

THE PENDULUM

Students with autism discuss
Elon experiences during Autism
Acceptance Month
PAGE 9

Elon dance team reminisces on
year before heading to 2023
nationals competition
PAGE 12

Students, faculty disturbed over North Carolina General Assembly abolishing handgun permit

State House voted to override
governor's veto of SB41,
minimizing standards for
pistol purchasing

Alicia Clanton
Elon News Network

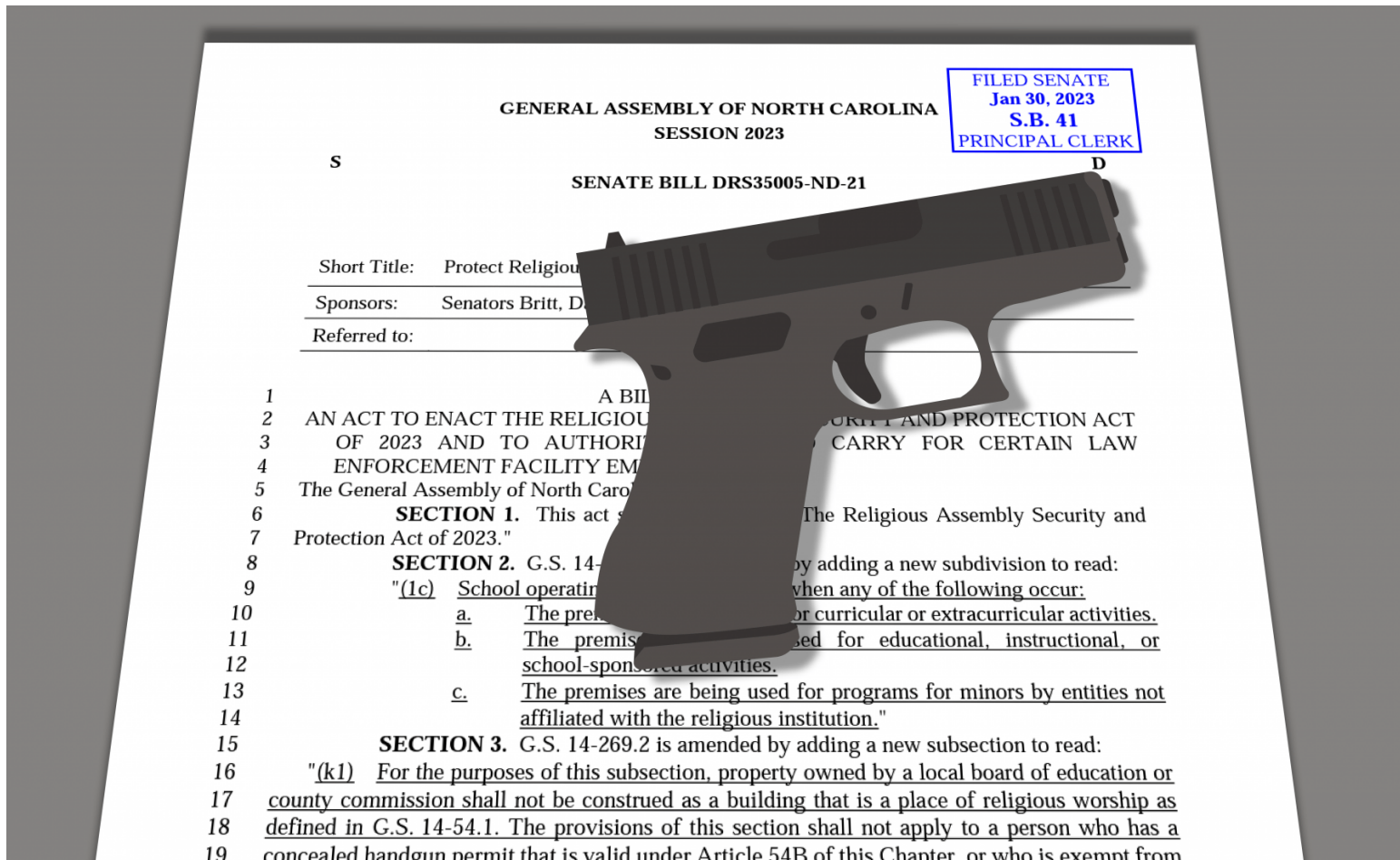
When junior Rylee McKinney meets university students during her semester abroad in New Zealand, one of the first things they ask her about is America's gun problem.

"Every single time I struggle to explain it, because I just am like, 'I'm in the same boat. I don't know why this keeps happening and they're not fixing it,'" McKinney said.

New Zealand is known for its low rates of gun violence – lawmakers swiftly banned assault rifles in 2019 after the country saw its first mass shooting in decades. McKinney is there as part of the teaching fellows program, taking education courses at the University of Otago. She was surprised to note that even the police there don't carry guns.

On March 29, North Carolina legislators repealed the state's handgun permit requirement after overriding Gov. Roy Cooper's veto of Senate Bill 41. As a result, the Alamance County Sheriff's Office will no longer issue or require handgun permits for individuals to purchase a handgun.

The new legislation also allows concealed carry of handguns at places of worship located on educational properties, as long as it is outside of operating school



The North Carolina General Assembly voted to eliminate all pistol purchasing laws in North Carolina through the passing of Senate Bill 41 on March 29. This comes two days after a deadly shooting at a private Christian school in Nashville, in which six were shot dead.

hours and related activities are not underway.

As an aspiring teacher, unrelenting stories of school shootings in America make McKinney feel especially concerned for her safety. She is pursuing a degree in English with teaching licensure, but said that as mass shootings happen one after

another — and the field becomes increasingly fraught with political debate — she feels less certain about her future plans.

"Nobody wants to pursue a four-year degree and go into a career where they feel like their life is going to be threatened," McKinney said. "I think the hardest part is just that a classroom is supposed to be

a supportive environment for not only the students, but the teachers and the larger community as well."

McKinney said she was frustrated, but not shocked, when she heard about the shooting at a Nashville elementary school that left three adults and three children dead on March 27. The shooter was identified as Audrey Hale — a

28-year-old who formerly attended the school and was being treated for an unspecified emotional disorder. Hale had legally purchased seven guns and used three of them in the shooting: two assault rifles and a handgun.

See **PERMIT** | pg. 5

Student Government Association allocates 80.15% of budget

SGA surpasses goal of
granting 75% of fund to
student organizations by end
of school year

Avery Sloan
Politics Editor | @Averysloan

Elon's Student Government Association vice president of finance is responsible for allocating SGA's \$436,000 budget to student organizations on campus — with the help of Elon's finance board. Senior Megan Curling, the vice president of finance for the 2022-23 term, said this year, SGA funded 104 organizations and 497 events.

SGA's \$436,000 budget is paid for by student activity fees. For the 2023-24 school year, all full-time students will pay \$292 for student activity fees.

SGA also has a reserve funding budget of \$436,000 as well. This budget also comes from student activity fees and is used less frequently for larger-scale projects. Curling said in order for this fund to be used,

SGA has to pass legislation — such as for the outdoor infrastructure legislation passed in 2021. This included funding for the adirondack lawn chairs on campus, the string lights outside of McEwen Dining Hall and fire pits across campus.

Curling said one of her goals was to allocate at least 75% of SGA's budget by the end of the academic year in May, as well as get more student organizations to request funding.

According to Curling, the finance board surpassed its goal and has allocated 80.15% of its budget as of April 4. Last year, SGA allocated 65.6% of its budget, while they allocated 33.9% the year before that due to the COVID-19 pandemic. In the 2019-20 school year — the first year SGA allocated money to organizations by event request model — SGA allocated 77.8% of its budget.

Prior to the event request model, SGA allocated a larger sum of money to each organization who requested funding at the beginning of the year, based on each organization's

PERCENTAGE OF SGA BUDGET ALLOCATED BY ACADEMIC YEAR

SGA is responsible for allocating the student activity fee budget to student organizations. This year the budget was \$430,000 and SGA has allocated 80.15% so far.

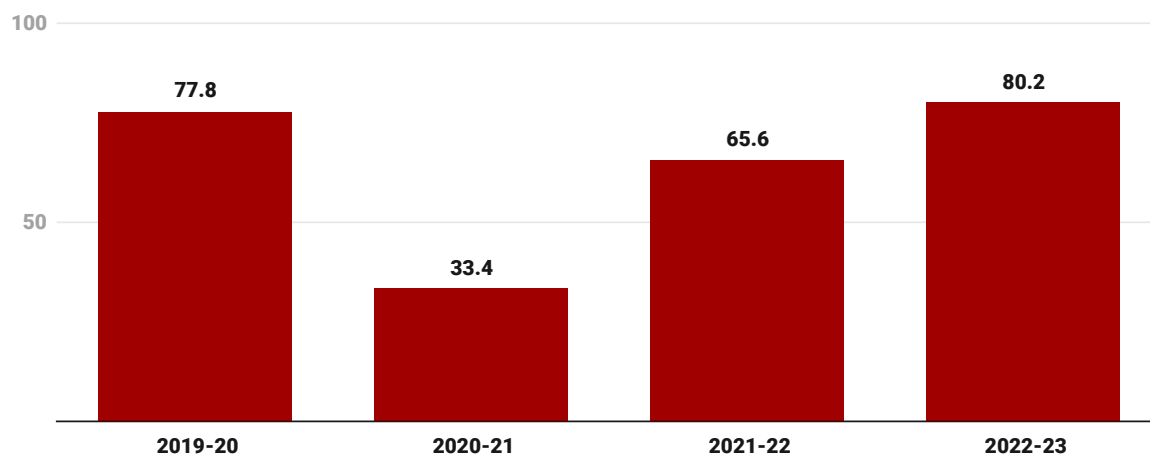


Chart: Erin Martin • Source: Elon Student Government Association • Created with Datawrapper

projected events and budget.

Curling said while SGA's budget can vary year to year, the goal of SGA and the budget is to be able to meet all of the needs of the student body. Any money that isn't used in a given school year is reallocated to Jon Dooley, vice president of student life, to use for larger projects that are more student facing.

"It's not like we're ever going to

set this ridiculous budget that it becomes this crazy competition to get it," Curling said. "A little bit of that room is purposeful, but I think as we get further out from the pandemic, we understand more about how this campus operates. Post-pandemic will get an annual allocation that has a higher percentage utilization and we'll have just a better idea of what event by event funding

looks like."

In order to increase funding, Curling made it a priority to be transparent with everything she did and stay in close communication with student organizations. This year 14 organizations requested funding from SGA for the first time.

See **BUDGET** | pg. 5

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
to report a correction or a concern.

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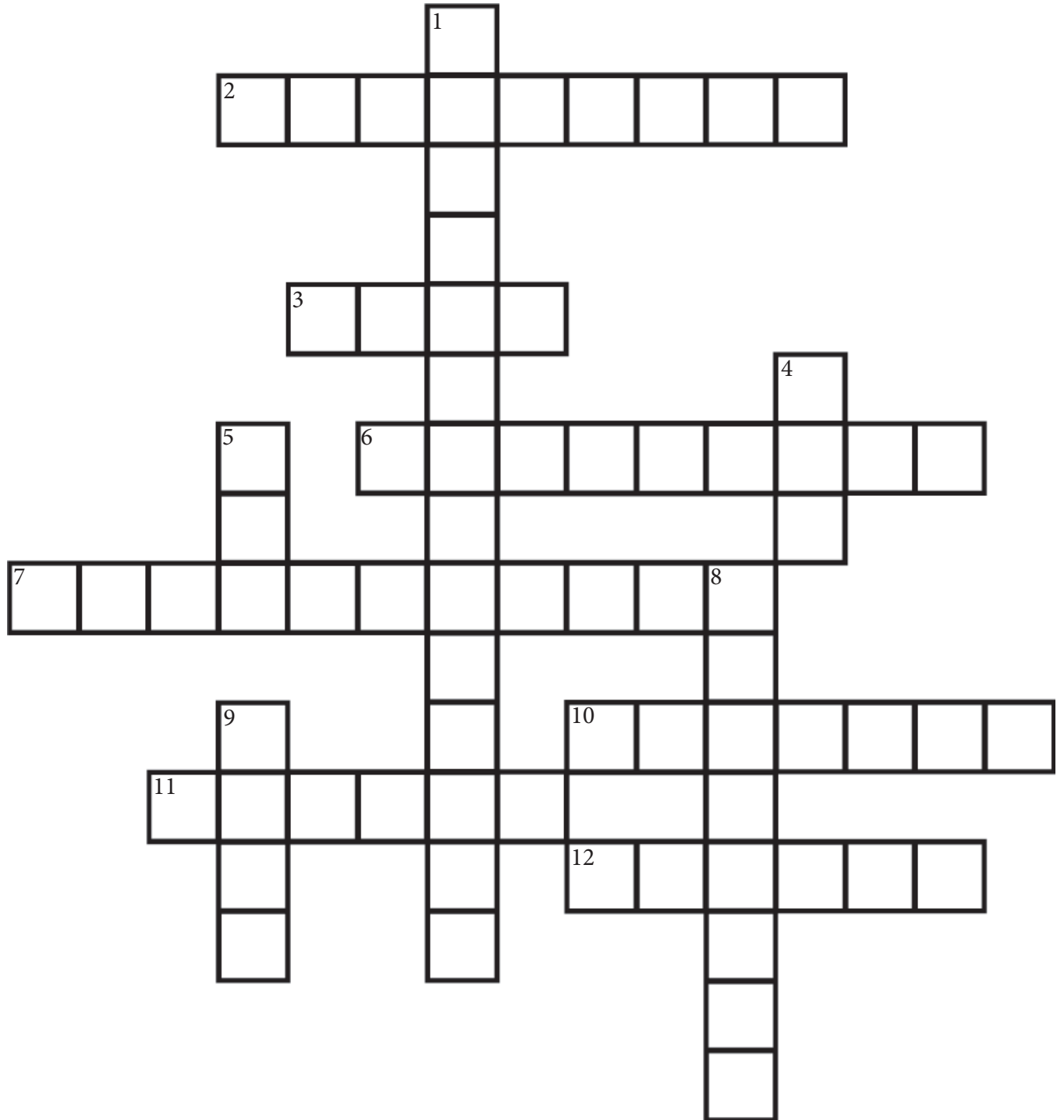
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Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month Crossword Puzzle

Although traditionally celebrated in May, Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month is celebrated at Elon University throughout the month of April.



SARAH DAWKINS | DESIGNER

Down

1. The American actress and singer of Filipino descent who starred in Disney's "High School Musical."
4. The month of Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month.
5. Joseph _____, the first Vietnamese American elected to Congress.
8. The first Chinese student to graduate from a U.S. university.
9. _____ Locke, the first Chinese American governor in the U.S.

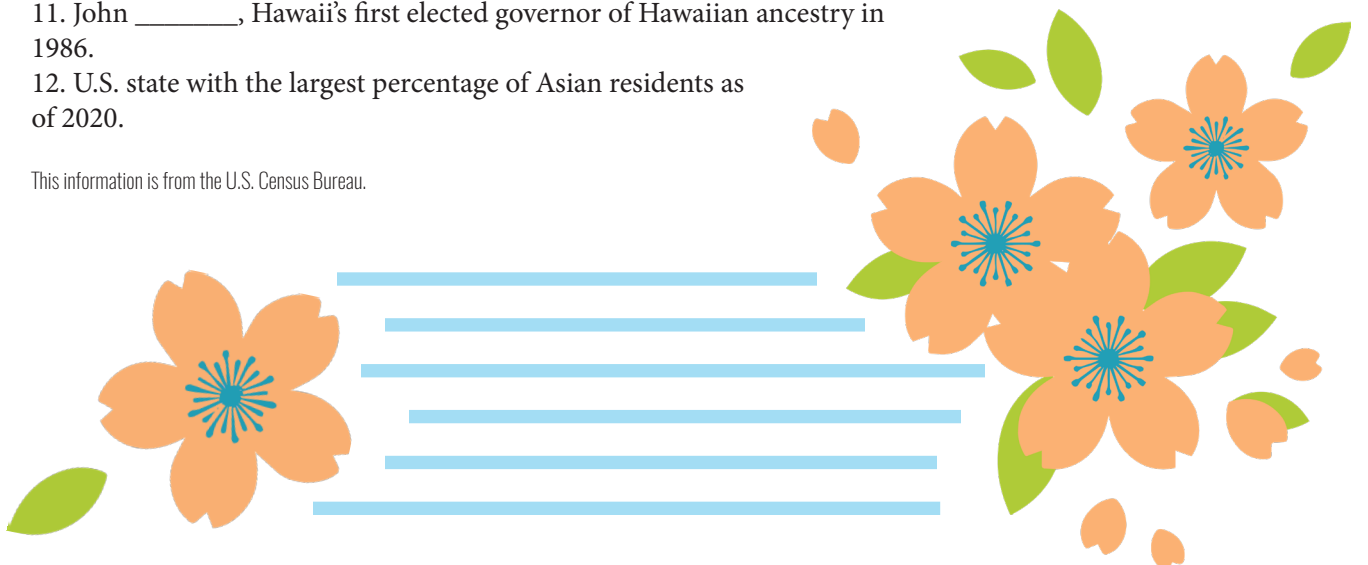
Across

2. The first Asian American elected to the U.S. Senate in 1959.
3. Issued Presidential Proclamation No. 6130 designating May 1990 as the first "Asian/Pacific American Heritage Month."
6. Asian American who became the first nonwhite player in the NBA in 1946.
7. Advancing Leaders Through _____, the 2023 AAPI Heritage Month theme selected by the FAPAC.
10. U.S. state with the smallest percentage of Asian residents as of 2020.
11. John _____, Hawaii's first elected governor of Hawaiian ancestry in 1986.
12. U.S. state with the largest percentage of Asian residents as of 2020.

This information is from the U.S. Census Bureau.

CORRECTIONS

There are no corrections from the last edition of The Pendulum.





JACOB KISAMORE | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Senior Shauna Galvin shares a hug with graduate student Olivia Archer after Archer became the Elon University women's tennis team's all-time leader in career singles victories during Elon's 6-1 win against Radford on March 31 at the Jimmy Powell Tennis Center. Archer's 6-0, 7-5 victory was the 69th of her career, surpassing the previous record of 68 held by Frida Jansaker '14. Galvin has been with Archer for four of her five years at Elon.



KATHERINE MARTIN | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Members of the MODA dance company perform "What game YOU playing?" choreographed by Elon senior Lauren Jacob, during the Game Over concert held in Scotts Studio on April. 1, 2023.



JACK SEEDS | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Elonthon participants use a photobooth costing one ticket, with props such as signs and crowns. The program raised \$114,284.23 for Duke Children's Hospital.



JOSEPH NAVIN | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Elon University senior and U.S. ROTC Cadet Arran Ponte speaks with Cadet Saums at North Carolina A&T State University during ROTC practice on March 30.



SARAH T. MOORE | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Elon students Balazs David, Connor Staub, Ross Brunschwag, Brynn Lackey, Payton Robinson and Haley Covington rehearse on March 26 for Elon's production of "Clue." The production ran March 31, April 1 and April 2.

Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month

Elon University celebrates Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month in April, though the month is traditionally celebrated in May. This year, the theme is “unity and community.”

GUEST SPEAKER: YELLOW PERIL, BLACK POWER

APRIL 6, 5:30 P.M. | MOSELEY 215

Zhihong Chen, professor in Guilford College’s history department will speak on the necessity of interracial solidarity and recognizing the nature of racism and oppression as it affects all marginalized groups.

APSA & UNITY AND COMMUNICATIONS

MINARI MOVIE SCREENING

APRIL 6, 7 TO 9 P.M. | TURNER THEATRE

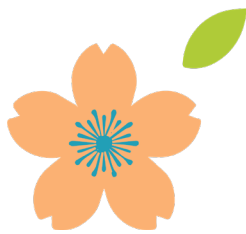
Best Picture nominee in 2021 “Minari” follows a Korean-American as he and his family start a farm in 1980s Arkansas.

ASPA

BOBA BAR

APRIL 7, 5 TO 7 P.M. | MOSELEY 215

Sample the East Asian and Asian-American staple by visiting APSA’s version of a boba bar, featuring milk tea and different toppings.



ASPA

RAMEN ACROSS ASIA

APRIL 11, 6 TO 8 P.M. | MOSELEY KITCHEN

Celebrate the cuisines within the API community by trying ramen from different countries across Asia.



ASIAN STUDIES

NIGHTINGALE MOVIE SCREENING

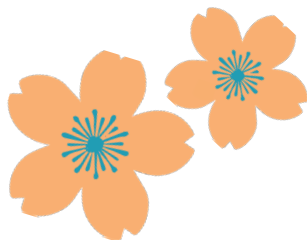
APRIL 11, 7 TO 9 P.M. | GLOBAL MEDIA ROOM

Join the Asian Studies department to watch “The Nightingale,” a Chinese film that follows a widower, joined by his granddaughter and pet bird, as he leaves Beijing to return to his native village.

API COMMUNITY LUNCH

APRIL 12, 11 A.M. TO 2 P.M. | MCEWEN DINING HALL, ROOM 125

Attend a free community lunch in McEwen, courtesy of the CREDE, to get to know faculty and staff who identify with or have an interest in API identities, cultures and experiences. Students should RSVP in advance on the CREDE’s APIHM webpage.



KAPPA PHI LAMBDA

CULTURAL FASHION SHOW

APRIL 12, 7 TO 9 P.M. | MOSELEY 128 (MCKINNON)

Students are invited to attend a fashion show featuring clothing from various different cultures. For those interested in participating in the fashion show, please scan the QR code below for more details.

CHINESE CLUB

WHITE SNAKE MOVIE SCREENING

APRIL 14, 7 TO 9 P.M. | GLOBAL COMMONS MEDIA ROOM 103

Join the Chinese Club to watch “White Snake,” a Chinese-American fantasy film telling the love story between a snake spirit and a snake hunter.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT WITH FRIENDS

“WHAT’S IN A NAME?”

APRIL 18, 5:30 P.M. | MOSELEY 221

Food For Thought is a monthly gathering to hold informal discussions on topics affecting API students. This month’s gathering will focus on the experiences of transracial adoptees — those adopted into a family of a different racial or ethnic background — and going through the name change process.

APSA

BASIL POT DECORATING

APRIL 17, 7 TO 9 P.M. | MOSELEY 215

Relax and decorate pots for a new basil plant.



ASIAN STUDIES

ASIA IN YOUR HEART, MIND, AND IMAGINATION: A COLLAGE WORKSHOP BY ALYSSA HINTON

APRIL 19, 6 TO 7:30 P.M. | CARLTON COMMONS

This workshop will explore collage and students’ own understandings of Asia with Alyssa Hinton, a Native American artist with extensive training from China. Students should bring an image they think best represents Asia, and if possible, old magazines to cut up. All are welcome and no prior art training is required.

CLOSING SPEAKER, PAVE NC

PUTTING THE “PAN” INTO “PAN-ASIAN”

APRIL 20, 5 TO 6:30 P.M. | OAKS 212 (MCCOY COMMONS)

PAVE NC is a nonpartisan, volunteer-led initiative created to educate by sharing real stories and experiences of Asian American and Pacific Islanders in NC. Co-producers of PAVE, Christie Soper ’95 and Tina Firesheets, will speak about their own stories and what it means to be Asian American.

CHINESE CLUB

FOOD WORKSHOP – SPRING ROLLS

APRIL 21, 5 TO 7 P.M. | MOSELEY KITCHEN

Join the Chinese Club for a food workshop on spring rolls, a staple of Chinese and other Southeast Asian cuisines.

THE MISSING (PIECE)

PACIFIC ISLANDERS AND THE ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE MOVEMENT

APRIL 24, 6 TO 7:15 P.M. | MOSELEY 221

Join the Office of Sustainability and the CREDE for a teach-in and panel discussion about the underrepresentation of Pacific Islanders in the climate movement, as well as how it’s being portrayed in the media. A dinner of Ni Armor’s Polynesian BBQ will be provided.

KAPPA PHI LAMBDA

HISTORY OF HENNA

APRIL 27, 6 TO 8 P.M. | SPENCE PAVILION 201

Learn about the history and cultural significance of the art of henna with Kappa Phi Lambda, the first Asian-interest sorority chartered at Elon.

SUB & APSA

WEATHERING WITH YOU MOVIE SCREENING

APRIL 28, 8 TO 10 P.M. | TURNER THEATER

“Weathering With You” follows a highschool boy who has run away to Tokyo and befriends a girl who appears to be able to manipulate the weather.

MORE ONLINE

To find a full lists of Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month Events, visit <https://www.elon.edu/u/crede/>



Gun laws deepen political divide, call for action, discussion

PERMIT | from cover

Freshman Maddie Hewgley said hearing about the Nashville school shooting and North Carolina's legislation back-to-back felt unreal.

Hewgley said the law change was eye-opening — she often hears people say, 'How many more kids, how many more people have to die for real change to occur,' but this change wasn't what she had in mind.

"It feels like I'm living in the worst timeline ever," Hewgley said. "When something like this happens it becomes apparent that for these policymakers who are trying to make it easier to possess firearms, it doesn't matter to them how many people are dying. That's not what they care about."

Hewgley said the situation made her think of the dire circumstances in her hometown of St. Louis. Missouri has some of the weakest gun laws in the country, according to Everytown for Gun Safety, with no background checks, permit requirements, age minimums or laws prohibiting domestic abusers from owning guns. The state

repealed background checks in 2007 when Hewgley was just a toddler, and since then has seen a 27% increase in firearm homicides.

"I've pretty much grown up my whole life feeling the effects of gun violence. I've lost many loved ones to gun violence, and so hearing about that happening in North Carolina really took me back because I know what it means," Hewgley said. "I know it puts all of us in North Carolina, all of our safety, in jeopardy."

In a report by Everytown for Gun Safety, states that require background checks show 10% lower rates of firearm homicides.

North Carolina voters are largely supportive of background checks. A poll conducted by a center-left think tank, in conjunction with a Republican polling firm, found that 89% of voters in the state — including more than eight in ten Republicans, conservatives and gun owners — support requiring background checks for all gun purchases as of June 2022.

Nonetheless, 71 North Carolina House Republicans voted against

46 Democrats to override Governor Roy Cooper's veto of SB41. Republican proponents say the permit requirement was racist and could be used to restrict nonwhite people from buying guns, citing its inception during the Jim Crow era as evidence. However, it is not clear whether racism or public safety was the stronger motivator, and racial justice advocates have called the association duplicitous.

"I've seen this play out depressingly a long time, and at this point, it's just frankly very frustrating," said sociology professor Tom Arcaro. "It seems as if the political right has a stranglehold on the truth. And by that, I mean the truth is that more guns mean more gun deaths."

From his years of studying social structures, Arcaro said he believes there is a connection between this country's staunch protection of guns and structures of race and power.

"The Republicans say it's all about freedom. The kind of freedom they're describing is mostly freedom for white people," Arcaro said. "This is about white fear of being now demographically put into the minority. Once that happens, there's all kinds of fear because we know how minorities get treated, because that's how we treated them for so long. There's this visceral fear of this transference, and whatever politically it takes to maintain the status quo, maintain this sadness and fear, is going to happen."

The heated politics behind the issue, in addition to its graphic nature, have largely made McKinney's professors and classmates avoid conversations

about school shootings in her classes. She hopes news of the law will finally get people talking.

"It's a really hard topic to talk about. Especially when it involves children who are obviously innocent and have no real perception of the actual division and binary happening in politics and everything about gun laws," McKinney said. "Elon's lack of conversation about it is definitely a reflection of how society is kind of scared to talk about it in a way."

Though the statistics and headlines can be overwhelming, Hewgley said her response is to take action rather than feel desensitized. She has been involved with gun violence advocacy since the age of 12, when she joined Mothers Demand Action with her mother. When she noticed there was not a version of the group for young people in her area, she started Students Demand Action in St. Louis.

"It's horrific, and it makes me really sad, and yes, I cry about it a lot," Hewgley said. "But I have learned how to channel that sadness and frustration into putting in the work. Because just letting it really get to me and make me sad doesn't help the issue at all."

Hewgley said Elon does not have a group devoted to gun violence advocacy, but she does what she can to encourage students to get involved with the issue. Hewgley suggested students and members of the Elon community do small things that can make a difference, such as calling state representatives to make their opinions heard or simply educating themselves and

others on gun safety.

Arcaro also said that despite the issue's deep roots in seemingly impenetrable political structures, he tries to remain hopeful for change.

"There's a wonderful quote, and I use it all the time from Cornel West, he said that 'I am a prisoner of hope,'" Arcaro said. "In every sense of that entire phrase, I have to remain a prisoner of hope, because believing that we can't respond in some way and make things better is, frankly, a depressing position to be in."

BY THE NUMBERS

FIREARM VIOLENCE IS THE LEADING CAUSE OF DEATH AMONG NORTH CAROLINA YOUTH AGED 1 TO 17.

1,470

People in North Carolina die of gun violence each year, on average.

3,530

People in North Carolina are wounded by guns each year, on average.

\$19.5 B

Is spent each year to gun-related deaths and injuries in North Carolina.

According to RTI International

Vice president of finance hopes to continue personal relations with student organizations

BUDGET | from cover

"I've joked that like 75% of this campus has my phone number now," Curling said. "Because that was just something that I wanted to be very clear that if anyone had questions there should be no hesitation and no barrier."

Gabby Gutierrez, vice president of finance for the 2023-24 school year, said she wants to build on the relationships Curling created with student organizations. Gutierrez has previously served on both the finance board and in the senate and has helped different student organizations she's been a part of to submit budget requests. She said through this experience, she understands both ends of allocating funds.

"One of the ideas that I had was to have different members of the finance board go to the org fare and also be almost a liaison between the finance board and the student orgs to be just someone that they could easily go to if they have any questions about funding," Gutierrez said.

Gutierrez also said to help

student organizations as early as possible — noting that if any new student organizations are created, she wants to create a meeting and explain the allocation process in person early on. This year, a more personal style of training is something Curling found to be successful.

Curling started the year the same way previous people in her role have: by presenting to treasurers of student organizations at the beginning of the fall semester on how to request SGA funds. From there, something new Curling did was hold two separate training sessions in the fall semester where she was able to answer more specific questions.

Curling said while only one organization came to each session, which she felt was initially disappointing, it allowed her to be more personal in a way that wouldn't be possible with a larger group.

"It also gave me a chance to sit one on one with someone for 25 minutes and talk to them about what they could and couldn't use our funding for, which I think was more beneficial than it would



During the final Student Government Association meeting of the 2022-23 term March 30, the finance board was awarded best committee.

have been if a lot of people would come so that was really nice," Curling said.

Curling said SGA's budget has not been a barrier to meeting student organizations' needs. According to Curling, 61 events were rejected and 55 events had the amount requested adjusted before approval. Requests were rejected or modified if they didn't meet SGA's guidelines for funding. An example of this is events not meeting SGA's spending caps. As per SGA's finance manual, the finance board isn't able to allocate more than a certain amount for specific items such as meals, flights and gas.

Another goal for funding is to make sure funds are being evenly distributed across organizations. Curling said the organizations who received the most funds in the fall were Black Student Union, Asian-Pacific Student Association, Model UN, Cinelon and Hillel.

"That was something this year that we're kind of planning ahead, knowing that as we get further out we might be getting more and more critical with budget requests, knowing that more groups are going to be asking for more money," Curling said. "We've been trying to work with the groups that are requesting

more to have really open lines of communication and prep them."

Curling said with these five organizations receiving the highest amount of funding, it is important to look critically at why this is the case. She said both Model UN and Cinelon tend to have larger conferences or projects to fund, which cost more, and the other three organizations all serve minority communities across Elon whose needs might otherwise not be met.

"You're creating a community that appeals to students who don't have as many organizations and so they tend to be concentrated," Curling said.

“

WHEN SOMETHING LIKE THIS HAPPENS IT BECOMES APPARENT THAT FOR THESE POLICYMAKERS WHO ARE TRYING TO MAKE IT EASIER TO POSSESS FIREARMS, IT DOESN'T MATTER TO THEM HOW MANY PEOPLE ARE DYING.

MADDIE HEWGLEY
FRESHMAN

“

I'VE JOKED THAT LIKE 75% OF THIS CAMPUS HAS MY PHONE NUMBER NOW. BECAUSE THAT WAS JUST SOMETHING THAT I WANTED TO BE VERY CLEAR THAT IF ANYONE HAD QUESTIONS THERE SHOULD BE NO HESITATION AND NO BARRIER.

MEGAN CURLING
VICE PRESIDENT OF FINANCE
2022-23 TERM

PHOTO COURTESY OF ELON SGA

EXTRA ENFORCEMENT: ELON UNIVERSITY SEES MORE PARKING REGULATION



NYAH PHENGSIITHY | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

A parking ticket sits on a car after violating one of Elon University's parking rules. Parking enforcement has increased this year, and many drivers are feeling the effects of it when they walk out to a ticket on their windshield.

Drivers on campus see an increase in parking tickets with parking enforcement on the rise

Nyah Phengsiithy

Elon News Network | @nyahphengsiithy

The sun is still rising as Kim Farmer begins roaming the streets of Elon University in his security car. As students, faculty and staff roll into their parking spots around campus for the day, Farmer makes sure that everyone is following campus parking rules.

As a university traffic officer, Farmer mainly drives around the south side of campus, checking faculty parking along East Lebanon Avenue, Historic Neighborhood lots and other areas when needed. Beginning around 8 a.m., Monday through Friday, he issues tickets to drivers violating campus parking rules, which often results in 20 to 30 tickets per day, and more than 100 tickets per week. After being in this role for 10 years now, he said he's familiar with many of Elon's parking habits.

"I recognize the cars because everybody's pretty predictable. They park in the same place," Farmer said. "I can't tell you every car that parks along this railroad, but I can tell you when something doesn't look right."

This school year though, Farmer has become more familiar with parking habits across campus as he's finding more drivers violate Elon's parking rules. Parking enforcement has increased this year, and many drivers are feeling the effects of it when they walk out to a ticket on their windshield, or sometimes, their cars towed

away. According to Chief of Campus Safety and Police Joe LeMire, more than 4,600 parking tickets have been issued in the 2022-23 school year so far, which is on pace to beat last year's 4,700 tickets issued.

One of the main factors behind additional parking enforcement is due to the university's growth, LeMire said. Aside from the rising student population, the university's additional infrastructure affects where drivers can park. The new walking path built in 2022 between Danieley Neighborhood and Colonnades Neighborhood removed approximately 95 parking spots, pushing students to find parking in other areas outside of their permit's designated area. The upcoming expansion of the East Neighborhood will also remove 50 parking spots.

"As you build more buildings, as you take away more parking, people start taking more opportunities to use spaces they shouldn't use, so the enforcement went up," LeMire said.

This year specifically, parking enforcement has increased in the Innovation Quad lot and Danieley Center Neighborhood. Parking officers are finding that many students in these lots do not have Elon parking permits, or drivers with registered vehicles are parking outside of their permit's restrictions. Parking permits from the university LeMire said that the other top areas parking tickets are written the most are in the Global Neighborhood and Inman Admissions lots.

Where does the money go?

The majority of university parking fines begin at \$50, which includes ticketing for

BY THE NUMBERS

\$375,000

is the total revenue Elon University's Police Department made from parking permits and fines in the 2021-22 school year. According to Chief of Campus Safety and Police Joe LeMire, the money collected goes to the central university fund.

unregistered vehicles, cars parked in a restricted or reserved area, or parking on the grass or sidewalk. More severe fines, beginning at \$100, are issued to drivers who park on tram paths, handicap spaces and fire lanes.

In the 2021-22 academic year, the total revenue parking enforcement made from permits and parking tickets combined was \$375,000. With the university on pace to issue more tickets this year, the total revenue is set to be even higher for 2022-23.

The money collected from fines and permits goes to a central university fund. The fund can sometimes be used for parking lot maintenance, such as striping parking spots, implementing and maintaining parking signs, and even salting the lots in the winter.

Drivers utilizing Elon University parking may feel the repercussions with parking enforcement this year, but it all goes back to following the rules, LeMire said. He reminds the community often that the Elon University Police Department's goal isn't going out and ticketing drivers, but rather reminding everyone that there are rules and regulations that come with parking.

"People get really upset about parking, but we want them to understand that the parking enforcement is to have people follow the rules," LeMire said. "I'd be happy to make no money. I'd be happy to find no parking violations whatsoever."

Enough parking or enough convenience?

According to the Parking Rules and Regulations handbook, there are enough parking spaces on campus to accommodate all registered vehicles, but that does not guarantee that a parking space will be available at a designated location at any time. Campus maps show approximately 6,000 parking spots available for Elon students, faculty and staff, with 300 of those spots reserved for disability parking, low emission vehicles, faculty living in residence halls, and reserved spots for maintenance workers and police.

But while the university technically has enough parking spots, some people may



not find them to be convenient. For sophomore Chandler Franko, driving is more convenient for getting around campus, but that sometimes comes with consequences in order to get to a destination on time.

"It's a walkable campus, but sometimes people just don't have enough time or don't have the physical ability to walk," Franko said. "There's also not really ample parking close to most of the buildings."

Franko said she's received multiple parking tickets from the university this year. Feeling the effects from parking

“

I CAN'T TELL YOU EVERY CAR THAT PARKS ALONG THIS RAILROAD, BUT I CAN TELL YOU WHEN SOMETHING DOESN'T LOOK RIGHT.

KIM FARMER
UNIVERSITY TRAFFIC OFFICER



NYAH PHENGSIITHY | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Elon University's Traffic Officer Kim Farmer drives around South Campus during one of his parking enforcement route. Beginning around 8 a.m., Monday through Friday, he issues tickets to drivers violating campus parking rules, which often results in 20 to 30 tickets per day, and more than 100 tickets per week.

enforcement more than once, she said the university should reevaluate their rules and regulations for drivers.

“They need to acknowledge that there are quite a lot of students who have cars given that they allow anyone from any grade to have a car,” Franko said.

Senior Gavin Beall has also received a number of parking tickets from the university as a commuter student. Beall said the university should consider more lenient parking rules for commuters.

“Every time I get a ticket I just crumble it up and throw it away. I don’t know how they charge you for it, but I just don’t pay attention to it,” Beall said. “They should definitely expand parking, and I think that they need to just be more lenient.”

Students that violate parking rules multiple times can have their parking privileges revoked by the university, and avoiding fines can also prevent students from participating in graduation exercises or obtaining transcripts. LeMire said that the university police department sends unpaid tickets from the previous month to the Bursar’s office on the 10th day of each month, which is then communicated to the students with unpaid dues.

Farmer said he often deals with students directly in parking lots concerned about receiving a ticket, but it all goes back to if the driver obeyed the rules. There are times, though, when he can be forgiving.

“If they come out, and they’re nice about it, I’ll let them go,” Farmer said. “I just say, ‘Here’s a verbal warning. Don’t do this anymore.’”

More rules and regulations

Drivers must also follow another set of rules and regulations if they utilize parking in downtown Elon. These additional parking rules belong to the town of Elon, with their main parking spaces located along North Williamson Avenue and one or two hour parking along West Lebanon Avenue.

All of the tickets from the town of Elon begin at \$25 — half of what the university mainly charges. The money collected from fines goes to a general town fund.

Town of Elon’s Sgt. Robert Lovett said the main issue the town sees with parking is when students confuse the difference between university and town parking. Lovett said that parking officers frequently find that students fill up downtown Elon’s parking during the school day and park over the designated time limit.

“Our parking is designed for downtown businesses. There is no student parking provided by the town of Elon,” Lovett said. “That being said, doesn’t mean the student can’t park there — we don’t care. It’s just meant for parking downtown.”

Town of Elon’s Civilian Parking Enforcement Officer Sammy Boggs said he writes between three to 10 tickets a day. Beginning at 8 a.m. weekdays, Boggs has a schedule where he “walks and marks” during specific hours of the day. His process starts with first writing down the license plate number of the vehicle and then chalking the back tire with a specific symbol. He then returns at a later time to make sure drivers don’t park beyond the time limit.

“I might do a horizontal line. I might do an X,” Boggs said. “It just depends on what I choose to put. At any given time, it’ll always be something different.”

Boggs said the town is more flexible when it comes to towing and ticketing compared to the university, but they aren’t as lenient to drivers who take advantage of the downtown parking. He often finds student drivers moving their cars along the one and two hour parking slots all day.

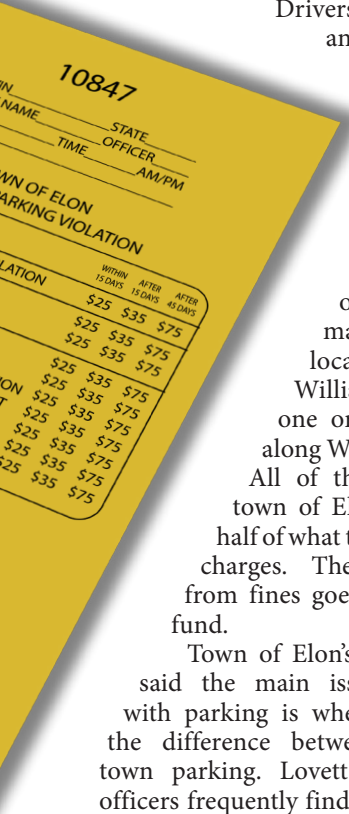
“You do have businesses there again, that people want to come and go get coffee or go to the bookstore or eat pizza,” Boggs said. “If you got cars just constantly jumping around, nobody new is downtown.”

Another parking issue the town sees is when students utilize the handicap parking



CLARE GRANT | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

This school year, parking officers are finding more students violate parking rules in the Innovation Quad and Danieley Neighborhood lots. One of the main factors behind additional parking enforcement is due to the university’s growth. The new walking path built in 2022 between Danieley Neighborhood and Colonnades Neighborhood removed approximately 95 parking spots, pushing students to find parking in other areas outside of their permit’s designated area.



“OUR PARKING IS DESIGNED FOR DOWNTOWN BUSINESSES. THERE IS NO STUDENT PARKING PROVIDED BY THE TOWN OF ELON. THAT BEING SAID, DOESN’T MEAN THE STUDENT CAN’T PARK THERE — WE DON’T CARE. IT’S JUST MEANT FOR PARKING DOWNTOWN.”

ROBERT LOVETT
TOWN OF ELON’S SERGEANT

spots — for the wrong and right reasons. Boggs said that he sees students use handicap spots without a pass more than often, which result in a \$100 parking violation fine, but there are also students who park in the spots with a pass, but their handicap permit is only valid for on-campus parking only. Those students are still fined \$100.

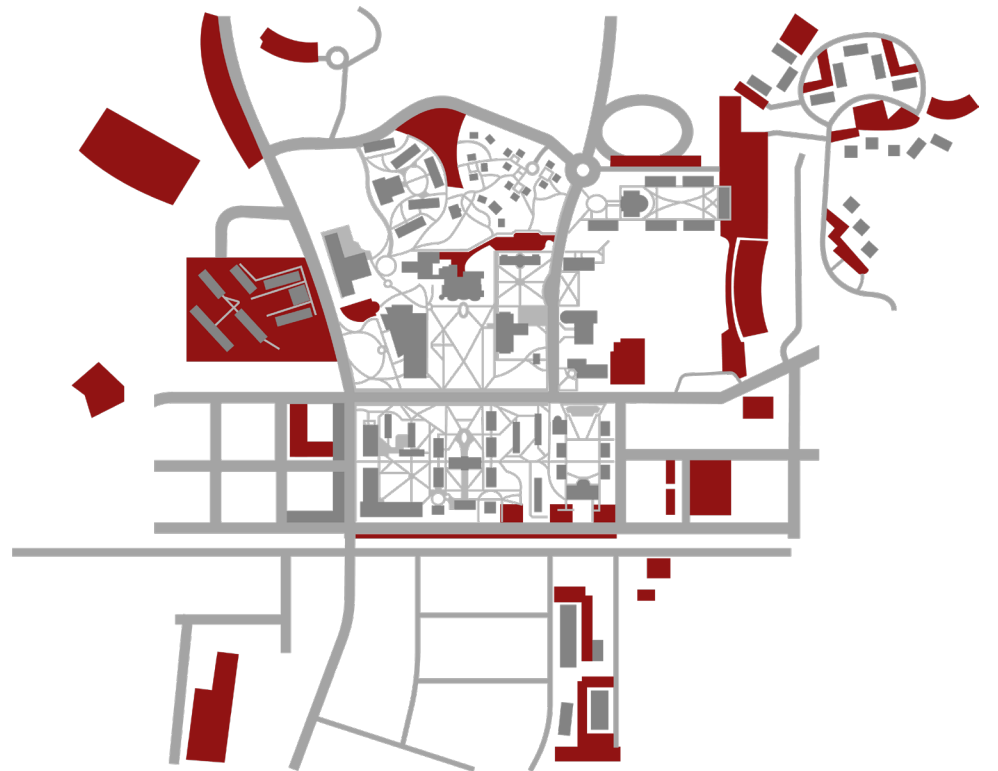
Lovett said the town is currently in the process of rewriting their parking ordinances to be more clear about parking rules.

Does the university need more parking?

According to LeMire, there are no current set plans for additional parking to be added to the university, but implementing another lot takes more than just pouring cement onto a designated area.

If the university were to build another parking lot, LeMire said the estimated cost would be between \$2,000 to \$3,000 per slot. The estimated cost to build a parking structure, such as a garage, would be \$30,000 or more. This cost factors in ground drainage work, cementing, striping parking spots and other building and maintenance.

LeMire is currently part of a university parking committee that discusses the future of what parking will look like on campus. The committee has been analyzing if the



CAROLINE MITCHELL | DESIGN CHIEF

The highlighted areas are where students, faculty and staff can park. According to the Parking Rules and Regulations handbook, there are enough parking spaces on campus to accommodate all registered vehicles, but that does not guarantee that a parking space will be available at a designated location at any time. Campus maps show approximately 6,000 parking spots available for Elon students, faculty and staff.

campus needs additional parking, who should be able to bring a car on campus and if there needs to be more flexibility with parking permit limitations.

The committee found that many other universities across the country don’t allow freshmen, and sometimes sophomores, to bring cars to campus. Parking permits are also higher at other universities, including at some of Elon’s peer institutions such as James Madison University, Fordham University and American University. Some of those universities charge more than \$400 for a full-year parking permit, which is much higher than Elon’s \$160 permit charge.

As the parking committee continues to discuss the next steps for Elon’s parking system, LeMire encourages drivers who utilize Elon’s parking to relay any comments or concerns to the Elon University Police Department.

Parking officers also encourage drivers to continue to follow parking rules and regulations — even if it means just taking the time to read the parking lot signs.

“Everybody needs to be respectful of the rules, and it would make my job much easier,” Farmer said. “It’s easy to complain, but do what’s right. If you’re having a real issue, call our office before you park somewhere.”

BY THE NUMBERS

4,600+

parking tickets have been issued in the 2022-23 school year. LeMire said this number is on pace to beat last year’s 4,700 tickets issued.

95

parking spots were removed when the walking path between Danieley Neighborhood and Colonnades Neighborhood was built in 2022.

50

parking spots will be removed in the Historic parking lots due to the upcoming East Neighborhood expansion.

Split identity: U.S. journalist and Iraqi native

Ahmed Fadaam immigrated to the U.S. after receiving death threats for his reporting during the Iraq War

Margaret Faust

Elon News Network | @MargaretFaust5

A car bomb exploded in Baghdad, Iraq — targeting a government official. Elon professor of communication design Ahmed Fadaam could see the smoke from his front door. He grabbed his camera and drove through his neighborhood, following the smoke. When he arrived at the scene of the explosion, he remembered seeing dead bodies everywhere. This was 20 years ago, but Fadaam remembers the details clearly.

Fadaam was a photojournalist for the news organization Agence France-Presse and went to work, taking photos of the explosion. Seeing him with a camera, the Iraqi soldiers grew skeptical of Fadaam. They beat him up while another soldier held an AK-47 to his head.

“I didn’t care about the guy punching me. I didn’t care about the camera. I was just worried about the guy with the AK-47, because he may squeeze the trigger by mistake at any moment and kill me,” Fadaam said.

American forces arrived at the scene and saved him. He said the attack was worth it journalistically.

“I went back to my office with two brown eyes and with a bunch of pictures that were on the front page the next day,” Fadaam said.

This year marks 20 years since the U.S. invaded Iraq. Fadaam is an Iraqi citizen and lived in Baghdad as an art professor. When his university shut down, his career pivoted. Translating conversations, taking photographs and reporting on the war kept him busy until he immigrated to the U.S. in 2012. Eleven years later, Fadaam said he wants to return home.

“I spent all of my life living there, and I’m still attached to these roots,” Fadaam said. “I can’t just cut them.”

Fadaam said he thinks about his life back home every day and remembers teaching sculpture at the University of Baghdad when he lived with two of his brothers and their families.

But, he said not all the memories were bright. Fadaam was making \$1 per month as an art professor and he said electricity, food and medicine were hard to come by — even before the war started. He worked extra jobs to support his wife and two young children.

“Life was rough in Iraq. We were locked inside a big prison,” Fadaam said.

If Iraq were a prison, Fadaam saw President of Iraq, Saddam Hussein, as the warden. Fadaam did not support the U.S. invading Iraq, but he was not against it either. Fadaam thought the U.S. invasion would take Hussein out of power. That, to him, was worth the invasion.

“The thing that I’m dreaming of is to see Saddam Hussein in a cage, answering for his crimes, and to think about a better, healthy future for my kids,” Fadaam said.

Becoming a journalist

But that is not what the immediate future looked like. Airstrikes, car bombs, fires and soldiers fighting in his neighborhood became his daily life. He was frustrated and scared, but Fadaam said he wanted to funnel that energy into something he thought would be productive. That is why he became a journalist.

“I thought that I was doing my job, trying to help my people to bring the truth out to inform the rest of the world and hopefully help ending this violence and this craziness happening to my country,” Fadaam said. “But I had to pay a heavy price for this.”

One price was his reputation, as many Iraqi people didn’t like that he worked for international media.

“We were all looked at as traitors, as blood merchants,” Fadaam said.

The other price was a physical one. According to Fadaam, he lost count of how many times he was shot at by both Iraqi and American soldiers.

Fadaam’s contributions to international news coverage did not go unrecognized, especially by WBUR radio foreign correspondent Dick Gordon. Gordon connected with Fadaam in April 2003 when he needed someone to help him understand the conflict and translate interviews. When they first met each other,



MARGARET FAUST | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Elon professor of communication design Ahmed Fadaam teaches COR 3630: History, Culture and Art of Iraq. Fadaam’s lectures include stories from his own life as an Iraqi.

Gordon was immediately impressed.

“His English was wonderful. His sense of Baghdad and the conflict was all encompassing. He was happy to help,” Gordon said. “I had no idea at that moment that I would end up forming a friendship with Ahmed that would last for the next 20 years.”

The men relied on each other. Gordon for information and Fadaam for a job. Gordon left Iraq two weeks later, but he stayed in touch with Fadaam by exchanging messages online. When Gordon moved to WUNC, he saw an opportunity for Fadaam to tell a story like no other foreign correspondent could.

Gordon asked Fadaam if he would write stories about his daily life for his new show. Fadaam said he was bewildered by this request.

“Dick, I have never written anything in Arabic, so how do you expect me to write something in English?” Fadaam said.

But Fadaam gave it a try, and it was a big success. Gordon said the show’s listeners were always asking to hear more. That is how “Ahmed’s Diaries” started — a series of broadcast episodes that Fadaam wrote and read aloud himself, detailing what it was like to live in a war zone.

Episodes of “Ahmed’s Diaries” are no longer available online due to technical difficulties. WUNC told Elon News Network that it is working on putting the episodes into the National Archive of Broadcasting, which could take months.

DC Comics also followed along with his series and asked him to turn his stories into a graphic novel and use his artistic skills to draw the pictures himself. Fadaam agreed and began his work, but when the Great Recession hit in 2008, DC Comics canceled the project.

“The cancellation of the project was a big blow. So I put it on hold, just threw it on the shelf somewhere,” Fadaam said. “Hoping that I would finish it one day.”

All the while Fadaam kept up with his journalism duties, running the video desk for Agence France-Presse. The bigger the responsibilities, the bigger the danger. He received two separate death threats: One was an email and the second was a phone call that rattled him.

“They gave me my children’s names, even the license plates of my cars, what schools my kids go to, what’s the name of my wife, what’s my house address. Everything,” Fadaam said.

Fadaam said he wasn’t afraid for his life, but he was afraid for his family. In 2006, he sent his

wife and children to live in Syria for two years.

Moving to America

The death threats worried Gordon too, who was still in regular communication with Fadaam. Gordon worked with the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill to get Fadaam to work at the university as a visiting scholar for one year.

“Ahmed had risked his life for me as a fixer in Baghdad. He had become a close friend and he was in trouble. And it was the only decent thing to do to see what we could do to help,” Gordon said.

Fadaam left his family in Syria and came to the U.S. for one year in August of 2008. Gordon hosted a welcome dinner for Fadaam. The

guests included people who helped fund Fadaam’s year-long stay and other people Gordon thought Fadaam would enjoy meeting. Among the crowd was Elon sociology professor Thomas Arcaro.

“I remember one of the first things I said to him was, ‘I apologize on behalf of the United States for invading your country,’” Arcaro said.

Arcaro thought Fadaam’s story was worth spreading and brought him to Elon in 2009 to teach a Winter Term course about Iraq in between his two semesters at UNC.

In 2009, when his time was up at UNC, Fadaam moved back to Iraq. He said he was following the news and concluded that the war was winding down.

“I don’t hear much about daily explosions and everything. And probably things got better. I’m away from my family so I need to get back to them,” Fadaam said.

He was misled. Fadaam noticed more militias, lots of corruption and no electricity or running water.

“I decided that it’s not a healthy environment for my children to grow in and maybe it’s time that I should apply for asylum,” Fadaam said.

Fadaam told Arcaro about his plan. At the time Elon was looking to hire more international professors and Arcaro threw Fadaam’s name in the hat.

“Life is such that there’s not a lot of people you feel totally comfortable with. And I felt able to be vulnerable with him and vice versa. And that’s the hallmark of any good friendship,” Arcaro said.

In the meantime, Fadaam worked for Al Jazeera English, who offered him a job in Qatar. As he was discussing this offer on the phone with his bureau chief, he got an email from

Elon University offering him a full-time job.

His boss at Al Jazeera told Fadaam to ignore her offer and encouraged him to go to the U.S. instead. He listened to her advice.

“I couldn’t believe how lucky I was back then that we are gonna be granted asylum in the United States, and I’m gonna have my job waiting for me,” Fadaam said.

After three and a half years living surrounded by war, Fadaam arrived in the U.S. with his family on Aug. 17, 2012. He landed at the Raleigh-Durham International Airport where Gordon and a World Relief resettlement organization employee were waiting to drive him to Burlington. Arcaro was waiting at Fadaam’s new house which he had stalked with pantry and refrigerator essentials before Fadaam arrived. Three days later, Fadaam started his job at Elon University.

“It was like a dream that took me a while to understand,” Fadaam said.

Fadaam said it was a whirlwind at first. He got electricity and water in his house, renewed his driver’s license and got a social security card. He also set up a bank account and bought a cell phone. Then he had to get used to Elon and teaching courses completely in English, his second language, on a regular basis.

“I don’t even know where I am on campus. And I had to ask around and even to find where my classroom is gonna be and how to reach it,” Fadaam said.

Arcaro mentored Fadaam about acclimating to the U.S. and Elon.

“I knew he would have all those questions. So I was always over his house and, and talking to him about stuff, how to do this and how to do that, and getting to know his family a little bit,” Arcaro said.

Fadaam and his family have been in the U.S. for 11 years now. Although he has lost touch with Gordon, Arcaro and him are still close friends and talk almost everyday. When a friendship is older than a decade, the friends come to know each other well and reamance about who they once were.

“I’ve seen over the years how frustrating it is for him to have his artistic vision and his skills kind of waning from disuse,” Arcaro said. “I know that that has hurt him. I think he’s at heart an artist, and at heart is somebody that likes to create.”

While he is no longer an art teacher like he was in Baghdad, his artistic skills are not totally lost. Fadaam’s graphic novel, titled “Art on Fire,” that he has been working on since 2008 is being published in a few months. The novel tells a graphic story — one of loss, love and legacy during the Iraq war 20 years ago. Fadaam never wants people to forget about the war and its victims: his people.

“This is not only a reminder for me, but it’s also my way of educating others about what really happened to my country,” Fadaam said.

Day in life of student with autism at Elon University

Junior Ryan Campbell uplifts existence, support of autistic people during Autism Acceptance Month

Betsy Schlehuber

Lifestyle Editor | @betsyschlehuber

Elon University junior Ryan Campbell wakes up at 7 a.m. each day and eats breakfast at 7:30 a.m. On March 28, he ate eggs and sausage at McEwen Dining Hall, but some mornings, he just eats in his apartment in Oaks.

Campbell always has a banana with breakfast.

Campbell was diagnosed with autism when he was 2 years old. He's never thought to ask his parents as to why he was diagnosed in the first place.

After eating his breakfast, he logs what he ate into MyFitnessPal. He said he started doing this when he arrived at Elon because he was worried he was eating too much. Campbell transferred from Wake Technical Community College in fall 2022 and is a Cinema and Television Arts major.

Campbell then moves to the darkened second floor of the McEwen Building in the School of Communications. With the lull 8 a.m. classes in the background, Campbell clicks away at the keyboard of a public iMac, catching up on homework. A timer beeps on his watch after 20 minutes and he pulls out his phone to play the daily quest on Genshin Impact.

April marks Autism Acceptance Month, previously Autism Awareness Month, a month dedicated to educating about and raising awareness for the disability. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, an estimated 2.21% of adults — about 3.62% of men and 0.86% of women — in the U.S. have autism.

The Autism Society of America suggested the shift from the word "awareness" to "acceptance" for the month of April in 2021 because it wanted a focus on inclusion of autistic people rather than education on autism alone.

WORKFORCE REPRESENTATION

According to Harvard Business Review, even though autistic people can be 140% more productive than typical employees in the right workplace, the unemployment rate in the U.S. for autistic people is 85%.

Campbell said while he doesn't really celebrate the month, he sees why other autistic people would.

"They probably don't get the same accommodations or the same support as others," Campbell said. "So ensuring that a lot more people can get that and just being aware, like 'Hey, we have these sorts of things that we could use help with,' definitely has value."

In regards to acceptance versus awareness, Campbell said determining those words is difficult because everyone could



BETSY SCHLEHUBER | LIFESTYLE EDITOR

Junior Ryan Campbell plays a round of the mobile game, Genshin Impact, on his phone. Campbell is autistic and plays the game during breaks from homework.

interpret them in their own way — so there's not one answer.

"For one person, awareness could be similar to acceptance," Campbell said. "But for some people, they also may see them as two separate things."

Another timer beeps after five minutes and he is back to work. This cycle repeats until he has to go to class down the hallway.

Campbell's first class of the day is CTA 3160: Writing for Cinema and TV with professor Brandon Booker at 10:30 a.m. He said he enjoys the class because it gives him practice with something he's interested in and he likes how it's different from writing for prose.

Fittingly, Campbell said one of his special interests is storytelling, as it is present in many of his enjoyments like books, anime and movies. A special interest is "a highly focused level of interest in particular topics," according to Ambitious about Autism, and people with autism commonly have at least one.

Ambitious about Autism also said special interests have positive effects, such as helping them develop friendships with people with similar interests. They can also guide an autistic person's study or career path. In Campbell's case, his major in film correlates with his love for storytelling.

Campbell uses academic accommodations, such as extended time on tests. He is also allowed to go to a separate room to take tests, but he said he sometimes forgets to ask for it. On top of autism, Campbell has auditory processing disorder, so he usually tries to sit near the front of the classroom.

APD means that even though Campbell can hear, he sometimes has difficulty understanding what has been said — whether that's not distinguishing between sounds or struggling to tune out background noise. According to

the National Institute of Health, most people with autism have some sensory issues relating to auditory processing.

Campbell is also sensitive to high pitched sounds, though as a child, he was sensitive to most loud sounds. He said he used to plug his ears at high school pep rallies because the sounds were too much for him.

Occasionally, Campbell talks to himself in a tiny whisper. He wears the same earbuds every day draped around his shoulders. He usually wears some sort of a polo shirt, and a pair of black Vans he had to buy for a past job at a movie theater.

After class, Campbell grabs a quick lunch of spaghetti and meatballs and then heads to his next class, ENG 3150: Intermediate Creative Writing: Creative Nonfiction with professor Cassie Kircher, which he needs for his minor in creative writing.

Though he doesn't know why he was diagnosed with autism, Campbell recalled that he had difficulty with socializing and often kept to himself as a child.

"I would sometimes play with my friends," Campbell said. "But then there would also be times I would just bring out a book and read."

One of his difficulties with socializing is struggling to look people in the eye. According to the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, one of the required criteria for diagnosis is

struggling with socialization and reading social cues.

Another required criteria for diagnosis is repetitive behaviors, such as rocking back and forth,



FOR ONE PERSON, AWARENESS COULD BE SIMILAR TO ACCEPTANCE, BUT FOR SOME PEOPLE, THEY ALSO MAY SEE THEM AS TWO SEPARATE THINGS.

RYAN CAMPBELL
JUNIOR STUDENT

twitching hands and echolalia, the action of repeating words and phrases heard. This manifests in Campbell through the bouncing of his legs.

When his creative nonfiction class ends, Campbell usually goes back to his apartment to unwind from the day. But before he can go home Tuesday, he meets with a student from

Cinelon, Elon's student-run film production company, where Campbell is a film editor. In the meeting, Campbell gives an update on a short film he is editing.

Once the meeting ends, he says goodbye and goes home to relax and play video games until it's time to sleep.

Campbell is proud of his autism and said it makes him unique.

"I personally highly value my individuality in some way," Campbell said. "So learning I have something that other people don't have, I was actually kind of happy to hear about that."

Yet at the same time, Campbell said he doesn't feel that different from other people, and didn't realize he was autistic until later in his adolescence. This is combined with the fact that his brothers also have their own diagnoses of color blindness and dyslexia, a disability that makes it

difficult for somebody to read.

"I guess it would be a bit more apparent if I knew from the perspective of someone who isn't autistic," Campbell said.

Campbell said he had a good support system growing up, whether it was from his schools, family or peers. But many autistic people aren't so lucky. According to a Sage Journals study from 2017, students with learning disabilities such as autism report greater rates of bullying than their peers without disabilities.

And even after an autistic student graduates, their time in the workplace can be difficult or nonexistent. A Harvard Business Review article said that even though autistic people can be 140% more productive than the typical employee in the right workplace, the unemployment rate in the U.S. for autistic people is 85%. Across the ocean in the U.K., 50% of managers admitted to choosing not to hire neurodivergent candidates.

Campbell said he hopes Autism Awareness Month can educate others on the fact that autistic people are like everyone else — just with some quirks that may require support.

"Some things are probably going to be different for us, we may interpret things differently, or we may look at things differently," Campbell said. "We may need something to help us out in ways that non-autistic people may not need."

On par with the month's title, Campbell said one thing is very clear.

"We exist and we are out there," Campbell said.

RESOURCES FOR ADVOCACY AND SUPPORT

1. Ambitious about Autism
2. Autism Society of America
3. Autistic Self Advocacy Network
4. Autism Society of North Carolina

LIFESTYLE

Spotify AI DJ: What's behind the music

Music professor, students say the feature lacks depth, sounds weird

Betsy Schlehuber

Lifestyle Editor | @betsyschlehuber

In the wake of artificial intelligence developments such as ChatGPT, Spotify announced it would join the artificial intelligence family with its AI DJ, a beta feature only available for Spotify Premium users in the U.S. and Canada.

When a listener clicks on the DJ for the first time, they are greeted by a male voice named X, who introduces the first set of five songs, which are based on songs the listener has on repeat. After five songs, X returns and introduces a new set of songs based on a different mood or genre. Sometimes, X even references what the listener just heard or will give a short biography on an artist.

Elon University music professor Todd Coleman doesn't think Spotify's new feature even qualifies as AI.

"AI, to me — what makes it different from regular algorithms — is learning," Coleman said. "They can learn by themselves, they can teach themselves things that are useful. And it doesn't sound like this is that at all."

Coleman has a background in the intersection between technology and the arts, and he said the Spotify AI DJ seems to use the same computer algorithm usually used to create its "Daily Mix" and "Discover Weekly" playlists. The only difference is that the voice is AI-generated, modeled after Spotify's Head of Cultural Partnerships Xavier "X" Jernigan.

Spotify itself even compares the AI DJ with its already-existing personalization algorithm, describing the DJ on its website as "a personalized AI guide that knows you and your music taste so well that it can choose what to play for you."

In addition, Spotify's in-house editors provide the OpenAI technology for DJ X with facts about music, artists and genres the DJ can pull from. Though most of the time, the DJ focuses on telling the listener which artist or genre is coming up next in the queue.

Elon sophomore Tabby Spell is a musician who frequently uploads her music to Spotify, among other platforms. She described the DJ as "weird" and thinks it will further the trend of radio dying out, because of the DJ's realistic voice.

"AI can't replace the joy of a real DJ on the air that you can interact with and whatnot," Spell said. "But knowing how isolated we all seem to be and how comfortable we are with that, at this point, it could definitely take over."

Coleman also spotlighted another side to the radio DJ versus AI DJ argument — the fear some have that AI will replace human beings in jobs like deejaying. With enough development and careful setting of limitations, the AI DJ could operate more efficiently than a radio DJ — and serve as entertainment.

"A robot can hold pieces of metal and weld them together and insert rivets and screw things on much faster than humans, so AI is the information side of that same puzzle," Coleman said.

When humans are hired to research information, they read articles, take notes and make connections. AI basically does the same thing, Coleman said, just without the use of a brain. A radio DJ's job is to deliver information to a general audience



MICHAEL WOLFF | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Spotify's AI DJ rolled out to Spotify Premium users in the U.S. and Canada over February and March.

about the music curated, which is what Spotify's AI DJ is trying to do.

But it's not quite there.

Coleman pulled out his phone and asked ChatGPT what it thought of the Spotify AI DJ. This was the response:

"Opinions on Spotify's new AI DJ are mixed. Some people think it's a great way to enhance the music, listening experience and help curate music based on individual tastes. Others criticize the AI DJ for lacking soul and interrupting the flow of music with robotic announcements," ChatGPT wrote. "Ultimately, whether or not someone likes the AI DJ will depend on their personal preferences and how they feel about technology's role in music correct curation."

Coleman labeled this response "horoscope-y" or vague — a reflection of the early days of AI. AI hasn't had adequate time to learn at a deeper level, and this observation carries over to entertainment AI like the DJ. Coleman said there needs to be questions asked about limitations and how the AI feature can be best used in anticipation for AI's growing intelligence.

As an Apple Music subscriber, Coleman said he wouldn't run to Spotify based on this new AI feature, but he would feel more inclined to use it if he could ask specific questions so the DJ can learn more about his personal preferences over time.

"Let's say it's the latest Taylor Swift song or something, and I'm like, 'Those were cool lyrics, do you know any poetry that's in a similar style?'" Coleman said. "Now you're getting into things that interest me."

Spell agreed, adding that she hopes the DJ will explain why it recommends a certain song, so listeners can know what they're getting into. Spell also acknowledged AI developments in music don't just affect streaming platforms.

"It's just one step further in this overarching trend of AI taking over artistic

spaces, however, I did hear this insight the other day that some people see it as a good thing where it will challenge artists to be more innovative with their creations," Spell said. "So, AI can generate pop music now. Hopefully, because of that, real human artists will push themselves further."

Despite hopes for improvements in Spotify's AI DJ, Coleman also thinks the feature could just be a gimmick by Spotify in order to make itself known in the ever-growing world of AI. Instead of focusing on

that, he said Spotify should focus on paying artists more, which could indirectly, over time, improve future AI efforts by Spotify.

"I wish they put in place a more ethical business model and then maybe artists would buy into that more and contribute things to the platform — photos, interviews, deeper information about their songwriting process on each song. And an AI could tap into that," Coleman said. "Whether it's a real DJ or an AI DJ or whatever, that makes for a much richer meaningful music experience."

To Use the Spotify AI DJ

- 1 Make sure the app is updated to the latest version
- 2 Go to the home screen of the app
- 3 Click on the tab at the top that says "Music"
- 4 The DJ appears as a blue pulsating circle
- 5 Click on the circle and begin the listening experience

Fashionable student businesses

Luvstich Boutique, Uwera Rings acquire a growing student fan base

Ruth Cruz

Elon News Network | @RuthCruz24

Small businesses at Elon University are nothing new. With Elon's entrepreneurship programs and frequent tabling events, student businesses can be found around campus. Two in particular – Uwera Rings and LuvStitch Boutique – have popped up throughout the semester at events, such as Elon Day and under the Oaks.

Uwera Rings

When sophomore Uwera Izabayo established Uwera Rings in the spring of 2022, she never thought it would be a successful business at Elon. Izabayo said she originally created rings for herself, but others became interested in her unique style, so she turned her rings into a business.

To make her business stand out from competitors, Uwera uses recycled spoons to promote sustainability. Uwera said her rings promote quality and sustainable jewelry for everyone to enjoy while remaining unique – a quality she appreciates across student businesses.

"Everyone has their own little niche and their own different style of jewelry," Izabayo said. "In that way, there's no shortage of creativity."

Izabayo said her rings are made of stainless steel because it's an environmentally-friendly option, as most of her customers are students who value that type of option.

"Something that I learned while making these myself was that metal takes a very long time to break down," Izabayo said. "It's really cool that this was a way that I can help the Earth."

Uwera Rings collaborates with Oak Originals in the marketplace. As a member of Oak Originals, she learns ways to grow her business for the future.

Oak Originals is a marketplace located Under the Oaks to promote student business at Elon University. It helps create a community that brings together unique businesses for students to enjoy on campus.

Izabayo also promotes her business through pop-ups, social media and other Elon students. She purchases spoons from Amazon or eBay, then creates their shape in the Elon Maker Hub. In the future, she said she plans to

create bracelets and necklaces.

Izabayo encourages other Elon students to create their own businesses, even if it's out of something they think will only be a hobby.

"If you have a talent for something, then make your mark," Izabayo said. "Turn it into a business; I encourage you to do so because it's very fun. As long as you have the time and you have passion for it, then



ABBY REED | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Uwera Izabayo sells rings at Oaks Originals which is a marketplace that promotes student businesses on campus.

go ahead, so it can always be something fun to do for yourself."

Uwera Rings products can be purchased by completing a form on the business's Instagram – @uweraring. Elon students receive free and fast shipping. Right now, silver spoon and fork rings are available for \$15 or gold spoon rings for \$18.

LuvStitch Boutique

Senior Christina Blaskey established Luvstitch Boutique in October 2020 during the COVID-19 pandemic as a way to take up her time in quarantine. After returning to campus, it became a business.

She was inspired by other local businesses that sold clothing for students at Elon University. Blaskey took a step further to expand her business outside of Elon by collaborating with wholesale vendors from Los Angeles.

In the worlds of Elon and LA, Blaskey acknowledges how saturated the clothing market is, so she makes the effort to distinguish herself from others.

"I try to stand out as a college student business owner, which I feel is pretty unique," Blaskey said. "All the clothes that I carry can fit a bunch of different clothing styles."

Luvstitch Boutique offers accessories such as necklaces, earrings, and belt bags. The clothing includes rompers, shirts, and jeans that change with the trends throughout the years.

Blaskey hopes to inspire women to create their

own businesses and go after their passions. She believes hard work, such as developing relationships within her market, will pay off in the future.

"I really want to empower women to chase and achieve their dreams, whether it be starting a business, a career goal, an extracurricular goal, whatever that may be," Blaskey said. "I think all women should go towards their dreams."

Through operating Luvstitch Boutique, Blaskey has learned to manage both her classes and business, especially as this semester is her last. Her future plans include running Luvstitch Boutique full-time and stocking more products.

Luvstitch Boutique products can be purchased on her website and at pop-up shops with Oak Originals. Customers can also follow her Instagram @LuvstitchBoutique.



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CHRISTINA BLASKEY
LUVSTITCH BOUTIQUE OWNER



EVERYONE HAS THEIR OWN LITTLE NICHE AND THEIR OWN DIFFERENT STYLE OF JEWELRY.

UWERA IZABAYO
UWERA RINGS OWNER



RUTH CRUZ | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Sophomore Uwera Izabayo wearing some rings from her small business, Uwera Rings. Izabayo makes her rings from stainless steel spoons.



PHOTO COURTESY OF CHRISTINA BLASKEY

SPORTS

The road to nationals: defending the crown

Members of the dance team reflect on season, future before 2023 national competition

Sydney Spencer
Sports Editor | @SydneyASpencer

During her final regular season warm up for the Elon University dance team, senior captain Lindsey Rothenstein began the game with tears in her eyes. She has been a member of the team since her freshman year and said her last performance, located in Schar Center for the last women's basketball 2022-23 home game March 2, was bittersweet, but she tried to enjoy every moment over her last four years.

"I had been taking it one game at a time and really appreciating it," Rothenstein said. "The last game, I was crying during the national anthem, because that was a moment for me that I just breathe and reflect on how grateful I am for all these opportunities and my membership on this team. By the time the national anthem ended, my neck was wet from all of the tears that I couldn't wipe during it."

Rothenstein also said hearing the crowd at Schar cheering them on has helped improve their performances.

"This year, there has been a crazy amount of engagement with the Elon community and the Elon students that have been showing up to games, which has been really incredible and fun," Rothenstein said. "It's just been great energy in Schar which made it a really wonderful last basketball season for me."

The dance team also performs during each home football game in the fall, before winter basketball performances. Junior Madison Valgardson transferred to Elon from Utah Valley University and joined the team after a virtual tryout prior to this year. She said joining a new team and going from one season to the next with different routines was difficult at times.

"Especially for basketball season, I don't think people realize that we're throwing different numbers out for half times, basically every week with the different games," Valgardson said. "You always just have to go into practice ready to learn and engage and be able to put your best self forward so that we can perform our best."

Although nervous to join the team at first, Valgardson said she and her teammates clicked from day one and have strong communication inside and outside of practice.

"The bonds were almost automatic," Valgardson said. "That's what really helped



The Elon University dance team performs its hip hop NDA routine at the dance team sendoff April 3. The team returns to Daytona looking to keep its championship status.

JACOB KISAMORE | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

IF YOU WATCH

Where:

tv.varsity.com - registration required

When:

April 6 - Pom 6:53 p.m.

April 7 - Hip hop 6:57 p.m.

to build trust was being able to communicate with each other, telling each other how we're feeling and expressing all of our emotions. Through that we've been able to grow closer as teammates and as friends."

A year ago, the Elon University Dance Team returned home from Daytona Beach, Florida, as the 2022 National Dance Alliance Division I hip hop national champions. Now, both old and new members are ready to hit the stage, hoping to continue the team's reign and defend its national title.

Joining not only a new team, but a national championship team was nerve wracking, but Valgardson said the high standard motivates her to work even harder.

"We've all wanted to continue to rise even higher as a team, pushing ourselves further than we thought we could go," Valgardson said. "I think that's what helps us to continue to have a drive. It's not about winning for us or about becoming another national champion, but it's about the process of getting there. If

we can continue to push ourselves and be our best self, then as a team we've already won."

As captain, Rothenstein plays a large role in helping new teammates transition, as well as keeping everyone in check and focused throughout the long season. She said she tries to be the best role model for the younger girls on the team.

"When we were freshmen, we had a lot of role models from the older girls, and it's just really amazing being able to be that role model for the younger girls," Rothenstein said. "But the rookies also inspire us in a new way and bring so many new skills, perspectives and talent to the team that we all learn from. It's been super full circle, and I'm really just enjoying every moment with them."

As reigning hip hop Division I national champions, the team will look to keep its championship status this season as it returns to Daytona Beach from April 5 to 9. The team also placed third in the pom category, and is looking to complete both wins: a chance to take home two national titles.

Being part of the winning team last season, Rothenstein said she's been inspired by past successes.

"Last year's championship win was just incredible. I try to find other ways to describe it, but genuinely, it's so hard to put into words how much that meant to us," Rothenstein said. "We are extremely proud of all of our

accomplishments last year, but we try not to live in the past, and we want to focus on this team and building the new class of rookies, starting from scratch."

After countless hours of practice, both Rothenstein and Valgardson said they are ready to perform their new routines, and the entire team has supported one another during the process.

"We're in that mindset of, this is what we want to do and this is what we want to achieve," Valgardson said. "With that support, everybody has made this whole process easier. I feel like if I didn't have that with the team, going into nationals would be even more nerve wracking than it is. But there's almost a sense of calmness, just because we know that we all have each other's backs at the end of the day."

The team begins its pom performance at 6:53 p.m. April 6 and its hip hop performance at 6:57 p.m. on April 7. The entirety of the NDA performances will be livestreamed on tv.varsity.com throughout the week.

In her last big performance with the team, Rothenstein said she is going to leave everything out on the floor.

"Just having no regrets and giving it your all, because you never know what's going to happen," Rothenstein said. "You might as well just give it your all. You're already dancing, so why not push yourself a little bit harder?"

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UPCOMING SPEAKERS



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James P. Elder Lecture
Thursday, April 6
6:30 p.m.
Whitley Auditorium



**Spring Convocation
with Ashley Judd**
Elon University Speaker Series
Thursday, April 13
7:00 p.m.
Alumni Gym



For tickets, visit elon.edu/boxoffice

