We have passed the four-year mark on the Elon Commitment strategic plan, which seeks to make Elon an exemplary model for higher education as the preeminent community for engaged learning.

While the Elon Commitment plan was originally intended to guide the university’s development through 2020, we have already accomplished more than half of the key goals. Next fall the Board of Trustees will devote its agenda to an on-campus retreat to examine closely the work yet to be done to fully meet the aspirations of the Elon Commitment.

A strong characteristic of the Elon culture is to look forward and anticipate greater progress. And yet, as we begin 2014, it is important to reflect upon what we have already accomplished through the Elon Commitment. Major headlines of which we should be proud include:

- Remaking the residential campus, with new student residences added at the Colonnades, the Station at Mill Point and the Global Neighborhood, along with the opening of Lakeside Dining Hall
- Establishing a new School of Health Sciences, including a new Physician Assistant Studies master’s program and the opening of the Gerald L. Francis Center as the school’s new home
- Completing the Ever Elon Campaign, nearly doubling the university’s endowment to $184 million, with most new funds devoted to increased student financial aid
- Earning a top-50 Bloomberg Businessweek ranking for the Love School of Business
- Attending to the spiritual and religious life dimension of campus through the construction of the Numen Lumen Pavilion, the opening of the Sklut Hillel Center and the establishment of the Center for the Study of Religion, Culture and Society
- Launching financial initiatives to provide 100 percent access to global study for all undergraduates
- Focusing on success after Elon by creating the Student Professional Development Center and enhancing career and internship placement in the professional schools and Elon College, the College of Arts and Sciences
- Maintaining our best-value focus and earning a top-25 Kiplinger’s best-value ranking
- Focusing on the importance of alumni to Elon’s future and opening the Martin Alumni Center
- Moving to the Colonial Athletic Association this fall, adding women’s lacrosse and making many notable improvements to athletic facilities, including construction of Alumni Field House and Hunt Softball Park and the renovation of Alumni Gym
- Making dozens of facility improvements to the physical campus, including constructing the Inman Admissions Welcome Center, Scott Studios (performing arts expansion), South Campus expansion (new health services and arts and sciences academic space), the Elon Town Center and Moseley Center renovation.
Beyond the headlines of new buildings, new academic programs and growing national prominence in the rankings, there is also much vital, steady work taking place every day under the auspices of the Elon Commitment, strengthening core academic functions and the overall student and campus experience. Some examples:

- The Writing Excellence Initiative, an all-university program, has been launched to ensure that writing is a signature part of each Elon student’s experience.
- The Study USA program has been launched as a part of the acclaimed Isabella Cannon Global Education Center.
- The Office of National and International Fellowships has been created to help students compete for Fulbright and other prestigious post-graduate fellowships. Elon has been named a “top producer” of Fulbright Scholars, and junior Madison Clough has been named a Clinton Scholar to study in Dubai.
- Elon has worked hard to become a more inclusive and welcoming campus under the leadership of Interim Associate Provost for Inclusive Community Brooke Barnett and faculty and staff leaders across campus.
- The Center for Engaged Learning has been established, which has already hosted a high-profile international meeting on the scholarship of teaching and learning. Through the center, Elon aspires to be a convener of national and international conferences and meetings and a center of scholarship about engaged learning and high-impact practices.
- The Center for Access and Success has been launched, ensuring Elon is doing all it can to support K-12 students in achieving their goal of a college education by marshaling and integrating the resources of The Village Project, the Elon Academy and the Watson and Odyssey Scholars Program.
- A faculty and staff salary plan has been put in place to reward and retain our most important resource for students.
- Innovative pathways to obtain an Elon education have been established, including the new first-year Gap Semester Program and new professional master’s programs to augment the undergraduate degree.
- We are building an identity for our young law school, which was recently named one of the top-20 most innovative law schools by the National Jurist.
- We are opening the campus to people aged 50 and older in the surrounding community through the popular Life@Elon program.

Of course there is much more important work to be done. The Elon Commitment speaks to a major expansion of the School of Communications facilities; additional space for sciences; construction of a convocation center; continued emphasis on endowment building, especially for scholarships to keep Elon a best value; support students and faculty efforts to strengthen the intellectual climate on campus; complete a successful transition to the Colonial Athletic Association; and much more!

Strategic visioning and planning are strengths of our campus community, and we are equally strong in following through with action and achieving results. The Elon Commitment was conceived as a community-wide effort, with the involvement and support of trustees, faculty, staff, students, parents, alumni and friends. Each of these constituents has been critical to the progress we have achieved together. The past four years have flown by and 2020 is just around the corner. Thank you for your interest and support as we work together to define, build and strengthen one of the finest universities in the nation.

Leo M. Lambert
President