Of all the elements combined to produce a show, the lighting design is the last to be incorporated, and for many reasons. As Ken White, ECU’s lighting professor and designer, says, “It is easier to change the color in the instruments, than to re-dye the costumes or re-paint the scenery.” Because the stage lights can be manipulated in a variety of ways including color, the color or textures of the costumes can be hidden by “using a heavy color, and that applies to the scenery as well.” This is also the most flexible element because changes can be made rather easily.

There are five ways light can be manipulated and are under the control of the lighting designer. The intensity can be two extremes bright and dim and every level in between. The direction of light is also a major part of the design. Light can come from a circular direction all around the stage and actors on it, and also from straight above or even below. The distribution, or pattern of light, can be uniform, splotchy, or even have strategically placed shadows. The most obvious way light is changed is with color. White also states that these five elements can all be changed over time during the course of the show.

Perhaps the most obvious question is, why would anyone change the lights in the five ways previously mentioned? White says, “[To] tell the story [and] convey the emotion of the characters and the trauma they are going through on stage.” In order to do this, East Carolina uses ninety to one hundred percent of their inventory, which adds up to just over three hundred instruments! “All the elements have to work together to support each other,” White says.

The beautiful costumes, scenery, and even the action of the characters on stage would be lost if not for the lighting design. The heightened sense of reality produced by a show is all thanks to the lights. The idea is best summed up in an adage Ken White is happy to share, “It isn’t pretty if you can’t see it.”