

SEA OF TROUBLES



Noel Fox/Old Gold and Black

Although students complain about the difficulty of finding a parking spot, Regina Lawson, chief of University Police, said that there are many places for students to park in addition to Scales parking lot.

Students under the influence of parking stress are driven to violate regulations

Continued from Page A1

dollars in tickets because they want to "park where they choose."

Regina Lawson, the Chief of University Police, has heard every parking complaint and contends that "there is always a vacant space." Yet she acknowledges that "parking is not ideal."

Junior Scott Gindoff said that he does not park anywhere except for Scales parking lot, even on the weekends, because he is scared of accumulating expensive tickets. "No one knows where you can and cannot park," said Gindoff. "The rules are very unclear to students. The whole system is very impractical." Whatever their way of dealing with it, many students agree that there is a problem with parking. There is both a lack of spaces overall and a lack of total spaces and a lack of conveniently located spaces, and too many tickets are given out, registering a car is also too expensive they say.

The cost of registering a car on campus is \$95. The cost of a standard ticket is \$20.

Another issue students raised with parking is that almost all parking near residence halls is reserved for faculty, when they are only on campus for a relatively small part of the day as opposed to students who live on campus and have more practical and urgent need for nearby parking.

"More spaces in the Scales parking lot should be reserved for faculty, and the faculty spaces closer to the residence halls should be given to students," suggested Gindoff. "Too many nearby spaces go unused because of impractical designations. It should be that if there is an empty spot, anyone can take it."

With so much student resentment towards the parking policy at the university, the questions remain: why is there such a widespread parking problem and what if anything is the university doing to change or improve it?

According to Lawson, the school has approximately 2,629 parking spaces for students. Students registered 4,580 cars in 1996-97.

However, according to the police only 75 percent of the registered cars are on campus at one time. Students may register two cars for reasons such as receiving a new one as a gift or bringing a different car back to campus after a break.

Even allowing this reduction, 3,435 cars could potentially be on campus at once. If you do the math, this leaves students at least 800 spaces short.

Lawson does give suggestions to make parking easier for students. Lawson

recommends that students avoid parking between 10 a.m. and 2 p.m. because these are the hardest times to find a spot. Students can save time by parking in less used lots. They should allow ample time for parking.

Lawson's suggestions for backup parking are lot R, which is located near Spries Soccer Stadium and lot W, which is located near the Worrell Professional Center, as well as parallel parking on Allen Easley Street. With a backup plan students will not be thrown into a lurch if their first parking choice is unavailable.

Charles Radcliffe, a sophomore who lives on South Campus, said that he avoids parking during the mornings and early afternoons. "It is almost impossible to park then. Sometimes you have to risk a ticket, though, because nothing is available."

Lawson stressed the importance of calling the Student Shuttle Service when a student has a long walk to a destination at night. Even after shuttle hours, University Police are available to escort students home from parking lots. Police encourage students to use one of the call boxes to contact them for this purpose. Lawson warns against students parking in faculty lots at night and expecting to wake up early and move their cars, because ticketing begins promptly at 7:30 a.m.

Unlike many, Danielle Whren, a sophomore who usually parks in the Scales parking lot, said that she does not find parking at the university to be a problem. "I have never had a problem because I usually only use my car on weekends," she said.

Another constant complaint of students is the price of registering a car. "Students have the perception that we use all the money to get faster cars and bigger guns, but that isn't the case," Lawson said. "Some of the money from parking tickets goes to material costs, for example upkeep of lots and decals, while other money goes to the university's general fund for scholarships."

According to Lawson, the parking registration fee is less than those at many other schools. Contrary to student belief, the campus police do not ever touch the money — it is handled by a financial agency.

University students are always discussing tickets, and they receive a lot of them. While 19,310 tickets were given out last year, Lawson likes to stress that 835 were appealed. She wants students to know that "appealing is your right" and the appeals officer is a third party.

In addition, if a student loses the first round of appeals there is a second round. Whatever the case, Lawson believes that



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While police are quick to ticket students for parking temporarily in facilities spaces, facilities vehicles are parked at will without consequences.

students need to address parking problems when they occur rather than allowing them to snowball.

The general sentiment among students, however, is that the appeals process is generally unfair and inefficient. There are very few students who have actually had an appeal approved. "The chance of an asteroid hitting the earth is greater than a student getting a parking ticket appealed," senior Jeff Fahrenkrog said.

Many students feel that parking is a problem which needs to be amended rather than endured.

In recent years some at the university have proposed that the approximately 800 freshmen who annually bring cars to campus should not be allowed to have them. Lawson said that this proposal has been rejected because the university is not a downtown school and freshman would find it difficult to get off campus.

Additionally many freshmen are from out of state and would have problems getting home. Right now there are still no plans for a new lot or plans to change any faculty lots over to student use. The only real change will be a natural transition of eighty cars from south to north campus

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Regina Lawson
Chief of University Police

due to the opening of Polo Hall. Lawson believes this will open up south campus which is where the real crunch for spaces occurs.

Radcliffe said that he would like to see another parking lot added, but he does not see where there is room for one. Gindoff feels that a double-decker parking lot should be constructed.

Despite the fact that no major changes are planned, a traffic commission with

student representatives constantly evaluates the traffic climate. Ideas now being considered by the commission include changing the number of compact car spaces and redesigning lot Q, maybe angling spaces.

Despite the cries of frustrated students Lawson claims that in comparison to other similarly-sized schools in cities comparable to Winston-Salem, the university's parking is better because freshmen can have cars, no destination is more than a ten minute walk, and there is a great deal of interior parking. Most campuses have moved to perimeter parking, where students cannot park near the academic buildings.

While Lawson said that "parking can always be improved" she also believes that some of the student complaints about parking are due to our culture of convenience, wanting everything quick and close. She likens parking at the university to parking at the mall during Christmas season.

So, next time you take a study break, plan ahead, enjoy the campus police ride from Scales to south, and sleep late the next morning... without guilt.