more than 6,000 undergraduates and 700 graduate students will add their experiences this fall to those who have come before them since 1890.



They'll arrive on this campus in the Piedmont section of North Carolina from 49 states and 58 countries; where they'll choose from more than 60 undergraduate majors, seven master's programs, a doctoral program and a law school. For first-year students, it's likely that their arrival will result in a degree in four years, because Elon's four-year graduation rate of 81 percent ranks in the top 10 percent of U.S. private universities.

This year, like many in the past, the SUVs loaded down with dorm-room furnishings had barely cleared the campus before a squadron of work trucks moved in. This semester begins on a brand-new campus that's been transformed over the summer break.

In all, Elon University has either completed or is nearing completion on seven construction projects, including a new academic building, expansions to a library, dining hall and recreation center and a residential neighborhood with space for 300 students. Perhaps the most noticeable expansion is the Schar Center, a 5,100-seat convocation center that will serve as the home for Phoenix basketball and volleyball and as a site for campus events such as graduations and concerts.

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Each new project builds on the design elements of the past, so that the entire campus fits together as one place. Brad Moore, Elon University's architect and director of planning design and construction management, says that the university has used a collegiate Georgian architecture style for buildings, predominantly made of a burgundy brick that recalls the college color and Elon Burn, a custom-made clay paver by Pine Hall Brick Company, to pave sidewalks and plazas.

Making each new building similar to the ones that came before lends a timeless appearance.

"If you come to our campus, you will see a fairly seamless campus, the brick and precast elements, the white columns, the gables, the shingle roofs and the cupolas," said Moore. "We have a very distinctive architecture on our campus. Our approach is that all buildings work together. You can't look at a certain building and tell a time frame when it was built. All have the same style and the same elements and as a result, the campus continues to weave itself together so that it works well together."



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The idea of build-and-repeat was intentional. Early on, college leaders came to understand that investments in classic architecture in the built environment, both buildings and outdoor hardscape elements, pay off by attracting better students and faculty.

“When you walk on this campus, you have a different mindset,” said Moore. “That’s the interesting thing. We want a pedestrian friendly campus built on a human scale, with buildings of three and four stories that continue in the same style, not disjointed from what you would ordinarily see on a college campus.”

Steven House, Provost and Executive Vice-President, agreed.

“Elon’s campus often makes an immediate and profound impression upon those who are visiting for the first time,” said House. “For those who study, teach and work here, it becomes an integral part of the learning experience, providing an environment that fosters engagement, community and connection. Through generations, the university’s leadership has built a campus that adheres to the university’s history, and prepares for its future.”

A Fire and a President

Elon University’s built environment had two defining moments in its history. One had to do with a fire that destroyed the college’s main building in 1923, an event so ingrained in the college culture that its mascot is now the Phoenix, shown arising from the ashes. The other was a college president who saw the usefulness in developing and implementing a strategic landscape design for the campus, despite initial opposition. George Troxler, Professor Emeritus of History and retired Dean of Cultural and Special Programs at Elon University, wrote a book: *From A Grove of Oaks: The Story of Elon University*. The book outlines how the college, which was founded by the Southern Christian Church, began in September 1890 with 77 students.

The first school’s president sold his family farm to build the administration building, which included an auditorium, offices, a library and classrooms. That building burned in 1923 and was replaced by five separate buildings of similar design, which included colonnades connecting them. From then until now, across decades of design and construction, buildings added to the campus included elements established in the design of those original buildings.

In 1974, James Fred Young, then President of Elon, oversaw the purchase of a 43-acre tract adjoining the north campus from the estate of Cora Caddell, increasing the campus by 40 percent. Troxler wrote that Young contracted



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with Raleigh, N.C.-based landscape architecture firm Lewis Clarke and Associates to prepare a master land-use plan. In October 1975, Wayne McBride of the firm presented plans that called for open spaces, plazas, fountains and clay paver walkways. McBride later founded his own firm, McBride Hess Design Group P.A., which continues providing land-use design services to Elon University today.

Among McBride's first suggestions was to tear out a parking lot in front of the Alamance Building, move parking to the outside edges of the campus and put in a fountain and pedestrian plaza made of clay pavers and ringed with walkways using similar materials that connect it to nearby buildings. Troxler recalls today the uproar by faculty and students alike over taking out a perfectly good parking lot and spending money to do so, because there were clearly other things that they saw as more important.

But McBride and his plan wouldn't be deterred. Within the college leadership, McBride came to earn the respect usually reserved for a winning football coach. Troxler recalls that the joke at Elon was that no one on campus dared plant even a daffodil without getting permission from Wayne McBride first. The money would be raised, the parking lot was torn out and Scott Plaza, which was named for a donor, would be built, which was both a testimony to good design and to McBride's persistence.

One of the more visible results of Scott Plaza and similar outdoor spaces, laid out in a combination of running bond and basketweave patterns in clay pavers that would follow, has been a campus-wide tradition called College Coffee. Each Tuesday, students, faculty, staff and administrators meet from 9:40 a.m. until 10:20 a.m. to have coffee and get to know one another better. The Coffee, which was first held on Scott Plaza, is now held at the Phi Beta Kappa Commons nearby, which is part of the Lambert Academic Village.

Although there were changes to the plan since it was first proposed in 1975, "McBride's vision of open green vistas, dramatic plazas, small unique courts, pedestrian-friendly walkways and architecturally harmonious buildings is evident today, and Elon is recognized for having one of the nation's most beautiful campuses," Troxler wrote.

A Campus that Tells the Story

Troxler said that the idea of purposefully building beauty into a college campus pays dividends that grow year over year.

"Wayne McBride knew what he was doing," said Troxler. "A beautiful campus attracts



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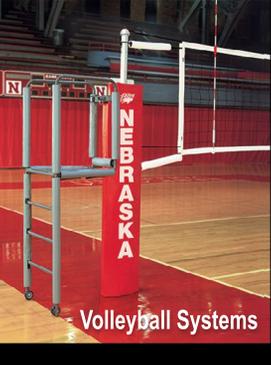
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students, it attracts donors and it is nice to work and nice to be a student at an attractive campus.”

As a student, your first impression is going to be positive and regardless of your SAT score, you are going to apply to this school, and this school is going to be higher on your list. And donors like to give to schools that are successful.”

Troxler said it’s that kind of attention to detail that tells the college’s story and it’s one he learned decades ago. He recalled that when he was starting out as a history professor and mulling over job offers, his advisor gave him one piece of advice, beyond the idea of research, of building his teaching skills, of pursuing tenure. The advice had to do with whether there was a fresh coat of paint on the outside of the building.

“See if you can see signs of deferred maintenance,” Troxler said his advisor told him. “If you can, then you don’t want to work there.”

It’s worth noting Troxler arrived at Elon in 1969.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR: Walt Steele is chief operating officer for Pine Hall Brick Company, America’s largest manufacturer of genuine clay pavers. For more information, Steele can be reached at (800) 334-8689 and by email at waltsteele@pinehallbrick.com. For more information, please visit www.PineHallBrick.com



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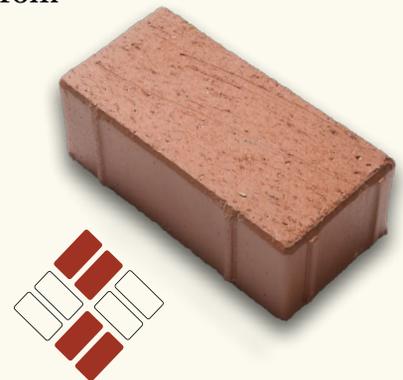
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