Following the approval of the Elon Commitment by the board of trustees in December 2009, we immediately went to work turning vision into reality. Strategic planning without thoughtful execution is pointless, so we have spent the past year hiring talented architectural teams, charging campus committees, putting search committees in place for new key leadership positions and developing specific goals to support the eight broad themes of the Elon Commitment.

For this first update, I would like to share with you the exciting changes the campus will undergo beginning this spring and continuing over the course of the next three years. The Elon Commitment is about much more than bricks and mortar, however, so as I walk you through how the physical campus will evolve, I want to emphasize the ideas and ideals behind the construction that will lead to a better Elon.
Premier living and learning environments

As you read in the last issue of The Magazine of Elon, we are reimagining the residential experience at Elon. More undergraduate students should be afforded the opportunity to live on campus, and our goal is to have 75 percent of our students in campus housing. This is important for many reasons. Studies show that students living on campus earn higher grades, have higher rates of retention and develop a strong affinity for their university. A strong residential experience allows students to remain connected to Elon’s vibrant academic and student life programs and contributes to a more intellectual campus climate.

In two phases over three years, the 600-bed Story and Harper centers along Lake Mary Nell, including Harden Dining Hall, will be razed. Replacing those facilities will be the Global Neighborhood, housing the same number of students with double the square footage of the previous complexes. At the heart of the neighborhood will be the Isabella Cannon International Centre, which will move from its current location in Carlton Building; an international cafe and theater; classrooms; faculty offices; and ample study rooms, kitchens and large gathering spaces. Students will reside on themed floors, with first-year students enrolled in Global Experience courses taught in the neighborhood. Older students will serve as mentors and lead the house governance system.

Immediately following Commencement 2011, construction of the replacement for Harden Dining Hall will begin as an addition to Moseley Center, effectively doubling the size of the building. The new dining hall will offer views of Lake Mary Nell and feature a second-floor facility similar to McKinnon Hall that will provide additional space for campus programs. Harden will not be razed until January 2013, when the Moseley addition is complete.

The Colonnades residential quadrangle will be completed behind the Ernest A. Koury Sr. Business Center in fall 2011. These new facilities will house 300 students and feature single rooms and four-person suites, informal gathering places, common kitchens and study rooms, more themed housing choices, and opportunities to interact with faculty-in-residence. One feature of this complex that we are particularly proud of is that the five residence halls surrounding this new quadrangle will be heated and cooled by a geothermal system. Nearby, five new houses in Loy Center will open this fall to provide additional housing and meeting space for sororities and fraternities.

This summer we will break ground on the first phase of the new senior class village, to be constructed on the playing fields across from the Elon fire station on Williamson Avenue. Designed to meet the needs of juniors and seniors, these two-story residences will have balconies and two to four apartment units per building, with each unit featuring single rooms for greater privacy. This 14-acre site will have village-style architecture on a scale designed to integrate well with the Town of Elon and will include amenities to promote bonding among classmates, including recreational facilities, an amphitheatre, gardens and other outdoor gathering places.

Honoring a campus leader

Last year, Elon acquired property adjoining Danieley Center, including 9½ acres of land and the 150,000-square-foot former Smithfield Foods building, which boasts more than double the square footage of the Koury Business Center. Much as we did when we renovated the former Greensboro Public Library to house the School of Law, we plan a complete interior demolition and repurposing of the facility. The renovated facility will be named the Gerald L. Francis Center to honor Executive Vice President Gerry Francis, who has dedicated his entire academic career to Elon. Francis began as an assistant professor of mathematics and later became full professor, dean, vice president and provost. He has loyally and effectively served with two Elon presidents.

The Francis Center will be the new home of the doctor of physical therapy program and the new master of physician assistant studies program, which will open January 2013, and it will provide new labs for the exercise science undergraduate program. There is much more space available in the Francis Center for later development to meet on-going campus needs. Ideas that have been offered include centralizing Elon’s technology operations and increasing library storage. DPT’s relocation from McMichael Science Center will allow 17,000 square feet of space to be repurposed for much needed undergraduate science expansion. We also plan to develop new intramural and club sports playing fields adjacent to the Francis Center and connect them with a new road to Danieley Center.

While Elon will remain principally focused on providing top-quality undergraduate education, the Elon Commitment plan calls us to carefully and selectively consider new graduate programs, particularly when their presence enhances undergraduate education at Elon. This certainly promises to be the case with the PA program.

CONTINUED
Building a more vibrant downtown Elon

Beginning this winter, a three-story building will be constructed by a private developer on university-owned land on Williamson Avenue, the site occupied by a former bank building (most recently used to house The Pendulum) and the patio adjacent to the Acorn Coffee Shop. The new building, to be called Elon Town Center, will house mixed-use retail, including greatly expanded space for Elon’s bookstore operated by Barnes & Noble. We hope this building will serve as a catalyst for more investment in downtown Elon, encourage entrepreneurship and privately-owned business, and provide students with needed retail services and social opportunities convenient to campus.

Following the bookstore’s move from Moseley Center, we will renovate the space to house premier career services and employer relations offices. Finding rewarding employment in these challenging economic times requires considerable student planning, forethought, patience and networking. Successful performance during an internship is often the key to landing a permanent position following graduation. Elon will begin staffing its employer relations program this spring to expand our network of alumni, parents and friends who are eager to assist Elon students and alumni in realizing their internship and career goals. New facilities in Moseley will provide quality space for employers, interview rooms and offices for an expanded staff.

The multi-faith center

Later this year, we will break ground for a new multi-faith center to be located in the Academic Village adjacent to Phi Beta Kappa Plaza. While Elon was founded by the Protestant Christian Church, the university welcomes students from every faith tradition. Roman Catholics comprise the largest religious denomination on campus today, and growing numbers of Jewish, Muslim and Hindu students have joined the campus community.

We envision a multi-faith center that is a place for prayer, meditation and reflection in the heart of campus, respecting the differing customs of students’ religious and spiritual traditions. The center will encourage a robust dialogue about religion on campus, exploring what unites us in our common humanity and promoting the values served by deeper interfaith collaboration. The new center will house the staff of the Vera Richardson Triuitt Center for Religious and Spiritual Life and provide space to support scholarly activity, interdisciplinary seminars and distinguished visiting faculty. A large multi-purpose room and kitchen will provide student organizations with space for weekly observances, and programs and meals. Besides serving as a resource to encourage Elon students to grow spiritually, I see the multi-faith center as a resource that will allow Elon to contribute to creating peace and global understanding.
New digs for the Phoenix

The Elon Commitment strategic plan recognizes how important Phoenix athletics is to Elon’s national visibility. Elon has competed at the NCAA Division I level for a little more than a decade—just a short time. We have made much progress upgrading our athletics facilities during that period, most notably the construction of Rhodes Stadium, renovation of Latham Park and addition of Belk Track.

In January, we celebrated the opening of Alumni Field House at the north end of Rhodes Stadium, which houses the Horace Hendrickson Football Center; new athletics training and weight training facilities for all sports; offices for the athletics director, his staff and all coaches with facilities in the North Athletics Complex; and the Walker Room and Terrace for special events. While Alumni Field House won’t be formally dedicated until later this spring, we welcome you to come by and see this marvelous new building.

A huge transformation of Alumni Gym has taken place thanks to a generous gift from Trustee Jeanne Robertson and Jerry Robertson. Old bleacher seats have been replaced with comfortable theater-style seats in a horseshoe-shaped arena, new video boards have replaced the old scoreboard, and new lighting focuses fans’ attention on the action on the court. Phase two of the Alumni Gym renovation, slated to begin this summer, includes plans for new locker rooms, team meeting rooms, and office space for men’s and women’s basketball and volleyball. Also, the student fitness center in Koury Center will be greatly expanded this year in space vacated by athletics.

While Elon plans to build a new convocation center later this decade, the changes to Alumni Gym have given the Phoenix an immediate boost, and we are grateful to the many people who have helped upgrade this historic structure.

Next on the drawing board for the Phoenix is the construction of a new softball facility across Williamson Avenue from Latham Park. The move from the current field near East Gym will provide an adjacent parking lot that will serve softball, baseball and football fans.

Students, alumni, parents, friends and community members will obviously see many construction fences, bulldozers and cranes on campus over the next several years. We hope you will be patient with new traffic patterns and inevitable minor disruptions but also take pride in these great advancements in our facilities and programs.

In future columns, I will focus on other elements of the strategic plan that are well under way, including

» updating Elon’s innovative general studies curriculum, the foundation for each undergraduate’s program at Elon, which is now undergoing an intensive two-year review by the faculty that is planned to be completed in May

» the search for a new chaplain to lead our religious and spiritual life programs

» our first recruiting class for the new International Fellows program

» progress we are achieving through the Ever Elon Campaign to provide more scholarship aid to keep the gates of this great university open to deserving young people of modest financial means

» and much more!

Keeping you up to date on developments at your university is essential. I look forward to conversations with many of you in the months ahead about the Elon Commitment and your personal interest in helping to keep Elon moving forward.

Leo M. Lambert
President