Elon University is dramatically shifting its approach to career services. We want to ensure that each undergraduate student takes advantage of the vast array of curricular, co-curricular and student life programs offered at Elon to prepare for a successful life beyond Elon.

The old days of walking into the career services office during the senior year to begin planning for a job search are long gone. To be well positioned for life after Elon, students must begin planning early and develop a roadmap for academic experiences, international study, research and internships. Top employers tell us they seldom hire new graduates who have not yet completed a significant internship experience.

To support students in this planning process, Elon's Office of Career Services is being retooled as the Student Professional Development Center, which will open in impressive new and spacious quarters in the Moseley Center in January 2012. This center in the heart of campus will have specially designed spaces for recruiters, interview and seminar rooms, a lounge, staff offices and the latest video conferencing technology. Two gifts, one anonymous and a second from trustee Wes Elingburg and his wife, Cathy, P’11, are funding these new facilities as well as providing an endowment to support continuous improvements to the center.

Elon is also continuing to add staff to support professional development and internships within the Martha and Spencer Love School of Business and the School of Communications. The Love School hosts the newly named Porter Family Center for Professional Development thanks to a gift from trustee Dave Porter and his wife, Jen, P’11. Both schools have talented on-site staffs dedicated to helping students secure internships and employment opportunities.

The Student Professional Development Center will also host enhanced student programming. An endowment gift from Charles and Diana Revson P’11 will enhance the transition strategies courses currently offered with a new series on practical business skills, such as how to read a contract and how insurance and real estate transactions work.

Developing a sophisticated employer relations program at Elon is a primary emphasis of a national search now under way for a new executive director of employer relations. This individual will help us realize our goal to develop a powerful network of alumni, parents, friends and contacts at leading companies. Deans, senior administrators, university advancement personnel and faculty will reach out to corporate, nonprofit and government employers to help match talented Elon students and graduates with fulfilling internship and job opportunities.

And speaking of networking, Michael Nowak ’11, a graduate of the Love School of Business and former senior class president, launched The Elon Network, an opportunity for students to interact with peers who have completed internships or research projects in various industries. Entrepreneurial leaders such as Michael understand that it is never too early for students to build personal networks beyond Facebook, reaching out to parents of current students and alumni who often are eager to advise and open doors. We wish Michael the best as he begins work with Teach for America in Philadelphia.

Also of significant note is the increasing number of Elon graduates going directly to graduate and professional school. Thirty-four percent of the Class of 2010 followed this path, including more than 50 percent in some arts and sciences fields.

Of course, faculty and pre-professional advisors remain the best source of mentoring, guidance and advice for students considering graduate and professional education. My best advice to students considering graduate school is to participate in Elon’s preeminent undergraduate research program. There is no better preparation for graduate school than to take on a significant research question with the guidance of a faculty mentor, work that can lead to a professional scholarly presentation or publication in an academic journal. These relationships transform students into protégés of faculty and introduce them to the exhilaration and rigors of creating new knowledge and artistic works.

As stated in our strategic plan, The Elon Commitment, the next phase of Elon’s dramatic rise in national reputation will not be fueled by new buildings or expanded academic programs but by the accomplishments of its alumni. Helping students construct sturdy bridges to their lives after Elon is one of the most important investments we can make.

Leo M. Lambert
President