

# THE PENDULUM

## RECOGNIZING A "NATIVE ENOUGH" CULTURE AT ELON UNIVERSITY



Controversies over identity and land acknowledgment complicate Elon's relationship with Native history

Jess Baker

Elon News Network | @jessmbaker\_

Junior Lakota Grindstaff has strong ties to her Eastern Band of Cherokee heritage. Still, she struggles with fitting into stereotypes of what she said people think Native Americans should look like.

"Even though I know I am Native, there have been many generations before me. I don't necessarily look like what people picture a Native American to look like," Grindstaff wrote in a statement to Elon News Network.

Grindstaff, co-president of the Elon University's Native American Student Association, said this is one of many issues some Native students face at Elon. With November recognized as Native American Heritage Month, students are bringing awareness to these problems today.

See **NATIVE HISTORY** | pg. 2

## Elon reacts to James Madison University leaving CAA

With the James Madison University Dukes accepting to join the Sun Belt Conference, Elon waits for what the future may look like

Caitlin Rundle

Elon News Network | @caitlinr\_21

After 36 years in the Colonial Athletic Association, James Madison University is on its way to a new conference. The university received unanimous approval from Virginia General Assembly's Intercollegiate Athletic Review Commission to leave the league in order to join the Sun Belt Conference, which was the final hurdle for the school to clear in its conference ascension.

James Madison has been a member of the CAA since 1985 and has become a league powerhouse in several sports — including football, softball, soccer, lacrosse and field hockey.

Among those supporting JMU's transition was Brian Hemphill, president of Old Dominion University. Old Dominion also used to be a member of the CAA but announced its departure in 2012, making room for Elon to join the conference in 2014. Recently, Old Dominion announced its athletic program will also be moving to the Sun Belt from Conference USA.

The Sun Belt Conference is part of the NCAA Division I Football Bowl Subdivision, which is the highest level of collegiate football. The FBS has more opportunities for visibility, funding and scholarships compared to the subdivision the CAA falls under: the Football Championship Subdivision.



THIS DIDN'T JUST HAPPEN OVERNIGHT FOR THEM, THEY'VE BEEN WORKING ON THIS. THEY'VE BEEN A GREAT PARTNER TO US AND THE CAA, AND THEY CERTAINLY ADDED A LOT TO OUR NATIONAL BRAND, WHICH WE APPRECIATE AND FEEL LIKE WE'VE BUILT THIS WITH THEM, TOGETHER.

DAVE BLANK

ELON ATHLETIC DIRECTOR

Elon athletic director Dave Blank said the Dukes have been planning this move for a long time, citing the renovations to the university's football stadium. An average of 15,000 seats sold per game is required by the FBS to qualify for bowl opportunities, which is over the capacity of the old James Madison stadium. Renovations in 2011 expanded the capacity from 12,000 to 25,000, with room still to grow.

"This didn't just happen overnight for them. They've been working on this," Blank said. "They've been a great partner to us and the CAA, and they certainly added a lot to our national brand, which we appreciate and feel like we've built this with them, together."

That loss of a brand is something that sports management professor Bill Squadron said will not be too large a loss to the conference.

See **CAA** | pg. 14

## Students with physical disabilities adapt to Elon University's growing campus

Students share the challenges they face on Elon's growing campus during their time here

Nyah Phengsitthy

Managing Editor | @nyahphengsitthy

Sophomore Victor Gaspar was born visually impaired. Though he has enough vision to see objects and can move around in good lighting conditions, there are some areas on Elon University's campus where traveling is a challenge when it's dark. As he walks in lower lit areas, Gaspar sometimes questions where he is headed next.

"Am I actually going to veer off into the wrong place?" Gaspar said. "Which wouldn't necessarily be a bad thing, I'd be able to find my way around, but it's just not as convenient if it takes me longer to get to a place if there were actual light poles there."

While Elon has tried to make its campus more accessible to his needs and to other students with physical disabilities, the university's older campus, which is continuously growing in population size and property width, brings new changes every day. From learning a new class route on campus every semester to working around the university's construction areas such as the



NYAH PHENGSTITTHY | MANAGING EDITOR

Sophomore Victor Gaspar walks through Historic Neighborhood. Gaspar was born visually impaired, where he has enough vision to see objects and navigate in areas with good lighting around campus.

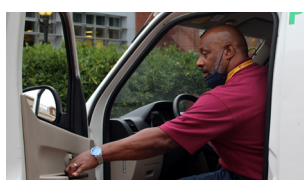
Innovation Quad project, adapting to Elon's campus with a physical disability can be challenging.

According to director of facilities management Scott Stevens, facilities management works periodically throughout the year with disability services to fix any issues that are brought to their attention.

"With a campus that is constantly

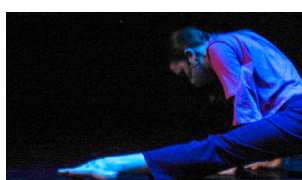
growing, there are always challenges. Elon University's campus has standards for walkways and also complies with ADA requirements," Stevens wrote in a statement to Elon News Network.

See **ADAPT** | pg. 8



### NEWS • PAGE 7

Elon staff member reflects on Air Force for Veterans Day



### LIFESTYLE • PAGE 9

A look into Elon's Fall Dance Concert Tech Week



### SPORTS • PAGE 14

Ace Speedway copes with COVID-19's tire shortage

# THE PENDULUM

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## EDITORIAL POLICY:

ENN seeks to inspire, entertain and inform the Elon community by providing a voice for students and faculty, as well as serve as a forum for the meaningful exchange of ideas.

## CORRECTIONS POLICY:

ENN is committed to accurate coverage. When factual errors are made, we correct them promptly and in full, both online and in print. Online corrections state the error and the change at the top of the article. Corrections from the previous week's print edition appear on this page.

Contact

[corrections@elonnewsnetwork.com](mailto:corrections@elonnewsnetwork.com)  
to report a correction or a concern.

## WHEN WE PUBLISH:

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broadcasts Tuesdays at 4:30 p.m.

**ENN Radio Podcast**  
publishes Friday afternoon

# Community weighs in on Elon's recognition of Native students

## NATIVE HISTORY | from cover

Paula Patch, faculty adviser to NASA, said she sees the direct consequences of small representation in modern media and culture among club members. She said she believes the club of 12 members would be larger if students didn't fear being accused of appropriating their own culture.

"The irony or paradox of it is that this sense of having to prove oneself and to prove one's claim to identity, and the worry and anxiety about that, is almost a cultural anxiety," Patch said. "It is anxiety that has been perpetuated by mainstream culture."

Though she is not of Native American descent, Patch teaches Native American literature. Currently, she is the only professor at Elon teaching about Native Americans in any form — Clyde Ellis, a Native American scholar, retired in 2018 and has yet to be replaced. As the adviser of NASA, she oversees the organization's mission of advocating for Native and Indigenous identifying students by promoting representation, inclusive programming and educational awareness of Elon's campus.

According to the 2020-21 Elon Fact Book, less than 0.1% of undergraduates identify as Native American. Patch said this small representation of students furthers the lack of acknowledgement of Native history at Elon. Patch also said some students feel they aren't representative enough of their culture to the eyes of other individuals at Elon. Several students who are members of the club declined to be interviewed by Elon News Network.

"They worry a little bit that they aren't closely enough connected to their Native American heritage to justify being in a group," Patch said. "They're afraid to gather with other students because they won't be seen as Native enough."

Polly Cox, employee of the Guilford Native American Association and member of the Lumbee Tribe, works toward recognition and correction of misconceptions about Native culture.

"Many people still dress up as Native Americans for Halloween," Cox said. "There's still those negative stereotypes that are still portrayed in the media. Some people just generally don't know that dressing up as a Native American is political and cultural appropriation."

GNNA was created in 1975 to foster education and support for Native students. The association has since expanded to serve over 6,000 Native Americans across 12 counties in North Carolina, with the goal of assisting them in achieving economic and social self-sufficiency.

Throughout her life, Cox also said she has recognized the stereotype that some people place Native Americans into. But being Native American isn't about what one looks like, rather it's about the culture and history behind it — an important thing that many people don't consider.

"People feel like Native Americans should look a certain way," Cox said. "Because if you don't fit this idea of what people think a Native American should look like, then 'Oh, you're not.'"

## Recognizing history and land

In 2001, Elon University joined Project Pericles, a national non-profit organization of colleges focused on social responsibility and participatory citizenship. As part of that, Elon issued a land acknowledgement — a statement from an individual or



COURTESY OF LAKOTA GRINDSTAFF

Junior Lakota Grindstaff on her reservation. Grindstaff is part of the Eastern Band of Cherokee heritage.

a group publicly acknowledging and apologizing for residing on Native grounds. According to Elon's acknowledgement, the university resides on land that historically belonged to the Adshusheer, Catawba, Eno, Occaneechi, Sappony/Saponi, Saura, Shakori and Sissipahaw tribes.

But Cox said these statements are more often done to be "politically correct," rather than sincere.



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**PAULA PATCH**  
NATIVE AMERICAN STUDENT  
ASSOCIATION FACULTY ADVISER

"It can come out kind of half-hearted if we weren't included, because we've been left out of so much in the past," Cox said.

According to Cox, respectful land acknowledgments include ceremonial events featuring traditional customs, such as blessings, with both parties present. When statements are sent out without actions, much like Elon's, it creates a hollow, short-circuited dialogue between one side and a figurative other, according to the former chair of the History and Memory Committee at Elon, Charles Irons.

"Land acknowledgments often function as apologies, but without involving other partners," Irons said. "Most land acknowledgments do not involve dialogue or restitution. It's a rhetorical acknowledgment of a debt."

However, some individuals see it as a fundamental first step toward actionable change.

"When Indigenous People's Day comes around, I usually send a note to the faculty and staff and say, 'On behalf of the organization, I want to remind you that Elon SGA and Elon University acknowledge Indigenous People's Day,' and I do the land acknowledgment there," Patch said.

Since the founding of NASA at Elon, the university has publicly celebrated Indigenous People's Day rather than Columbus Day — a step toward recognizing Elon's Native student population. According to Cox, after acknowledgment and recognition, continued education on historical and current issues is the next step toward uplifting Native communities.

"If you don't acknowledge the facts and what actually happened, it makes it difficult to learn and move on," Cox said. "And then history tends to repeat itself."

## IF YOU GO

Reading of "There There" with author Tommy Orange. This story is about 12 Native Americans journeying to a Powwow

**Where:**  
Greensboro Coliseum Complex  
1921 W. Gate City Blvd.  
Greensboro, North Carolina  
27403

**When:**  
Thursday, Nov. 18  
7 - 8:30 p.m.

## American Indian Heritage Celebration

**Where:** Virtual at [ncmuseumofhistory.org/aihc-2021/schedule](http://ncmuseumofhistory.org/aihc-2021/schedule)

**When:** Friday, Nov. 19 - Saturday, Nov. 20

## CORRECTIONS

In the last edition of The Pendulum, Elon soccer player Ben Rosenblatt's jersey number was misidentified. Elon News Network regrets this error.



Elon University football head coach Tony Trisciani is joined by senior quarterback Davis Cheek and junior running back Jaylan Thomas at the post-game press conference after losing 35-0 to Villanova during homecoming weekend. LUKE JOHNSON | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER



Elon University President Connie Book speaks at Homecoming Weekend's Rock the Block event prior to a fireworks display on Friday, Nov. 5 on East Haggard Avenue. JOSEPH NAVIN | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER



Elon University's volleyball team huddles during a timeout in their straight sets game against Hofstra on Nov. 6. Elon beat Hofstra 3-0. ERIN MARTIN | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER



Seniors Sophie Gerth and Brooks Lacoste walk across Rhodes Stadium on Saturday, Nov. 6 after being named to Homecoming Court. LUCAS CASEL | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER



Wide receiver Caleb Ogunmola tries to receive the ball against Villanova's defensive back Ty Trinh on Saturday, Nov. 6 at Rhodes Stadium. The Phoenix lost to the Wildcats 35-0. LUCAS CASEL | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

# ELECTION WINNERS

Municipal election winners in Burlington and town of Elon discuss how they plan to address community concerns over public safety and economic growth

Graysen Shirley | Politics Editor | @graysen\_shirley

## TOWN OF ELON MAYOR EMILY SHARPE



COURTESY OF EMILY SHARPE

**A**LDERWOMAN EMILY SHARPE IS the second woman to be elected as mayor of Elon. She won the Elon mayoral election last Tuesday with 85.23% of all reported votes, according to the North Carolina State Board of Elections. Sharpe plans to finish her role on the Board of Aldermen before being sworn in as mayor in December.

Sharpe said she hopes to bring the anti-

discrimination ordinance, legislation by the town that would provide more protections to Elon residents, including LGBTQIA residents who have limited protections under state and local laws, back into discussions with members of Elon's Board of Aldermen. Previous discussions of the ordinance by the Board of Aldermen occurred last spring, but coordinating with the town staff on enforcement of the ordinance proved to be a

challenge. She hopes to work with the Board of Aldermen to address this.

"Our biggest real barrier to putting forth an ordinance versus the resolution was specifically the fact that it could be a burden on the staff to enforce, so we really have to get all our ducks in a row before we push forward with the ordinance," Sharpe said. "It's definitely something I want to see brought back up."

## BURLINGTON MAYOR JIM BUTLER

**J**IM BUTLER WAS ELECTED mayor of Burlington last Tuesday and held 57.71% of all reported votes, according to the North Carolina State Board of Elections. He is hoping to work more closely alongside the Burlington City Council in his new position.

Butler said he wants to address issues in the city relating to economic development, including recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. Burlington currently has more than \$11 million in funds from the American Rescue Plan, according to Butler.

He also said he hopes to implement funding in response to concerns over poverty and homelessness in the western part of Burlington. In addition, Butler said he intends to recruit additional members for the economic development department, parks and recreation department and first responder organizations.

"We need to be sure that those entities are adequately staffed, adequately funded, adequately trained and fully supported," Butler said.



CITY OF BURLINGTON



COURTESY OF STEPHANIE BOURLAND

## BOARD OF ALDERMEN STEPHANIE BOURLAND

**S**TEPHANIE BOURLAND WAS ELECTED to Elon's Board of Aldermen. Bourland currently serves as the associate director of corporate and employer relations at Elon University's School of Communications.

Bourland said her new position on the town of Elon's Board of Aldermen will allow her to work alongside the town of Elon Police Department and Chief Kelly

Blackwelder to increase accountability of law enforcement.

"I support Chief Blackwelder's restructuring of patrol shifts that added in 24-hour supervision to enhance officer safety and increase accountability," Bourland said. "I am also committed to making sure all people are treated fairly by well-trained law enforcement officers and that transparency is a vital part of the process."

## BOARD OF ALDERMEN RANDY ORWIG

**R**ANDY ORWIG, SENIOR PASTOR of Elon Community Church, was also elected to Elon's Board of Aldermen. Orwig said he plans to use his position to allow underrepresented communities, such as the Ball Park Avenue neighborhood, to have their voices heard. The Ball Park Avenue neighborhood is located adjacent to the town's train tracks and encompasses Lawrence Slade Park and Elon First Baptist Church.

"There are some underrepresented neighborhoods that sometimes feel like it doesn't matter what they say, and I want to make sure that they're heard," Orwig said.

Orwig said he also plans to work alongside the newly elected mayor of Elon and members of the Board of Aldermen to address the cost of water and sewage services along with economic development of the town.



COURTESY OF RANDY ORWIG



CITY OF BURLINGTON

## CITY COUNCILMAN HAROLD OWEN

**H**AROLD OWEN WAS REELECTED to the Burlington City Council. His campaign focused on increasing the presence of law enforcement officers to help combat crime and helping businesses recover economically from the pandemic. These are two things he hopes to address by collaborating with other members of the city council.

Owen also said the city council is continuing to utilize funds from the American Rescue Plan in order to assist businesses who faced economic hardships due to the pandemic.

"We're looking to be a little bit more aggressive in terms of economic development in reference to growth ... and bring more jobs to the community for residents," Owen said.

## CITY COUNCILMAN RONNIE WALL

**R**ONNIE WALL WAS ELECTED to the Burlington City Council, winning the race with 28.35% of all votes reported, according to the North Carolina State Board of Elections.

Ronnie Wall is the Head of School at The Burlington School. He formerly served as the mayor of Burlington. Prior to becoming the mayor of Burlington,

Wall served on the city council from 2005 to 2007.

Wall did not respond to Elon News Network's multiple requests for comment.

In a statement on his Facebook page, Wall thanked voters for coming out to the polls and said he is ready to get to work in his new position.



CITY OF BURLINGTON

## CHEAT SHEET

THE CHEAT SHEET IS AN INTERVIEW WITH A RELEVANT EXPERT TO EXPLAIN COMPLEX TOPICS

# THE NEW VACCINE ELIGIBILITY AFFECTS PROFESSORS



BEN MUSE | ANALYTICS DIRECTOR

Biology professor Jessica Merricks discusses vaccine eligibility for children and its affect on her teaching

Avery Sloan

Elon News Network | @averysloan



Jessica Merricks

Jessica Merricks, professor of biology, discusses how the approval of the Pfizer-BioTech COVID-19 vaccine for children ages 5 through 11 is helping professors with young children feel

safer being back

in person. Through her own experience as a professor and a parent this is a personal issue for her.

## How has it been being back in person teaching this year with your child not being able to be vaccinated?

"She's five and she started kindergarten this year, which was a big source of stress for both me and my husband. She was in daycare before starting school and it was a very small group and they were in person but it was like I said, very much a nuclear group. So, we felt pretty comfortable with her being at school going every day. She wasn't around a lot of different people.

"This shifted, her being in school, like in a big elementary school, with lots of teachers and moving around and stuff gave us a little bit of stress. But honestly, we've been pretty lucky. We haven't had any major challenges. The only real sort of difference now is she got a cold a couple of weeks ago and that becomes a huge deal. So I had to miss work ... and it's not like, you just sit for a couple days and then you get to go back. You got to go get tested, and it's just a whole process.

"There's been some disruption just

due to the new policies that are in place to keep everybody safe. This time of year everybody's getting colds and that's what she had. But, everything kind of gets treated the same way right now just to be safe. So a little bit of disruption in terms of work and some anxiety around her being around lots of people, but it's been OK."

## How do you see the vaccine rollout affecting your child?

"We're gonna get her vaccinated. That's a definite thing that will happen. I think it just depends. When I look at the community that we live in, there are a lot of parents that have been waiting for this, because I think it gives us all a peace of mind that we all feel better about sending our kids to school, knowing that they have this extra protection. So I'm excited about it."

## Have you spoken with other faculty at Elon who have children that are affected by this?

"We chat about it in our departments and my friends on campus that have kids and for the most part, I get the sense that the Elon faculty is grateful for the opportunity to finally be able to vaccinate this group. When it came out for the older kids, I know lots of Elon faculty ran and got them signed up to get their shots. And I think it's a similar situation with the younger kids, especially now that we know that there are some not so great effects of COVID with little ones. So even though little ones that have gotten COVID get over it pretty quickly, but we know that there are some kind of lingering impacts. A lot of faculty on campus have been more concerned about that, and so getting the vaccine seems to be pretty important to people."

## What do you expect to see happen with COVID vaccinations nationwide as children are now able to become vaccinated? Do you think there will be any hesitancy from parents?

"Yeah, I think the last survey I read said something like the nation was broken up into thirds, right, a third of parents are like, absolutely. Another third is like, well, let's wait and see how it goes, and another third

is like absolutely not. I don't think it's going to be that much different than the general population. Parents are nervous because it's new, and that's what happens when things are new. So I would love to say that I think all parents are going to jump and get the vaccine but that's not gonna happen."

## How does this new eligibility for children back to 11 change your comfort level regarding COVID regarding socializing?

"It's a big deal for us. We have plans to travel for Thanksgiving and knowing that Maya has been vaccinated means that I can stress a little bit less going around different people getting on a plane. In the same way that I felt a big weight off my shoulders when I got vaccinated, I'm gonna feel so much better knowing that she has that extra protection."

## How has this year felt for you compared to last year, 2020, in regards to you and your family safety and comfort level with being back around other people?

"I think generally we have started to feel a little bit more relaxed this year. You know, my husband and I are both vaccinated. Our circle of family and friends is vaccinated. So that has allowed us to do a lot more than we were able to do last year, which is great. But there are still certain things that we don't do, and because Maya isn't vaccinated, there are still certain things that we don't feel all that comfortable doing. So we're looking forward to those sorts of things, being able to go to places with large crowds and going back to doing those types of big community gatherings. That'll be something we're looking forward to and we'll be able to do once she's vaccinated."

## Do you think that the plan that the White House currently has for the vaccine rollout will be successful in getting people to get vaccinated?

"It depends on how you define successful. I think that the efforts that are being put in place are great. There's a shot available for every child in this country. We are lucky that we have that. We're lucky that we have the resources available. There's only so much we can do to get

people to take advantage of it. So I don't know if 100% of that responsibility falls on our governments, they prove they're providing this resource, they're providing the education about how important it is to get it done, I'm excited that they're available.

"I think that the timing is good, especially because the research shows, just like last year, the holiday season brings spikes. So I think the timing couldn't be more perfect for people to get their kids vaccinated before Thanksgiving and Christmas. I'm happy with the way that things have been going."

## Is there anything else that you would like to add that I didn't mention?

"Other than the fact that I think that there's a little bit of hesitancy because of the emergency use authorization of the vaccine, which was the same with the one for adults, I think a lot of people are nervous about the fact that it doesn't have full FDA approval — and that's understandable. But at the same time, I hope that doesn't stop people from getting their kids vaccinated, especially if they are planning on traveling or being around large groups of people. It's just not worth the risk, in my opinion, and there's a really good chance that it's going to get fully approved. So because of where we are in the calendar, I would not risk waiting."

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3. Click the pop-up link

# FROM AIR FORCE TO FACILITIES MANAGEMENT



JOHN LUKE FARAH | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Warren Daye, who serves as floor technician in Elon University's facilities management, reflects on his time in the Air Force.

Warren Daye, an employee of Elon University and veteran of the Air Force, shares his personal story and experiences

**John Luke Farah**  
Elon News Network

Warren Daye went from securing nuclear weapons in Minot Air Force Base, North Dakota to serving in Diyarbakir Turkey in Burlington, North Carolina. He begins his day at 5 a.m. driving around Alamance-Burlington School System to fulfill submitted work orders. He then travels to Elon University to begin his shift as a floor technician at 4 p.m., where he will stay on campus until 10 p.m.

In addition to being an Elon and Alamance-Burlington School System employee, Daye is a father of two, a North Carolina native and an Air Force veteran.

With Veterans Day recognized on Thursday, Nov. 11, Daye will continue to reflect on his service in the Air Force and work within the Elon community.

Veterans Day, or originally Armistice Day, was first celebrated on November 11, 1919, a year after the end of World War I. In 1938, Veterans Day was made a national holiday by congress. The day is meant to tribute those who gave their lives while serving as well as to thank living service members. To celebrate, Daye will be taking the day off from work.

Daye joined the Air Force in 1981 after graduating from Williams High School in Burlington, North Carolina. He would serve within the Air Force for the next 20 years until his retirement in 2001. Having a "wild streak" when he was younger, Daye said the discipline and structure in school and in the Air Force helped him.

"It kept me off the streets," Daye said. "If you don't have something to occupy your time, you know, these streets will get you."

According to Daye, he forged many meaningful relationships while in the Air Force. He spent the majority of his service at Pope Air Force Base in Fayetteville, North Carolina — which also happens to be

“

IT KEPT ME OFF THE STREETS. IF YOU DON'T HAVE SOMETHING TO OCCUPY YOUR TIME, YOU KNOW, THESE STREETS WILL GET YOU.

**WARREN DAYE**  
FLOOR TECHNICIAN AT ELON UNIVERSITY

the place where Daye said he made the most friendships.

With the aid of social media, Daye is able to keep up with the friends he made while serving, and they have been reuniting for three years. At these reunions, Daye said people share their old war stories, reminisce on the times they have shared together and check-in on one another. The sense of brotherhood he gained from the military was the greatest part about serving, Daye said.

"You never know the impact that you had on them until, normally, it's long gone," Daye said. "Later on, they come back and say, 'Hey man, you know I appreciate the way you carried yourself, the things you did in situations.'"

Kimberly Stapleton, assistant director of financial aid and Veterans' Affairs certifying official, acts as a liaison between the VA and students with active duty or veteran parents at Elon University to ensure they receive financial benefits.

"It is an honor to serve our Veterans and military families on campus," Stapleton wrote in a statement to Elon News Network. "This is my way of giving back to them after

the incredible sacrifices they have made for our country."

Stapleton, who comes from an extensive military family, cited her close relationship with her cousin, who served as a Marine, as what gave her a significant understanding of military service and thus makes her work more meaningful to her.

Having familial experience, Stapleton can attest to the work ethic of past and present military members.

"[They are] positioned for success due to their experiences, training, work ethic, and steadfast commitment," Stapleton wrote.

Daye said he prides himself on his worth ethic and goal-oriented mindset.

"I don't like half-way doing anything, I'm like, if I gotta do it, I wanna do it right because my name is on it," Daye said. "If you don't go somewhere and try to make it better when you leave than it was when you got there, then you've been pretty much, I think, insignificant."

Daye attributes his strong and perfection-seeking work ethic to his time in the military and said military or not, students might find success following a similar structure.



JOHN LUKE FARAH | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Daye enters his truck as he begins his shift as a floor technician for Elon University.

# NAVIGATING ELON IN A DIFFERENT WAY



LUKE JOHNSON | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Sophomore Ella Nutt heads to lunch after finishing class. Nutt was diagnosed at birth with spina bifida, a condition that affects the spine, and hydrocephalus, a build-up of fluid in the brain. She operates in a manual wheelchair.

## ADAPT | from cover

But while sending in FixIt requests — a work order system that documents when a repair is requested or completed — may eliminate specific issues, some areas of campus are still difficult to navigate through, at least for sophomore Ella Nutt. Diagnosed at birth with spina bifida, a condition that affects the spine, and hydrocephalus, a build-up of fluid in the brain, Nutt fully operates in a manual wheelchair.

“Where the ground is kind of uneven, I have to be careful of where I direct the chair,” Nutt said. “There have been a couple of times when, if the wheel on the wheelchair hits one of those spots just right, it actually can cause the wheelchair to flip over.”

In certain areas of campus, such as the crosswalk between the McMichael building and Numen Lumen, Nutt struggles with uneven cobblestone paths when crossing the street. Paths with missing bricks also make

it difficult for her to manually navigate the chair in a new direction.

The older parts of campus, such as in the Historic Neighborhood, are also areas where Nutt struggles to get from one location to another.

“Those pathways are a little bit more worn than others, so there’s more of a possibility, there’s more of a tripping hazard,” Nutt said.

Though physical campus challenges are evident for some students with physical disabilities, there’s another main obstacle students face: communication between the university and students with physical disabilities. Earlier this year, there was an instance where the elevator wasn’t working when Nutt arrived at class in Schar. Unaware of the malfunctions due to the lack of communication between the student and university, Nutt couldn’t make it to the second floor of her class.

“Nobody reached out to me,” Nutt said. “I showed up to the building for class that day and they were like, ‘Oh, it’s broken,’ and

I was like ‘OK.’”

Zoe Nulty, accommodations specialist for Elon’s disabilities resources, said that disabilities resources work with facilities management to solve issues on university property, such as for Nutt’s past situations.

“I enjoy serving as a student advocate,” Nulty said. “Students with disabilities and other diagnoses can oftentimes be underrepresented and having the ability to be an additional voice for them gives me an opportunity I wouldn’t have just anywhere.”

According to Nulty, if issues with property are owned by the town of Elon, facilities management also assists in ensuring those areas are addressed as well. The town of Elon’s disability management has been discussed at past Board of Aldermen meetings this year. According to the November agenda meeting, the board went over the town of Elon’s local government self-assessment on current programs in place and facilities regarding accommodations for residents with disabilities. The town entered a contract with Stewart Inc. — a design, engineering and planning firm based in North Carolina — in June 2020.

Sela Cornell, a sophomore who has been visually impaired since she was born, said that she faces communication issues at the university as well. When she arrived at Elon, communication with some professors was challenging in terms of accommodating her needs. Cornell said she experienced a time where a professor had difficulties working with her because they felt it would give her a leg up in class, when really Cornell just wanted to be “up to the level” with everybody else.

“A lot of people with my condition are completely blind, and I am fortunate enough to have a lot of usable vision,” Cornell said. “But I was shocked at how much I was told after graduating high school about certain teachers not wanting to accommodate me because they thought it would make it unfair to other students.”

While most professors work on a case-by-case basis with accommodations for students with disabilities, Cornell said that students should never have to prove the severity of need for accommodations. She ended up solving her learning

accommodations with the professor, but only after bringing in disability resources for assistance.

“My big issue, now that I’m responsible for handling this kind of stuff on my own, has just been mostly frustration at feeling like I need to prove that I need the accommodation,” Cornell said.

## Facing independence

The desire of being independent has been one way students with disabilities use to combat challenges they face on campus. For Nutt, individuals around her should consider the idea when they see her or students who face the same challenges as her “to ask if the help is needed, rather than just assuming that it’s needed.”

“I don’t tend to ask for help that much because I like the feeling of being independent more,” Nutt said. “I think sometimes people are in a position where they see that somebody might need help, but they don’t necessarily know how to offer it.”

And for Cornell, individuals should learn to observe before playing the hero card.

“Find a good mix between asking if they need help, and letting them come to you and ask for help,” Cornell said. “Because I know sometimes I find it frustrating if people automatically assume that I need help.”

Because she was given mobility lessons and introduced to new skill sets at a younger age, Cornell said she has grown to become more independent. Cornell grew up in a school system where disabilities services helped her learn to read braille and utilize her walking cane.

The sense of being independent is also a way for students to continue exploring Elon’s campus in a different way. Though Gaspar became familiar with the university’s layout, such as walking down East Haggard or traveling from the Global Neighborhood to McEwen Dining Hall, there’s areas of campus he still needs to adapt today despite some of the challenges.

“As time goes on, you just learn more paths, and you just connect things,” Gaspar said. “That’s how I am now. I’m like, ‘Oh, well, maybe today’s the day that I’ll just go pick out a random path and see where it goes.’”



NYAH PHENGSIITHY | MANAGING EDITOR

Sophomore Sela Cornell has been visually impaired since she was born. Cornell said that there have been instances where she faced communication issues with some professors from the university.



# Tech week takes toll on dancer's body, mental health



Junior Hannah Giessler rehearses for the Fall Dance Concert on Saturday, Nov. 6. The upcoming Fall Dance Concert has brought challenges of balancing mental health and physical well-being during tech week.

ABBY REED | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

The Fall Dance Concert will hit the stage Nov. 12-14 and some dancers noticed a decrease in mental and physical well-being

## Samantha Sussman

Elon News Network | @Samanthasusma

While most performers in the Fall Dance Concert only need to know their one part in the dance, freshman understudy Katey O'Connell has to learn and practice all parts. For each rehearsal, O'Connell switches positions so she is prepared to step in for any scenario.

"I don't know who I'm going to have to go in for at any given moment for each rehearsal, having jumped in for somebody new to make sure right off the bat, I have it down like the back by hand," O'Connell said. "It's definitely a stressor with confidence levels, because all these girls have been rehearsing the same part every week, whereas I have to change on a dime."

This year, dancers will be able to perform maskless, but audience members will be required to wear masks during the performance. Social distancing regulations have been put in place requiring six feet between dancers and the front row of the audience, with the audience wearing masks during performances. With these guidelines there are less tickets and the shows are already sold out. The performances will be in Roberts Theatre and include a mix of student, faculty and guest choreographer's original pieces.

Director of the Fall Dance Concert and professor of dance Casey Avaunt

said most performers have been dancing for the majority of their lives and know what to expect during tech week. She said there is more excitement and precision in movement seen as the concert grows nearer.

"I think it's an intense time, but it's also a really exciting time. I think it's when you start to realize all the hard work you've been putting in over the semester is going to actually come to fruition and be something really exciting that people want to watch," Avaunt said. "Even though it's exhausting, the students are really having fun and it's high energy."

Senior Lauren Weinberg choreographed a piece that will be featured in the Fall Dance Concert based on her experience with the March of the Living educational program, where participants visit concentration camps and try to better understand what it was like living through the Holocaust. It is entitled "Just a Number."

Weinberg said in previous rehearsals, the only people present were her and her understudy, but during tech week, everyone is watching, and she has to think about the audience and how they can get the best view, lighting and understanding.

"I think just because you're performing it on a stage rather just in a rehearsal studio, there's a bit more to it you know," Weinberg said. "How can everyone get the best view and what can you do as a performer, then in my case, as a choreographer as well. ... When I go to tech week or dress rehearsal, it's like, everyone, every cast and crew member is also watching."

Although Weinberg is excited for her first live show in two years, she

said she has been overthinking and stressing about the dance and trying to make sure it's perfect to not disappoint the audience.

“

I THINK IT'S AN INTENSE TIME, BUT IT'S ALSO A REALLY EXCITING TIME. I THINK IT'S WHEN YOU START TO REALIZE ALL THE HARD WORK YOU'VE BEEN PUTTING IN OVER THE SEMESTER IS GOING TO ACTUALLY COME TO FRUITION AND BE SOMETHING REALLY EXCITING THAT PEOPLE WANT TO WATCH.

**CASEY AVAUNT**  
DIRECTOR OF THE FALL DANCE  
CONCERT

"I think it helps that I have understudies and faculty and staff on my side looking out for me and in the best interest of myself and in my dance in my process," Weinberg said. "But at some point like I just have to be okay with what's happening and how it's

going and take some of the pressure off myself because then I'll drive myself crazy."

O'Connell said there are positives and negatives to tech week regarding time management and emotional release.

"It definitely tacks on a little bit of extra time pulling my mind away from schoolwork which is good and bad. It's definitely a nice release and outlet. But at the same time, it does pull some of my focus away from my schoolwork which can get overwhelming at some times, so you have to be really good with time management," O'Connell said.

With tech week rehearsals beginning, freshman dance major Gia Nguyen said she is excited to perform in her first show at Elon, but said she is already feeling sore as training intensifies.

"As it gets closer, I think they get more intense because it's all about cleaning it to perfection like before the concert," Nguyen said.

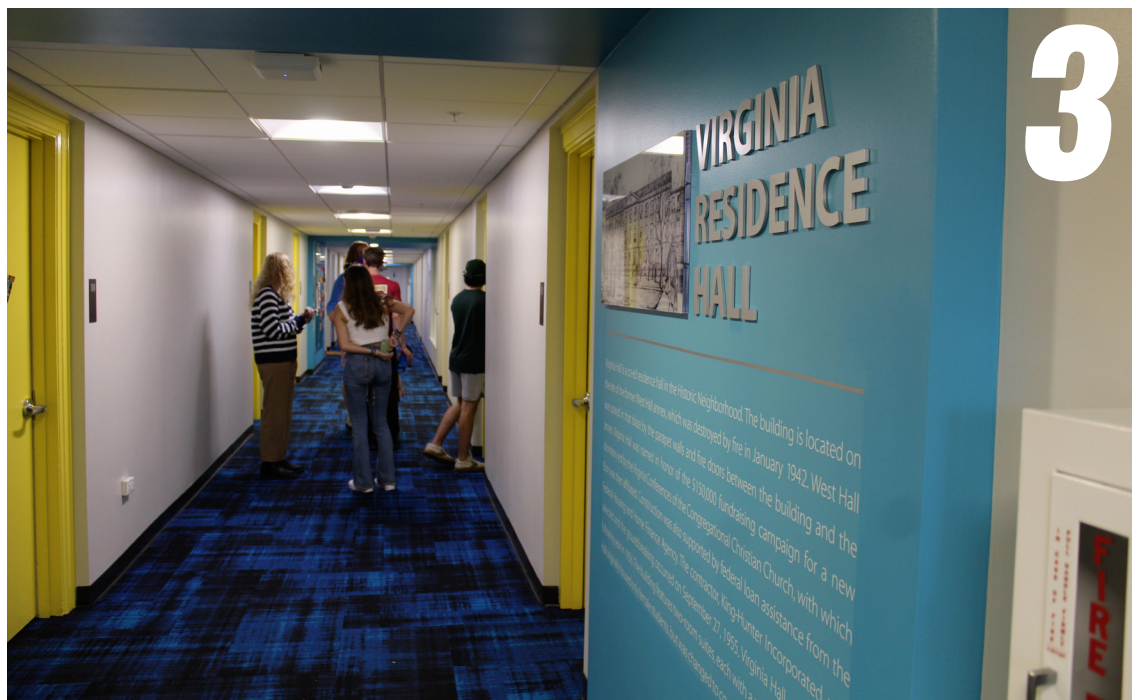
Freshman dance major Meredith Peck is focusing on keeping up to date with school work and her mental and physical well-being during tech week. But, she believes the dance program handles mental and physical health well.

"I definitely think being a freshman, you're kind of jumping into a new thing," Peck said. "But other than that, I think the dance department handles everything super well and getting freshmen integrated into the new system. So I think that they do what they can to keep you mentally set, in a good spot and not stress us out too much."

# ELON STUDENTS FIND NEW SPACES IN OUTDOOR LIVING LEARNING COMMUNITY

First year students living on the Outdoor LLC (OLC) create community over shared love for the outdoors and adventure. Residents participate in Elon Outdoors trips, the Elon Challenge ropes course and various community events, as well as create their own adventures on the weekends.

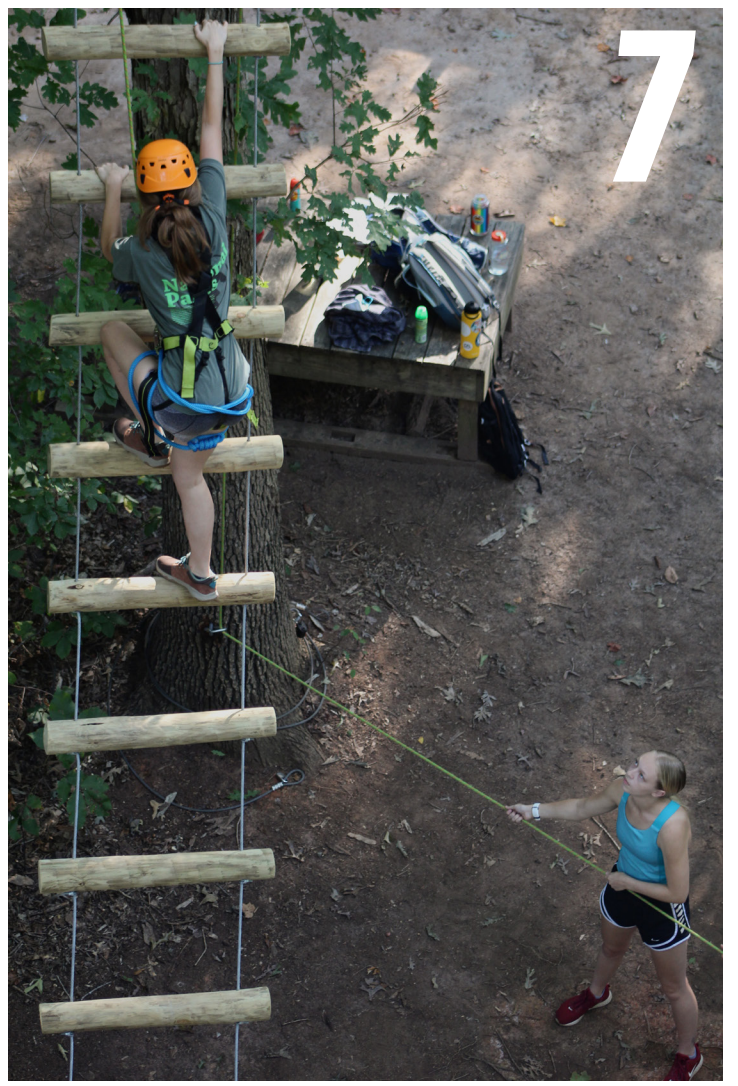
Molly Healy | Elon News Network



1. Delaney McDowell (left) and Sadie Smith (right) walk back to Virginia Hall where the Outdoor LLC is housed. 2. Since its inception in 2018, the Outdoor LLC has housed four classes of first year students. Throughout the year the students go on trips with Elon Outdoors and visit the Elon Challenge ropes course, as well as coordinate their own outdoor adventures. Pictured from left to right: Jason Feinstein, Isaac Moles, Sadie Smith, Delaney McDowell. 3. Current freshmen resident Sadie Smith said the floor is one where “everyone chose to be here.” They are a self-described “eclectic group” with athletes, musicians, STEM majors and even veterinarian technicians. The floor spends time together as most first year halls do: hanging out in the common room, swiping one another for food and the occasional Cook Out run. But on top of that, this floor goes for hikes, climbs and hammocks together. 4. “Everyone’s grown really close,” resident Sammy Johnson said. “Even quieter folks have come out of their shell, it’s a really positive environment.” 5. “Whenever I come back something is always going on,” resident Delaney McDowell (center) said. “People are singing New York State of Mind, doing handstands, watching movies in the common room.” McDowell said the floor is always like that. They connected very quickly and it’s not unusual for people to knock on every door to gather a group to eat together. Pictured from left to right: Jason Feinstein, Delaney McDowell and Sadie Smith.



6



7



8



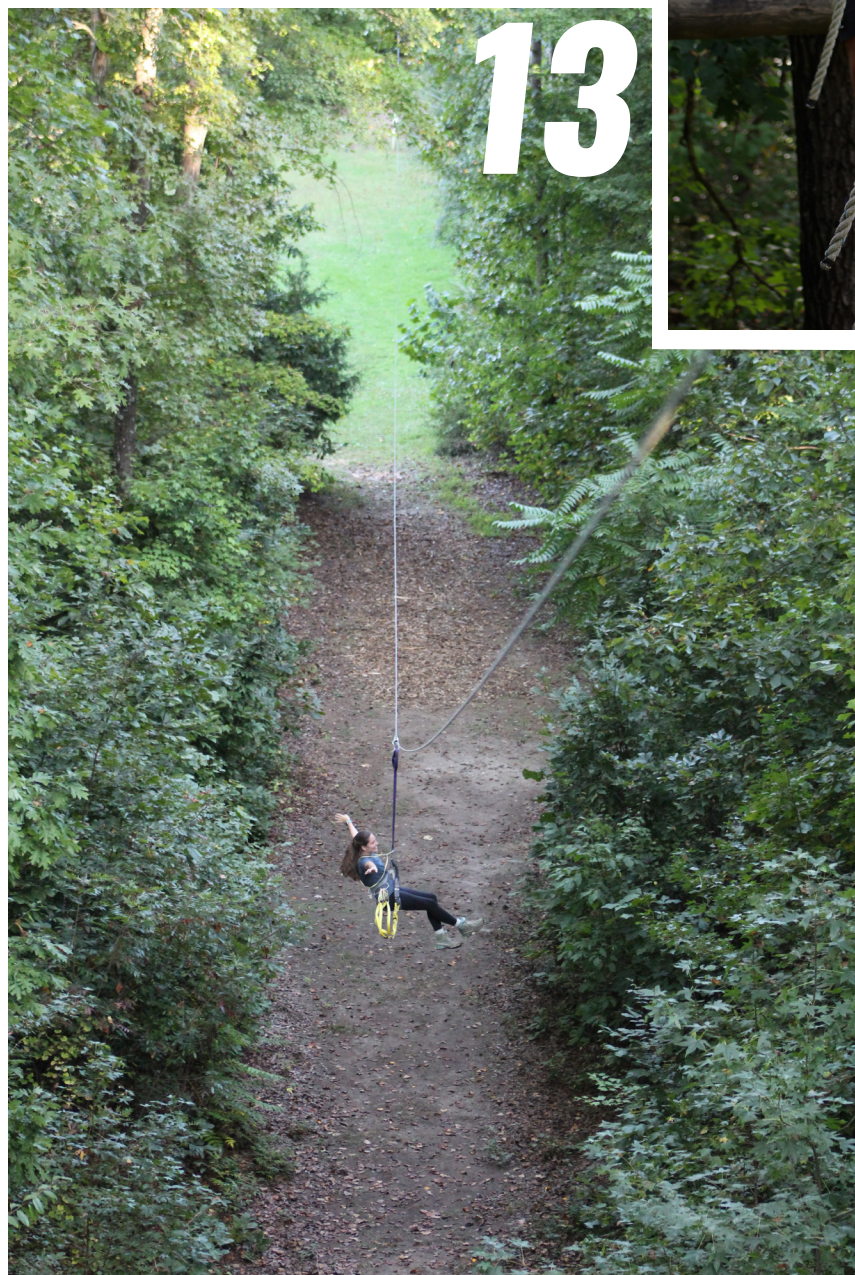
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10



11



13



12

6. Sadie Smith (pictured) said the floor made her transition to college much easier. "It's somewhere to start," said Smith. "People try to be as inclusive as possible." 7 and 8. The LLC came to the Elon Challenge ropes course to work on teamwork and facing their fears. Everyone completed the circuit, a series of elements that test your balance and determination. Pictured left is Ella Silvergold and Lucy Hewitt. 9. Gram Brownlee focuses on the multi-vine element. 10 and 11. "Anytime you push people in an experience," said Smith, "They're bound to come together." Pictured left is Quinton Akridge, right is Sadie Smith. 12. Lucy Hewitt smiles before going on the zipline. 13. Katie Grinnell zips down the wire.

# Elon did not **THROW AWAY ITS SHOT** to bring behind the scene stars of Hamilton to campus

Resident music director Chris Rayis has worked on big name productions such as Frozen and Hamilton

**Haley Phelps**  
Elon News Network

## Q: Could you tell me a little bit more about your role at Elon?

"I am, this year, the new music director for the musical theater program, which means, for example, in 42nd Street, I'm conducting the show. Normally, I'd be conducting an orchestra but because of COVID, we just have a piano and a computer, which is how it goes sometimes.

For 'Into the Woods,' I hired the orchestra. I make sure everything is arranged properly and teach the music in rehearsal, make sure music is provided in rehearsal and then conduct each performance. Then in addition to that, I teach classes on analyzing scores of music, analyzing musical scripts and next semester, I'll be teaching a class on how to do what I do, how to music direct — that involves conducting and arranging and copying and all that sort of thing."

## Q: What have you enjoyed about your time at Elon so far?

"I knew about Elon because Elon is one of the best musical theater programs in the country. Working in New York, I would often meet outstanding Elon alumni, one of whom worked on Hamilton. I met Fergie Philippe, who went here and just knew that it was one of the best programs that produced really unique personalities.

Elon was great at sort of exemplifying different personalities. When I was able to come here to work, I felt incredibly lucky to be a part of this program that's shaping some of the next great performers not just good, not just working performers, but some of the next great performers in musical theater, who hopefully will go on to become writers and directors, not just actors, although I hope some of them do that too."

## Q: Do you have a favorite memory of your time here at Elon so far?

"Yes. So I would say my first day of musical theater literature class, which is the one I teach, where we analyze scripts and scores. You know, you hear all kinds of things about teaching a college class, sometimes students are receptive, sometimes they're not. I'm always afraid that I will not have prepared correctly for the class, that I could have done more or less or done it better. And I'll never forget on my first day of teaching that class, just how lively the conversation was.

I think there's a stereotype that musical theater students, maybe actors in general, aren't as sharp or aren't maybe as original as you might think, as say writers or directors. I, to this day, cannot believe the brilliant ideas. I mean, I'm talking about literary theory, about dramatic ideas that I would never have come up with in a million years, brilliant ideas that come out of junior musical theater majors who are going on to become actors. And that first day was so powerful because all of my misconceptions were broken in the first five minutes when we started speaking and just incredible perspectives, lively conversation, students who are engaged and that is all Elon because there absolutely are universities where that's not the case."



Pianist, conductor and resident music director Chris Rayis stands on McCracy Theatre stage at Elon University on Nov. 9.

LUKE JOHNSON | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

## Q: What are some of the big lessons that you hope to teach the students while you're here?

"I would say to do what you love and don't regret doing it in the end. Something I told my class on the first day was a lesson I learned in my career, which was that it's better to have loved and lost than to have liked and lost. To have done something that you thought was fine and still have it come to an end. That to be in New York, to choose what you do, in the theater, find an area that you are passionate about, even if it won't be a forever career, even if you try your best and don't succeed. Because that can happen in the theater, at least it will be something you were extremely passionate about. To find something that drives you to wake up every day, because you can't imagine not doing it."

## Q: I know that you have been on a lot of really cool shows. Do you have some favorites that you've worked on?

"Of course, of course, I would say I have three favorite experiences from my life as a working artist. The first thing that happened in my life was working on the film adaptation of a musical called 'The Last Five Years' and I had just moved to New York and I was making connections. I was sitting in a good orchestra.

I got a call one day from the composer and lyricist, a guy named Jason Robert Brown. He is one of my heroes, one of my idols. I was 24 and I got a call to come to his apartment to help him arrange for this movie and I could not believe it.

It had just sort of gone through the grapevine that he needed someone and I'd been recommended for it, and so I ended up helping him arrange some string parts for that film living in his apartment for a couple days and just doing whatever I could to help him with that. That was an unbelievable dream come true. The second great experience that I had was connecting with Hamilton and that was through doing my masters at Penn State. It just so happened that they were on the second national tour, the music director and that

music directors associate who is the second in command. Were both from my program at Penn State, my conducting program.

I had known both of them and so they needed an assistant to help in the music department, and specifically to work with Alex Lakum or the original music director, who is another one of my heroes. I was able to work on the second national and then on believably the Hamilton team asked me back to work on the third national that was the one that went to Puerto Rico, and is now in San Francisco. So I was able to work with Alex and Lin Manuel Miranda and the team. One of my favorite memories working on Hamilton was right before the show was going to go to Puerto Rico. The original conductor, Alex Blackmore, was going to conduct the show again, after having not done it for a long time and he asked me to make notes from his original Hamilton score that he had written handwritten notes in that I mean they had started working on at the public when it was like a first draft.

I spent a week going through this unbelievable experience of looking through him in the original Hamilton score, seeing how it had changed. Seeing the notes he taken how he had transformed it. That was an incredible experience. That I was so grateful to have."

## Q: I heard that Stephanie Klemons is teaching a master class and you were an influential part of that. So what did that process look like bringing her here?

"She's one of the associate choreographers for 'Hamilton' and they actually were able to arrange that master class while I was still interviewing. So I did have a connection to her, but they were mostly able to contact her and bring her here before I even was involved with the program.

But she is an extremely talented choreographer. So Andy Blankenbuehler, was the original choreographer for 'Hamilton,' but for example, when I worked on the second and third national tours, and I worked on them in New York, while they were preparing to go on the road, Stephanie was one of the leaders of the choreography

teaching the choreography to the new cast, who as you can imagine, were hyped out of their mind.

She was brilliant at keeping them on task, and executing, I mean, very, very difficult choreography on such a short timeline. I mean, there were not a lot of rehearsals as you can imagine. Once a machine like 'Hamilton' gets going, it just runs and it runs quickly. And Stephanie is great at what she does. She teaches very difficult, complex choreography very efficiently, very quickly, and makes sure that it's performed at a very high level.

I think the students here at Elon are very, very lucky to meet someone of her caliber and I can't wait to see where Stephanie's career goes from here as a choreographer and teacher."

## Q: You touched on it briefly, but how do you think the students can benefit from her experience?

"Someone in Stephanie's position is always looking for the next great talent, looking for someone who will be a jewel in their next project and there are no rules about where that person has to come from. An Elon musical theater major being noticed in a workshop like this would not be the first time that such connection happened. You just never know. But ultimately, it's the wisdom, knowledge and experience that she has from her career, bringing it here directly from New York.

She works in the contemporary musical theatre industry, she knows what's happening right now and the faculty here is incredible and many of us have had wonderful and prolific experiences in the New York musical theater community.

But all of us are here. That's the difference between us and Stephanie. Stephanie is there, she knows what it's like today and that is such a cool thing.

At her level at an elite level, that's a crucial connection. For these students. Because they don't want to be great musical theater artists of 10 years ago, five years ago. They need to be great musical theater artists of tomorrow and Stephanie is a huge part of making sure that that's the case."

# Net Impact joins campus to improve sustainability

The new club's goals include educating students on importance of sustainability

**Abby Hobbs**

Elon News Network | @abigailhobbss

Joining Elon University this year, Net Impact plans to educate students on how they can make a difference in sustainability through leadership. According to Christy Benson, adviser and professor of business law, the skills learned in this organization will reflect on their jobs later in life.



ONE OF THE MAIN GOALS IS JUST HAVING A COMMUNITY ON CAMPUS WHERE PEOPLE CAN KIND OF BRING SUSTAINABILITY INTO THEIR LIVES ON CAMPUS, AS WELL AS CAREERS IN THE FUTURE.

**KATIE ROBINSON**

SENIOR IN ELON'S NET IMPACT CHAPTER

"The Elon Chapter of Net Impact seeks to demonstrate to students how they can make a tangible difference on the most pressing issues of our times — whether it be climate change, social justice, saving our oceans, or protecting our most vulnerable people and places," Benson wrote in an email to Elon News Network. "There are more and more ways for folks entering the work force to make a positive impact within their companies and in the wider communities in which we all live and work."

Bringing the chapter to Elon's campus, seniors Katie Robinson and Johanna Bogue



Kelly Harer, the Assistant Director of Sustainability for Education and Outreach leads the Net Impact club through the garden at Loy Farm.

JOSEPH NAVIN | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Marlowe wanted to continue Net Impact's mission of creating young leaders to make a difference in the world.

According to Benson, Elon's Net Impact chapter's goals are threefold: sponsor events that educate the community on the power of sustainability, connect students with networking opportunities that will help them facilitate positive change and work with other Net Impact chapters to support these objectives.

According to Robinson, the club executives are planning many events, including hosting speakers and sponsoring film screenings, in order to help achieve these goals. These events are in the works for 2022 and will involve panel discussions about job opportunities in the field with agricultural companies and alumni. Recently, the club took a tour of Loy Farm

to promote and educate members on what the university is doing to assist its sustainability initiatives.

"We can see the fact that sustainability isn't something that's taught to all students at Elon," Robinson said. "One of our goals, long term, is to have an impact on that and bring sustainability more into the curriculum so that everybody graduates here and is educated enough to make a more sustainable world."

Robinson and Bogue Marlowe said they have identified that there is a lack of connecting sustainability to different majors, which translates to a lack of understanding the environment in the real world. This inspired them to create the Elon chapter of Net Impact.

"We're looking at the holes in the gaps in the curriculum right now in those

different areas and how sustainability can kind of help fill some of those gaps," Bogue Marlowe said. "I know that as an environmental leader, it's always talked about with me."

Benson remembers when the organization as a whole was created 28 years ago while she was an MBA student. She said sustainability was simply a buzzword then, but it now has a deep meaning in how organizations operate.

"The fact that major organizations are actively seeking to balance people, planet and prosperity means that there are more opportunities than ever for students to pave career paths," Benson wrote. "They can make a meaningful difference in changing the world for the better at the highest levels of organizations of all sizes in the private and public sectors."

## ELON EATS

ELON EATS IS A COLUMN THAT REVIEWS RESTAURANTS AND FOOD VENDORS IN THE LOCAL AREA

# Simply Thai's fried bananas are simply a staple



**Eddie Keefe**  
Freshman

## IF YOU GO

### Simply Thai and Sushi

#### Where:

2041 Timberline Station Drive  
Elon, NC 27244

#### When:

Monday - Wednesday:

4 p.m. - 9 p.m.

Thursday-Friday:

11 a.m. - 3 p.m.

5 p.m. - 9:20 p.m.

Saturday:

4 p.m. - 9:30 p.m.

Sunday:

11 a.m. - 3 p.m.

5 p.m. - 8:30 p.m.

I was excited when I learned fried bananas were on the menu at Simply Thai — a restaurant that specializes in fresh Thai cuisine — because I had never tasted them before. This is one of the most unique treats I've had since coming to Elon this fall.

Coated in powdered sugar, these fried bananas are the perfect balance of savory and sweet. I would order them over and over again. The bananas have a perfectly crunchy exterior with a smooth texture right when you bite into them.

Located down the road from Elon's campus, Simply Thai's menu boasts many dishes such as pad thai, steamed dumplings and many vegetarian options like tofu. The restaurant offers indoor and outdoor seating, along with online ordering.

Along with the fried bananas, I ordered their calamari appetizer. The calamari tasted great, however it lacked much of the crunch that I love about fresh-fried calamari.

I also ordered an asparagus sushi roll with additional avocado and brown rice.

The spicy mayo that came with the sushi was what pulled the meal together. The asparagus would've been more memorable if it was cooked longer and had seasoning. Because asparagus is already a moist

vegetable, the roll fell apart and the avocado was unnecessary. I wouldn't recommend adding it on, especially for the additional price of \$1.50. Next time, I would order a roll with meat in it to improve texture and flavor.

I would rate Simply Thai a 7.8/10 based on the items that I ordered. My friend's food looked delicious, and I would love to go back to try new sushi rolls and appetizers. The restaurant as a whole was very pretty inside and a great place for family and friends to eat, but their calamari and asparagus rolls missed the mark for me.

But if there's one thing I would order again, it's the fried bananas in a heartbeat.

If you have any questions or a review idea, please reach out to me at ekeefe5@elon.edu.

## EDDIE'S SCORE

# 7.8 of 10

Every week the restaurant reviewed is given a score out of 10.



Asparagus sushi roll, fried bananas and calamari from Simply Thai.

EDDIE KEEFE | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER



JACOB KISAMORE | SPORTS DIRECTOR

Co-owner of Ace Speedway, Robert Turner, said he faces challenges with keeping the facility alive in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic.

# LOCAL RACING COMMUNITY STILL BATTLING BACK FROM PANDEMIC

Ace Speedway owner and drivers face lingering challenges from COVID-19

**Jacob Kisamore**  
Sports Director

Robert Turner has witnessed the growth of Ace Speedway from a dirt track to a paved facility. As a driver, he won multiple track championships — most recently in 2005. Now, as the track's co-owner, he is facing a daunting challenge: keeping the facility alive in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic.

As the track concludes its 2021 season, there are still concerns about how COVID-19 continues to impact the local racing community. Turner said he is hopeful to keep Ace Speedway operational so racers can keep making memories at the facility.

"I have spent so much of my life here, my son grew up here watching me," Turner said. "If this all goes away, those memories cannot be made by other families to enjoy."

One of the main issues facing the local racing industry is a nationwide tire shortage. A scarcity of Hoosier F45 racing tires forced Ace Speedway to cancel races last season and operate with a smaller schedule in 2021.

The track also dealt with smaller entry lists in its premier divisions.

Turner said the track has seen a decline in car counts in its late model, limited late model, mini stock and modified divisions since the pandemic began. He said the declining car counts have hurt fan interest.

"Whenever you've only got 10 late models or 10 limiteds, or five or six modifieds, those are the nights when the crowd's not as big," Turner said. "And those are the nights that it's tough for the track to survive, because those numbers will not keep us alive."

While attendance at the track increased from last season, Turner said the tire shortage and declining car counts hurt the track's bottom line.

Five time Ace Speedway late model champion Dustin Rumley said tires are not the only spare resource for race teams, as there are also shortages in chassi parts. He said these shortages will continue to impact the industry until the country's supply chain returns to normal.

"The pandemic is going to continue to affect racing because of shortages," Rumley said. "It's affecting everything."

Despite being one of the most successful drivers in Ace Speedway's history, Rumley does not race to make profits. He has a full-time job at his father's trucking company and said he races on the side because he loves the sport. When Ace

Speedway was closed last summer due to COVID-19, he said it did not impact his team financially.

"You don't ever do this to make money, and when you're not racing, it's good because you're not spending money," Rumley said. "Obviously, we wanted to race, but sometimes not racing is not a bad thing."

“

FROM A FINANCIAL STANDPOINT, THIS SEASON HAS BEEN WORSE THAN LAST YEAR, EVEN THOUGH WE HAD THE WHOLE YEAR AS AN OPPORTUNITY TO BE ABLE TO OPERATE.

**ROBERT TURNER**  
CO-OWNER OF ACE SPEEDWAY

New technology is making it more expensive to build competitive race cars. Rumley said a late model car can cost up to \$100,000 to build from scratch and can require up to \$8,000 to \$10,000 to maintain throughout each offseason.

Turner said increased expenses for teams is a pivotal reason for the dip in car counts, not only at Ace Speedway, but at local tracks across the country. He said tracks cannot sustain themselves financially.

"You've seen a lot of tracks go by the wayside due to lack of car count or lack of fan attendance, and just the cost to run a facility like this," Turner said. "We schedule 15 races a year. So we have 15 days of business to be able to make enough money to pay our bills for the full year, because our bills are not just when we're open. If you can't get cars and you don't get a decent crowd, you just can't do it."

Despite the pandemic, Ace Speedway hosted two events in May 2020 with spectators in attendance. The state of North Carolina temporarily shut the speedway down in June as they deemed that it was not complying with mask mandates and social distancing protocols.

Turner said keeping the track open during the beginning of the pandemic was critical. Because hosting events was the only way to preserve the business, Turner said that hosting full capacity crowds going forward is necessary in order to keep the track afloat.

"We're a legitimate business, it takes money to run this place," Turner said. "It's very important to run all the races we can and for those events to be successful."



The Phoenix at Elon's Homecoming Weekend football against Villanova on Saturday, Nov. 6 at Rhodes Stadium.

LUCAS CASEL | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

# FROM THE FIGHTIN' CHRISTIANS TO THE PHOENIX, A MASCOT REBORN

Elon University celebrates 21 years since the unveiling of the Phoenix

**Jacqueline Vontersch**  
Elon News Network

Before the Phoenix, Elon sports were represented by the Fightin' Christians, a mascot that has evolved with the university since the 1920s. Now, the Phoenix celebrates 21 years as Elon's mascot.

In the early 1920s, the nickname "the Fightin' Christians" first attached itself to Elon College. At the time, Elon was still a Christian, mostly local institution whose student body consisted largely of North Carolina and Virginia residents.

Over the next 80 years, the school retained this identity, introducing its own formal mascot, the "Fightin' Christian," sometime in the late 1970s.

Since 1956, the Board of Trustees have not been required to be members of the United Church of Christ. Required Chapel attendance was eliminated in the 1960s, untying Elon from its status as a singularly Christian institution.

Former Elon President Leo Lambert, after officially becoming the eighth president of Elon on January 1, 1999, proposed a daunting project: replacing the Fightin' Christian.

The community felt affection for its old mascot, but Lambert decided the change was necessary after a 1999 men's basketball game.

"Not everybody understood Elon was founded by the Christian church, and we were the Fightin' Christians. It worked locally, but it did not work nationally. People laughed at it. That's not what you want to get out of your mascot — derisive laughter," Lambert said to a Medium reporter.

Selected from more than 125 names suggested by members of the Elon community, the Phoenix won because of its ties to fires, rebirth and oak trees.

The Phoenix was officially announced on May 9, 2000, through the hatching of an egg. In his article for the News and Record, Rob Daniels described the event.

"The egg cracked open, with plumes of white smoke pouring upward," Daniels wrote. "A large banner and two

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MASCOTS BRING EVERYONE TOGETHER. YOU'LL SEE THREE YEAR OLD KIDS OF ALUMS THAT ARE HAVING THEIR FIRST INTERACTION WITH ELON UNIVERSITY, AND THEY'LL GO UP TO THE PHOENIX AND GIVE THE PHOENIX A HUG, AND GET THEIR PICTURE TAKEN WITH THEM.

**DON SCOTT**  
ASSISTANT ATHLETIC DIRECTOR  
OF MARKETING AND FAN  
ENGAGEMENT

side banners unfurled, revealing Elon's new maroon, gold, white and black Phoenix logo."

It would be five months until the Phoenix mascot was fully introduced at Elon.

"It was homecoming of 2000, and our football team was playing Liberty in the last game of Burlington Memorial stadium, or the last Elon game at Burlington Memorial stadium," said Don Scott, assistant athletic director of marketing & fan engagement. "That's when the actual mascot was introduced to the crowd, so he was born on Nov. 4."

This past Thursday, Nov. 4, marked the Phoenix's 21 birthday, evoking odd feelings for some alumni.

"I was the mascot and you weren't born?" said Brad Caldwell, Elon's first Phoenix mascot, in an interview with a 20 year old student. "That's insane."

Despite its many faces, the responsibilities of Elon University's mascot still remain the same.

"You'll see 3 year old kids of alums that are having their first interaction with Elon University, and they'll go up to the Phoenix, and give the Phoenix a hug, and get their picture taken with them. We'll have 80 year old people that are celebrating their 55th reunion, and they'll be taking their picture with the mascot," Scott said. "A mascot binds us all together, to our special identity that we all have as Elon people."



The Phoenix mascot poses with two students at College Coffee on Tuesday, Nov. 2.

NYAH PHENG SITHY | MANAGING EDITOR

## James Madison University enters Sun Belt Conference

CAA | from cover

"I think the CAA has many very strong schools and teams, has some great competition, has some excellent rivalries, plays a very high level of athletics in virtually all sports," Squadron said. "I think that the CAA has been growing in stature, growing in economic strength, and will continue to do so."

The CAA announced Wednesday that James Madison will be banned from competing in any remaining postseason tournaments. Additionally, James Madison will no longer be allowed to host four tournaments scheduled to be on its campus — men's soccer, women's basketball, women's lacrosse and softball.

The ban will not impact James Madison's football team, however, which will still be allowed to play in the CAA tournament and receive the CAA's automatic bid to the FCS playoffs due to separate football bylaws.

In a press release sent to the James Madison community, the university's athletic director, Jeff Bourne, said he was "disappointed and upset for our student-athletes and regret that they have had to experience this." The bylaw cited by the CAA was written 21 years ago, but Bourne said more should've been done to prevent this outcome.

"A process existed for the league to evaluate and not enforce this bylaw," Bourne said in the release. "I don't agree with it, and I think it's harmful to the ideals of the CAA and NCAA as a whole in regard to athlete well-being."

This conference championship ban has already had an effect on the Elon men's soccer team. James Madison, the winner of the last three CAA titles, had already clinched one of the four spots in the upcoming conference tournament. However, with the Dukes no longer being able to compete, Elon replaced them as the number three seed.

"Those that make those decisions make them for the reasons they feel strongly about, and the rest of us carry out what's gonna happen," Blank said. "Our athletes are no different. Any opportunities that we get will be deserved, because while James Madison still competes in the conference, they still come in whatever place they come in, but you know now going into whatever season it is that there are nine schools vying for the opportunity to be the automatic bid into the NCAA tournament."

Even next year, when the Dukes are no longer members of the CAA, Associate Dean of Sport Management Tony Weaver said he would be surprised if the spot does not get filled. According to Weaver, there is often a ripple effect felt throughout all conferences whenever a conference realignment occurs. From an athlete perspective, he said the loss of competition might not be as enticing.

"I would probably tell you that if you asked most of our student athletes, they would just prefer to play all the teams," Weaver said. "If James Madison has a good program, and you want to show that you're just as good as they are, then of course you want to compete and beat them."

Weaver said the topic is especially interesting not just as a college athletics issue, but a higher education issue overall. Since moving to a new conference is an expensive process from a financial standpoint, Weaver said the transition shows where schools like James Madison think an investment will pay off.

"When you look at how schools spend their money, the pot of gold is not unlimited, right? So if we're going to invest in athletics, that means something. Somebody else may not get that money," Weaver said. "What they're suggesting is, in order for them to be known and prestigious, they're going to invest in something else, right? So schools make decisions on what they're going to spend their money on."

James Madison University President Jonathan Alger said in a release that the school plans to begin its transition to the Sun Belt on July 1, 2022, playing a mix of games against opponents both from the Football Championship Subdivision and Football Bowl Subdivision. It is expected that by 2024, the Dukes will be full members of the Sun Belt.

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