

# THE PENDULUM

Women's tennis player leans on team after earthquake hits her home country  
**PAGE 5**

Pitcher shares his mental and physical journey in preparation for successful season  
**PAGE 8**

2023

*Softball*

**LAX**

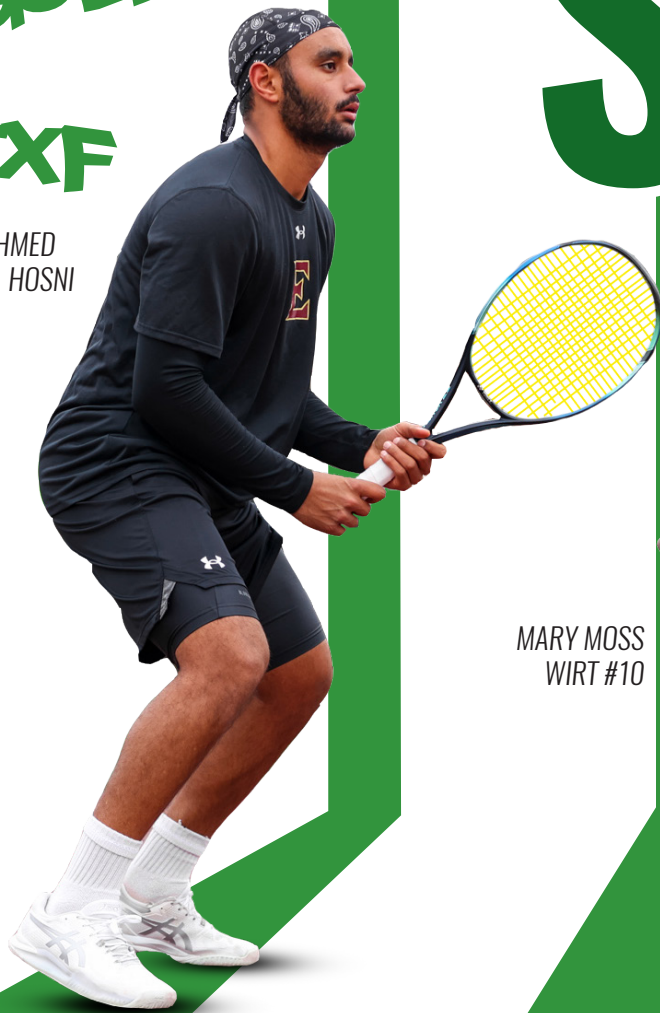
# SPRING SPORTS

**PHOENIX!**

**GOLF**

**TXF**

AHMED HOSNI



MARY MOSS WIRT #10



ANNIE WU



BRYCE JESKE #11



**TENNIS**

*Baseball*

# 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.

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Contact

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## CORRECTIONS

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

# TOP ELON PLAYERS TO WATCH



**TENNIS**

**HELEN SARIKULAYA | FRESHMAN**

Rockville, Maryland | Music  
CAA doubles team of the week (Jan. 25 2023)  
4-2 in singles and doubles and has clinched two matches for Elon this season



**TENNIS**

**OSKAR ANTINHEIMO | FRESHMAN**

Helsinki, Finland | Undecided  
CAA player of the week (Feb. 14 2023) and CAA co-doubles team of the week (Jan. 25 2023)  
Has a team-high four singles wins through five matches



**SOFTBALL**

**MAURI MURRAY | FRESHMAN UTILITY #19**

Marvin, North Carolina | Business Analytics  
Hit a three RBI inside-the-park homerun in her second college at-bat against NC Central on Feb. 10  
Three-time all district player



**BASEBALL**

**KENNY MALLORY JR. | SOPHOMORE OUTFIELDER #2**

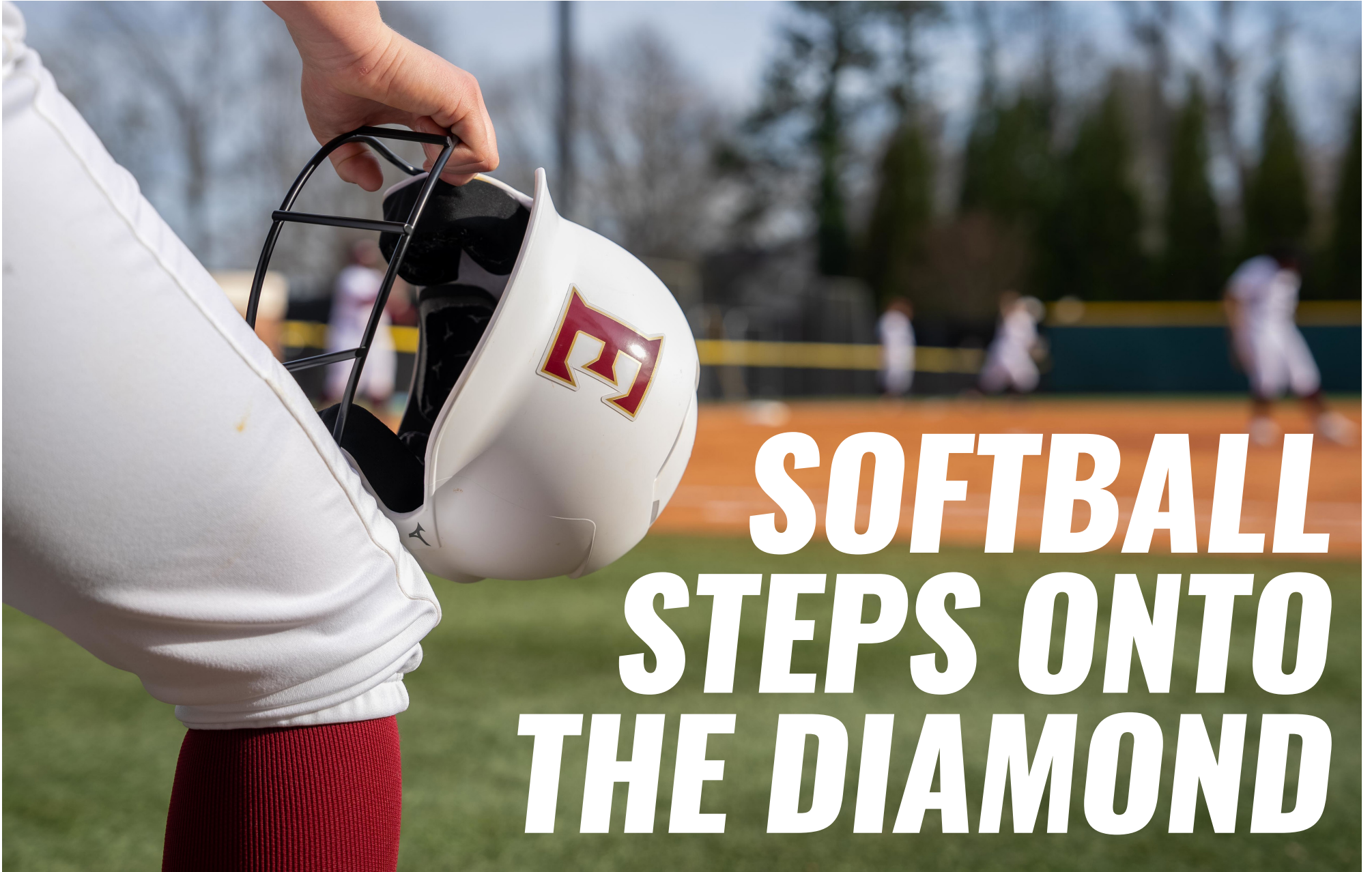
Lawrenceville, Georgia | Undecided  
First season at Elon after transferring from Vanderbilt University  
Ranked by Prep Baseball Report as No. 116 overall prospect coming out of high school



**LACROSSE**

**CIERRA HOPSON | SOPHOMORE ATTACK #22**

Villanova, Pennsylvania | Sport management  
Scored 23 goals as a freshman to rank fourth on the team and is the team's second-leading returning goal scorer  
Played in all 16 2022 games with seven starts



# SOFTBALL STEPS ONTO THE DIAMOND

CLARE GRANT | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Elon Softball kicked off its 2023 season this weekend with its first four games in the Elon Softball Classic Tournament.

## A preview of the 2023 Phoenix season

**Sydney Spencer**  
Sports Editor | @SydneyASpencer

Elon University's softball team stepped onto the field for the first time in the 2023 regular season in the Elon Softball Classic tournament Feb. 10 to 11. The team has played four games so far — two against Winthrop University, one against North Carolina Central University and one against Morgan State University — and finished 1-3 with its only win against N.C. Central.

Despite this outcome, head coach Kathy Bocock said that she's looking forward to this year's season, keeping in mind that the team still has more work to put in.

"We've got to clean some things up, but they were so excited about playing and we ended up having a beautiful day," Bocock said.

Four freshmen additions have been preparing with the team during the off-season and have now made their softball college debut. Freshman utility Mauri Murray made her first college at-bat pinch hitting against Winthrop University and NC Central on Feb. 10. After practicing in the off season, Murray said she was excited to finally be on the field.

"I've been ready and I've been prepared," Murray said. "We've been working since August, so it was fun to finally be on the field for a game."

In her second ever at-bat Feb. 10 against N.C. Central, Murray nailed a line drive up the middle, splitting the outfielders and rolling all the way to the fence. Murray let her speed carry her home for an inside-the-park homerun and three RBIs.

Bocock said she was thrilled to see Murray's enthusiasm and skills show during the game.

"When you have young players, they're just waiting for that opportunity and they've got a lot of good energy," Bocock said. "So when they're in that moment, it's a great opportunity to give them that chance, but knowing that they can do it as well. They bring that energy to you, and good things happen."

Senior utility Drew Menscer stepped onto the field for her fourth season with the Phoenix. She said she was proud of the team's resilience against NC Central, winning after an initial four-run deficit. She also said she believes that their winning performance will be able to translate throughout the rest of the season.

"It definitely shows we have some fight," Menscer said. "We bounced back, we didn't lay down. Coming back like that, it shows a lot throughout the season, and we will be able to accomplish a lot."

The Phoenix were predicted to place fourth in the Colonial Athletic Association preseason polls. Sophomore pitcher and first baseman McKenna McCard and junior middle infielder Gabi Schaal were named to the preseason watch list, showing promise for the team.

Bocock was pleased with the softball team's opening for this year's season, but she's hoping to tighten up and move the team forward.

"They did a good job of never giving up," Bocock said. "They stayed focused, they stayed positive with one another, which I like, because I'm a believer that the game's not over until it's over."

The Phoenix also debuted new uniforms in their season opener, which was one way to boost and push the team's confidence.

"They looked sharp and the girls looked sharp in them," Bocock said. "That just adds a little pep in their step. It's great to be back, and we're ready."



CLARE GRANT | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Elon University third baseman Allee Seering attempts to get North Carolina Central University runner Makiya Graves out at third base during their game at Hunt Softball Park on Feb. 10, 2023. The Phoenix beat the Eagles 8-7.



CLARE GRANT | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Elon University short stop Bella Devesa prepares to a ground ball to first base during the Elon Softball Classic against the Morgan State Bears at Hunt Softball Park on Feb. 11, 2022. The Phoenix lost to the Bears 1-5.



CLARE GRANT | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Elon University sophomore Isley Duggins prepares to pitch to Winthrop senior Macy McCall during their game at Hunt Softball Park on Feb. 10, 2023. The Phoenix lost to the Eagles 0-4.



CLARE GRANT | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Elon University softball outfielder and sophomore Reagan Hartley celebrates with the team after her scored run in their game against North Carolina Central University during the Elon Softball Classic.

# Two Canadian women's golfers find new opportunities

Athletes share their experiences, background, its influence on their golf careers

**Audrey Toscano**  
Elon News Network

Senior Annabelle Ackroyd came to Elon University to join the women's golf team. She began playing the sport at a young age, but she said what makes her golf experience different is where she grew up — Canada.

"It is not as big there, especially because it is a cold-weather place," Ackroyd said. "As a kid, it is harder to get into it than other sports, especially as a girl. There were not many people to play with."

From Calgary, Alberta, Ackroyd said that playing golf in Canada was challenging not just because of the limited number of people she could play with but also because of the weather and the recruiting process.

"To a certain point there is no other girls to play with, you play with your dad, your guy buddies, but there are no other girls playing tournaments and pushing you, coming from Canada," Ackroyd said.

Ackroyd saw an opportunity when she began to take golfing more seriously.

"You have to stand out to be recruited from Canada," Ackroyd said.

Playing tournaments since she was ten years old, the University of Minnesota recruited her five years later. After two years at the public school, she was looking for something different.

She then transferred to Elon University her junior year because she wanted a smaller school and loved the golf program and the beautiful campus.

During Ackroyd's recruitment process, head coach Chris Dockrill said he believed it was a good opportunity to take Ackroyd since she could play year-round, something she is unable to do in Canada due to the weather. He said her hard-working and competitive nature made Ackroyd stand out.

## An International Experience

Like Ackroyd's experience, freshman Ashley Lafontaine from Ottawa, Ontario, also emphasized her challenges with receiving recognition in Canada for golf.



CLARE GRANT | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Through perseverance and hard work, she committed to Elon for golf and its academics.

"I wanted to come here because there are some golf programs in Canada that are pretty good, but in general, it is harder," Lafontaine said.

Since coming to Elon, Lafontaine has built a strong relationship with her teammates and said that the team's diversity has made each player come together and appreciate their different experiences. She added that she knew she could make a difference on this team.

Much like Ackroyd, Dockrill said Lafontaine has positively impacted the program as a freshman.

"She's been very tough, and for her age, she is very mature on the golf course," Dockrill said. "She was a heavily recruited player but a late bloomer as far as Canadian golf goes."

Dockrill said he has a roster of players from around the world and recognizes the great opportunities that Elon can provide for international students. He also acknowledges the different stages both Ackroyd and Lafontaine are at in their golfing careers.

"We have had a lot of different nationalities play for us," Dockrill said. "I've enjoyed recruiting worldwide."

Dockrill, a Canadian himself, recognizes that their home country has produced many

great players.

Sharing their home country has created a relationship between Ackroyd and Lafontaine that translates even when they are not golfing together.

"I'm very lucky that I have Ash because we can talk about things from home," Ackroyd said. "She is a reminder of home."

As the current captain of the women's golf team, Ackroyd said she appreciates the opportunities Elon has given her. She adds she's also happy to have a teammate from home to make her golf experience easier.

"It helps us inspire other people back home that might be wanting to do the same thing as us," Lafontaine said.

# Men's golf enters season with younger, fresher roster

Youthful roster promotes challenge for men's golf

**Max Wallace**  
Elon News Network | @Max\_C\_Wallace

The Elon University's men's golf team faced a 180 degree turn when it returned to the links this fall. The team of 10 last year was made up of four seniors and two graduate students. This year, it has just one of each that make up the 10-man roster. Now, primarily made up of underclassmen, head coach Don Hill said he's seen this year's team bond in ways last year's group did not.

"This group is probably the most cohesive," Hill said. "I think having a team that is young, that are all very similar ages and going through similar experiences at the same time, helps that a great deal."

Forced not only to adjust to a new college environment, the predominant youth of the golf team also meant adapting to a new cast of characters that represent the maroon and gold. With spring season starting, the team has come a long way in connecting with one another

from where it started back in the fall, and now looks to take the next leap: securing a national title.

Six underclassmen make up the team this year. Right swinging freshman Oliver Rotermund, said the team's comradery made it effortless to find his comfort zone on and off the fairways.

Rotermund said transitioning from high school to the collegiate level was an adjustment, but the competition and playing with the university team is where he finds his drive.

"I played college golf and chose to do it because I love competing," Rotermund said. "You're playing for the university, so it definitely was intimidating at first, but I think the more experience that you have, the better you get."

Another underclassman has gone through a unique transition of his own. Right swinging sophomore Juan Callejo Ropero grew up playing golf across the Atlantic Ocean in Madrid, Spain. He said the difference in playing golf here in the U.S extends beyond the dog legs and pin placements of the courses he plays.

"It's obviously different," Callejo Ropero said.

"Not only are the courses different, but the way the tournaments are prepared."

In Spain, Callejo Ropero was accustomed to tournaments structured over four rounds, each round featuring a complete 18 holes of golf. On the contrary, the structure of golf in the U.S forced him to adjust to two full rounds of golf, 36 holes, in a single day followed by another 18 on the second.

Yet, Callejo Ropero said he did notice one similarity between golf on both sides of the pond: the caliber of the players.

"Golfers are good everywhere," Callejo Ropero said. "But here, there are more."

Callejo Ropero said one of the best parts about competing in the U.S is that he gets to match up against some of his former golf teammates and childhood friends from Spain. He said he will often see a familiar face when the team travels for a tournament.

"It's fun to see them compete and see them in tournaments around here," Callejo Ropero said. "It's a real rivalry between us when we go out there. We try to represent Spain, too."



JACOB KISAMORE | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Sophomore Juan Callejo Ropero walks to the sixth tee at Alamance Country Club during the opening round of the Phoenix Invitational on Oct. 10. Ropero finished tied for sixth, the highest finisher on Elon's Gold Team.

Earlier this year, the entire team took an eight day trip to Scotland, giving it the chance to learn a lot about the history of golf at St. Andrews. However, the trip also allowed the young team to bond and learn about each other off the course. The experience allowed Hill to take off his coaching cap at times and get to know the team as young men, not just as players. The trip is something that Hill always looks forward to, but said that this year's group

made the excursion extra enlightening.

Rotermund said its youth makes the Phoenix feel as if it has something to prove to the rest of the competition.

"We have a lot of talent and we are just excited to prove it to people and show every team in the NCAA that we are a legit team and we are ready to play," Rotermund said.

Callejo Ropero said he hopes the team can go further than the Colonial

Athletic Association championships in April.

"Our goal is to get to the national championship, step by step, tournament by tournament," Callejo Ropero said.

Although the team is young, Hill believes the confidence they have will fill the season with success.

"The group that we have is so golf centric, and they will win and they want to be good," Hill said. "We feel like we are on the cusp of something really special."

# Far from home: tennis player draws inspiration and strength from challenging times

The earthquake hitting Miray Konar's home country came at a challenging time — the beginning of the 2023 women's tennis season

**Sydney Spencer**  
Sports Editor | @SydneyASpencer

A series of text messages was blowing up sophomore tennis player Miray Konar's phone on the evening of Feb. 6. The texts were coming from Konar's friend in Lebanon, asking if her family in Turkey was safe. Konar, who was unaware that an earthquake hit her home country, was hearing the news for the first time.

"I got shocked," Konar said. "I couldn't move. I couldn't react and I just panicked and I remember I screamed."

A 7.8 magnitude earthquake ripped through Turkey and Syria, resulting in the death toll passing 40,000 people, according to Reuters on Feb. 14. Konar, who is from Izmir, Turkey, said hearing about the earthquake was incredibly frightening.

"I checked my phone and I saw that the earthquake was in Turkey, but it wasn't giving the specific city," Konar said. "My hometown is an earthquake center, so it was one of the possibilities that it was in Izmir. It was really scary. I couldn't sleep that night."

Konar eventually found out that the center of the earthquake was in Gaziantep, almost seven hundred miles from her hometown. When she realized that her family would

be safe, she said she felt a weight lifted off of her shoulders.

"I got relieved, but after 10 minutes, I saw the news about how big and awful it was. The city looked like it was bombed," Konar said.

The earthquake hitting Konar's home country came at a challenging time — the beginning of the 2023 women's tennis season. Despite the challenging and scary moments she's faced, the recent event is pushing her to work harder and persevere.

"Some people waited for days under the rubble without drinking water and without eating anything," Konar said. "I watch their stories and I read their stories and it's so inspiring. I'm going to take that nothing is impossible, because they believe that they're going to survive and they believe that someone is going to find them."

Konar transferred to Elon this year and has studied in the US since she completed high school in Turkey. She started playing tennis at eight years old, competing in international tournaments all around the world. Initially, she said leaving her home country was tough for her, especially during the first few years.

"It was really tough for me to stay away from my family," Konar said. "I live with my family in Turkey and it was so far away from my comfort zone."

Konar said she could have never predicted that she would be away from her family during a tragic time. Head coach Elizabeth Anderson said it's been hard watching Konar go through a period of uncertainty.

"It's absolutely awful. It's such a tragedy and our hearts go out to them," Anderson said. "Seeing it,

seeing Miray, it took her a little while to be able to catch up with her family, and I think dealing with all of that it's just incredibly difficult."

Anderson praised Konar for her abilities on and off the court and said her resilience throughout this period has been powerful to watch.

"I definitely think she's an inspiration in the way that she's handled this with so much courage and resilience," Anderson said. "Her teammates already respected her tremendously, but I think after all of this too, when they're around, they're able to hear stories and have conversations as things are unfolding more in the news."

Konar has also taken to spreading the word about Turkey throughout the Elon community. She is partnering with the American Turkish Association, supporting and raising funds for earthquake relief. Anderson said watching her support this cause has been inspirational for her as a coach.

"To see the strength that she's shown in these really difficult times, and she's really been trying to get the word out here to you know, to help her fellow citizens and to really make a difference," Anderson said. "I feel like in those really, really dark awful times, you see the people that are helping and you see those people that are trying hard to make a difference, and I feel like Miray is one of those people."

Konar said the biggest takeaway from her will be to live her life the way that she wants to.

"Living the life that you want because life is so short," Konar said. "So I'm going to take that do it now mentality. Don't plan it, but say something and do something."



JACOB KISAMORE | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

## DONATION INFORMATION

If you want to donate or get involved to help the relief effort in Turkey, visit the American Turkish Association of North Carolina at [www.ata-nc.org](http://www.ata-nc.org)

# Freshman tennis recruit inspired by hometown hero

Veljko Krstic hails from Belgrade, home of top-ranked tennis player Novak Djokovic

**Max Wallace, Matthew Farina**  
Elon News Network

Freshman Veljko Krstic, tennis player for the Elon men's tennis team, came to Elon from Belgrade, Serbia. Novak Djokovic, the world's best tennis player according to the Association of Tennis Professionals, comes from the same city as Krstic.

Krstic said that growing up watching Djokovic play inspired him to make tennis more than just a hobby.

"I started having more interest in tennis because of him," Krstic said. "He's brought so much popularity to the sport. As a kid we all wanted to play tennis to be as successful as him. He's a true legend of the sport."

Now, Krstic continues on his own tennis career at Elon; however, his sights weren't always tinted maroon and gold. Initially considering bypassing college to play professionally, Krstic decided on Elon after being impressed by the school's offerings, including the Martha & Spencer Love School of Business and Elon men's tennis head coach Michael Leonard.

"I was trying to be a professional tennis player and skip college. But

I got introduced to many coaches, including Michael," Krstic said. "I realized that college tennis is a great opportunity to get an education as well as compete at a high level."

Krstic appeared in the team's first two doubles matches of the spring season, against No. 14 ranked Wake Forest University Jan. 16 and Rice University Jan. 27, working with senior teammate Nicholas Campbell in both. The duo ended their set against the Demon Deacons due to time resulting in a 5-3 loss, and lost their set 6-2 against Rice.

On the solo side of things, Krstic channeled his inner Djokovic in the team's first home match against the North Carolina Central University Eagles on Feb. 5, winning his set 6-2, 6-2. His performances capped off a perfect afternoon for the Phoenix, as it went on to defeat the Eagles 7-0 and secured its first match win of the season. Krstic said Djokovic's ascension to the top of the world rankings was an inspiration to himself not only in his childhood, but as he began his collegiate career.

"He's the No. 1, in my opinion the best tennis player ever," Krstic said.

Krstic continued his solo success in the team's next match against the Campbell University Camels Feb. 7, as he won his match in a best of three set 6-4. His efforts proved vital to the Phoenix, emerging victorious for the second



AS A KID WE ALL WANTED TO PLAY TENNIS TO BE AS SUCCESSFUL AS HIM. HE'S A TRUE LEGEND OF THE SPORT

**VELJKO KRSTIC**  
FRESHMAN

straight match as it took down the Camels 4-3.

However, Djokovic's success on the court isn't the only way he has inspired many like Krstic. His childhood in Serbia was marked by conflict, including the 1999 NATO bombing of Belgrade.

"When he's talking about his life, his development as a player, he's talking about the tough situation in his early life," Krstic said. "I've been fortunate enough to not be involved in the war situation he has been in."

Currently 2-3 on the season, the Phoenix set its sights on three straight home matches, with the first Feb. 15 against Longwood University at 2 p.m. The Phoenix will look to keep its perfect 8-0 record against the Elwood when the two meet.



CLARE GRANT | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

# BASEBALL

FEB 17-19 KENTUCKY  
4 PM | 2 PM | 1 PM

FEB 21 GARDNER-WEBB  
4 PM

FEB 24-26 AKRON  
4 PM | 2 PM | 1 PM

FEB 28 UNCG  
4 PM

MAR 1 UNCG  
4 PM

MAR 3-5 QUINNIAC  
4 PM | 2 PM | 1 PM

MAR 8 EAST CAROLINA  
4 PM

MAR 10-12 NORTHEASTERN  
4 PM | 2 PM | 1 PM

MAR 14 NC STATE  
6 PM

MAR 17-19 MONMOUTH  
1 PM

MAR 21 WAKE FOREST  
6 PM

MAR 24-26 DELAWARE  
6 PM | 2 PM | 1 PM

MAR 28 USC UPSTATE  
6 PM

MAR 31-APR 2 TOWSON  
3 PM | 1 PM

APR 4 WAKE FOREST  
6 PM

APR 7-9 WAKE FOREST  
6 PM | 4 PM | 1 PM

APR 11 HIGH POINT  
6 PM

APR 14-16 WILLIAM & MARY  
6 PM | 3 PM | 1 PM

APR 19 GARDNER-WEBB  
6 PM

APR 21-23 STONY BROOK  
6 PM | 4 PM | 1 PM

APR 26 CAMPBELL  
6 PM

APR 28-30 CHARLESTON  
6 PM | 2 PM | 1 PM

MAY 3 CAMPBELL  
6 PM

MAY 6 NAVY  
6 PM | 1 PM

MAY 9 HIGH POINT  
6 PM

MAY 12-14 NC A&T  
6 PM | 4 PM | 1 PM

MAY 19-20 HOFSTRA  
2 PM | 12 PM | 3 PM

MAY 24-27 CAA CHAMPIONSHIP  
MT. PLEASANT S.C.



CHRISTO  
GARRELTS #16



# SOFTBALL

FEB 15 NORTH CAROLINA  
5 PM

ELON SOFTBALL INVITATIONAL

FEB 17 FORDHAM  
12 PM

FEB 17 MICHIGAN STATE  
2:30 PM

FEB 18 SAINT FRANCIS  
12 PM

FEB 19 JAMES MADISON  
5 PM

FEB 22 NC STATE  
5 PM

LIBERTY SOFTBALL CLASSIC

FEB 24 PRINCETON  
4 PM

FEB 25 NORTHERN ILLINOIS  
10 AM | 2 PM

FEB 26 MARSHALL  
11 AM

FEB 26 LIBERTY  
1 PM

MAR 1 EAST CAROLINA  
4:30 PM

MAR 3-4 UNCG  
5 PM | 1 PM

MAR 5 UNCG  
1 PM

MAR 7 DETROIT MERCY  
4:30 PM

MAR 11 STONY BROOK  
12 PM | 2:30 PM

MAR 12 STONY BROOK  
1 PM

MAR 14 NOTRE DAME  
5 PM

MAR 18 MONMOUTH  
12 PM | 2:30 PM

MAR 19 MONMOUTH  
11:30 AM

MAR 25 TOWSON  
12 PM | 2:30 PM

MAR 26 TOWSON  
1 PM

APR 1 HAMPTON  
1 PM | 3 PM

APR 2 HAMPTON  
12 PM

APR 7 DUKE  
TBA

APR 8 DUKE  
TBA

APR 11 NC CENTRAL  
3:30 PM | 5:30 PM

APR 15 UNCW  
12 PM | 2:30 PM

APR 16 UNCW  
1 PM

APR 22 HOFSTRA  
1 PM | 3 PM

APR 23 HOFSTRA  
12 PM

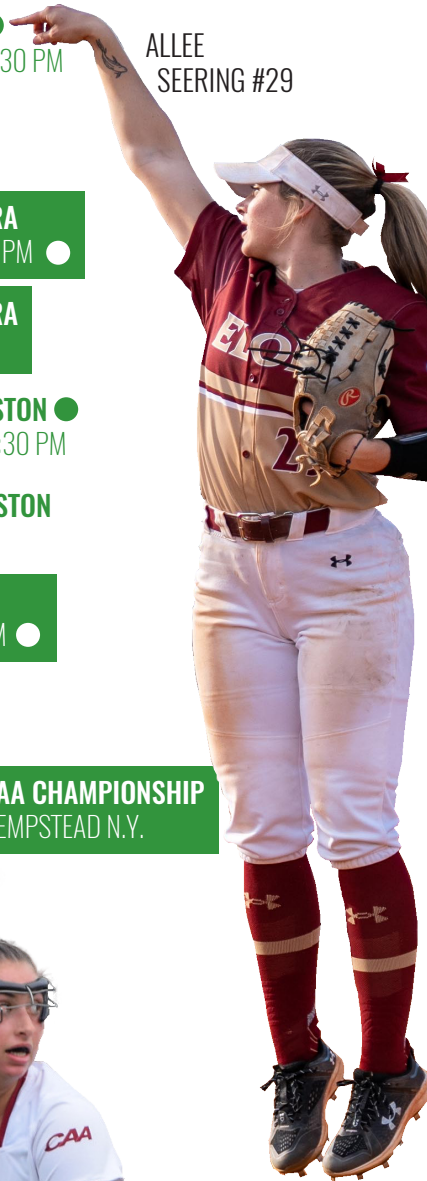
APR 29 CHARLESTON  
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APR 30 CHARLESTON  
1 PM

MAY 5 NC A&T  
3 PM | 5 PM

MAY 6 NC A&T  
1 PM

MAY 9-13 CAA CHAMPIONSHIP  
HEMPSTEAD N.Y.



ALLEE  
SEERING #29

# LACROSSE

FEB 15 QUEENS  
5 PM

FEB 18 VCU  
12 PM

FEB 23 GEORGE MASON  
5 PM

FEB 26 COASTAL CAROLINA  
12 PM

MAR 5 VIRGINIA  
5 PM

MAR 8 VIRGINIA TECH  
5 PM

MAR 12 EAST CAROLINA  
12 PM

MAR 15 HIGH POINT  
5 PM

MAR 18 MONMOUTH  
11 AM

MAR 25 STONYBROOK  
12 PM

APR 1 TOWSON  
12 PM

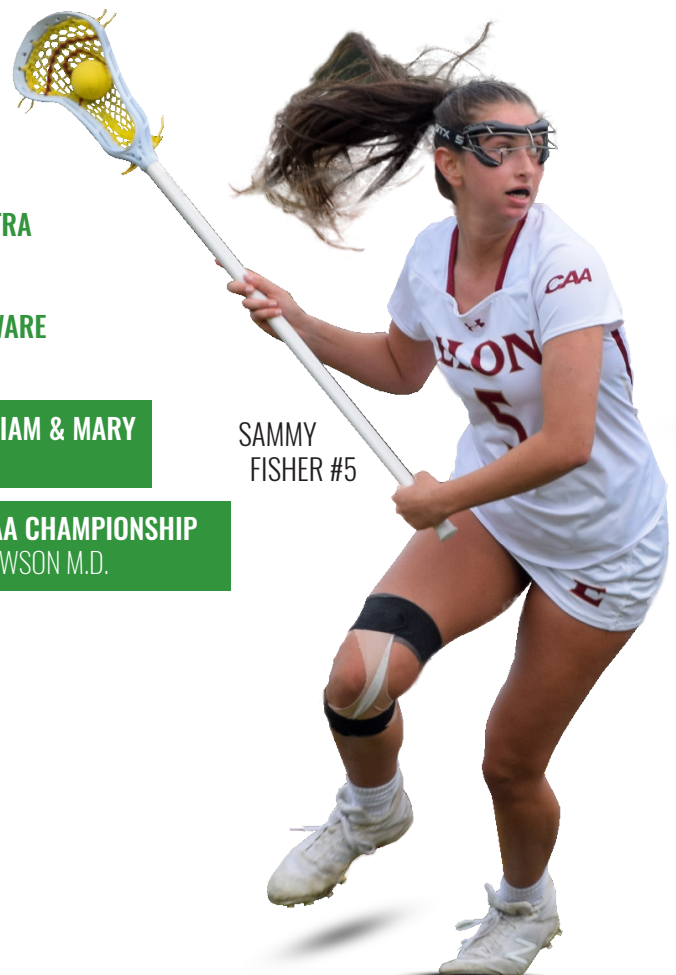
APR 7 DREXEL  
12 PM

APR 15 HOFSTRA  
12 PM

APR 22 DELAWARE  
12 PM

APR 29 WILLIAM & MARY  
1 PM

MAY 4-6 CAA CHAMPIONSHIP  
TOWSON M.D.



SAMMY  
FISHER #5

AWAY	HOME	DOUBLE HEADER
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# WOMENS GOLF

**FEB 25-28** CSU - RIVERTOWNE INVITATIONAL  
CHARLESTON S.C.

**MAR 12-14** UNCW RIVER LANDING CLASSIC  
WILMINGTON N.C.

**MAR 16-19** WOFFORD LOW COUNTRY INTERCOLLEGIATE  
HILTON HEAD ISLAND S.C.

**APR 2-4** MIMOSA HILLS INTERCOLLEGIATE  
MORGANTON N.C.

**APR 14-16** CAA CHAMPIONSHIP  
SOUTHPORT N.C.



MATTHEW  
DOYLE

*HOLE IN ONE*

# MENS GOLF

**MAR 27-28** NC A&T - AGGIE INVITATIONAL  
GREENSBORO N.C.

**MAR 31-APR 2** CUTTER CREEK INTERCOLLEGIATE  
SNOW HILL N.C.

**APR 6-8** NC STATE - STITCH INTERCOLLEGIATE  
CARY N.C.

**APR 23-25** CAA CHAMPIONSHIP  
DATAW ISLAND S.C.

# TRACK & FIELD

**FEB 17-18** JDL DMR INVITATIONAL  
WINSTON SALEM N.C.

**FEB 21-23** CAA INDOOR CHAMPS  
VIRGINIA BEACH V.A.

**MAR 16-18** 49ER CLASSIC  
CHARLOTTE N.C.

**MAR 17-18** BOB DAVIDSON INVITE  
HIGH POINT N.C.

**MAR 23-25** RALEIGH RELAYS  
RALEIGH N.C.

**MAR 31-APR 1** VERTKLASSE MEETING  
HIGH POINT N.C.

**MAR 31-APR 1** FLORIDA RELAYS  
GAINESVILLE FLA.

**APR 6-8** DUKE INVITATIONAL  
DURHAM N.C.

**APR 15-16** MEET OF CHAMPIONS  
HIGH POINT N.C.

**APR 21-22** VIRGINIA CHALLENGE  
CHARLOTTESVILLE V.A.

**APR 28-29** CHARLOTTE INVITATIONAL  
CHARLOTTE N.C.

**MAY 5-6** CAA CHAMPIONSHIP  
WILLIAMSBURG V.A.

# WOMENS TENNIS

**FEB 15** LONGWOOD  
2 PM

**FEB 25** CHARLOTTE  
2:30 PM

**MAR 3** MIDDLE TENNESSEE  
2 PM

**MAR 4** METHODIST  
10 AM

**MAR 4** HAMPTON  
2 PM

**MAR 11** DAVIDSON  
1 PM

**MAR 14** MORGAN ST  
10 AM

**MAR 14** SHAW UNIVERSITY  
2 PM

**MAR 16** UNCW  
2 PM

**MAR 25** CHARLESTON  
10 AM

**MAR 26** RICHMOND  
2 PM

**MAR 29** DELAWARE  
1 PM

**APR 1** RADFORD  
1 PM

**APR 2** WAKE FOREST  
4 PM

**APR 8** WILLIAM & MARY  
12 PM

**APR 12** NC CENTRAL  
2 PM

**APR 20-23** CAA CHAMPIONSHIP  
WILLIAMSBURG V.A.



HELEN  
SARIKULAYA

*CAN'T MISS THIS*



DANIEL  
MARTIN

# MENS TENNIS

**FEB 15** LONGWOOD  
2 PM

**FEB 18** SHAW UNIVERSITY  
10:30 A.M.

**FEB 18** GEORGIA STATE  
2 PM

**FEB 23** GARDNER WEBB  
2 PM

**FEB 25** NC STATE  
12 PM

**MAR 4** HAMPTON  
2 PM

**MAR 5** WOFFORD  
1:30 PM

**MAR 13** CHARLESTON  
2 PM

**MAR 21** DARTMOUTH  
2:30 PM

**MAR 23** DAVIDSON  
3 PM

**MAR 25** PRESBYTERIAN  
1 PM

**MAR 30** DELAWARE  
1 PM

**APR 1** WILLIAM & MARY  
1 PM

**APR 7** CHARLOTTE  
2 PM

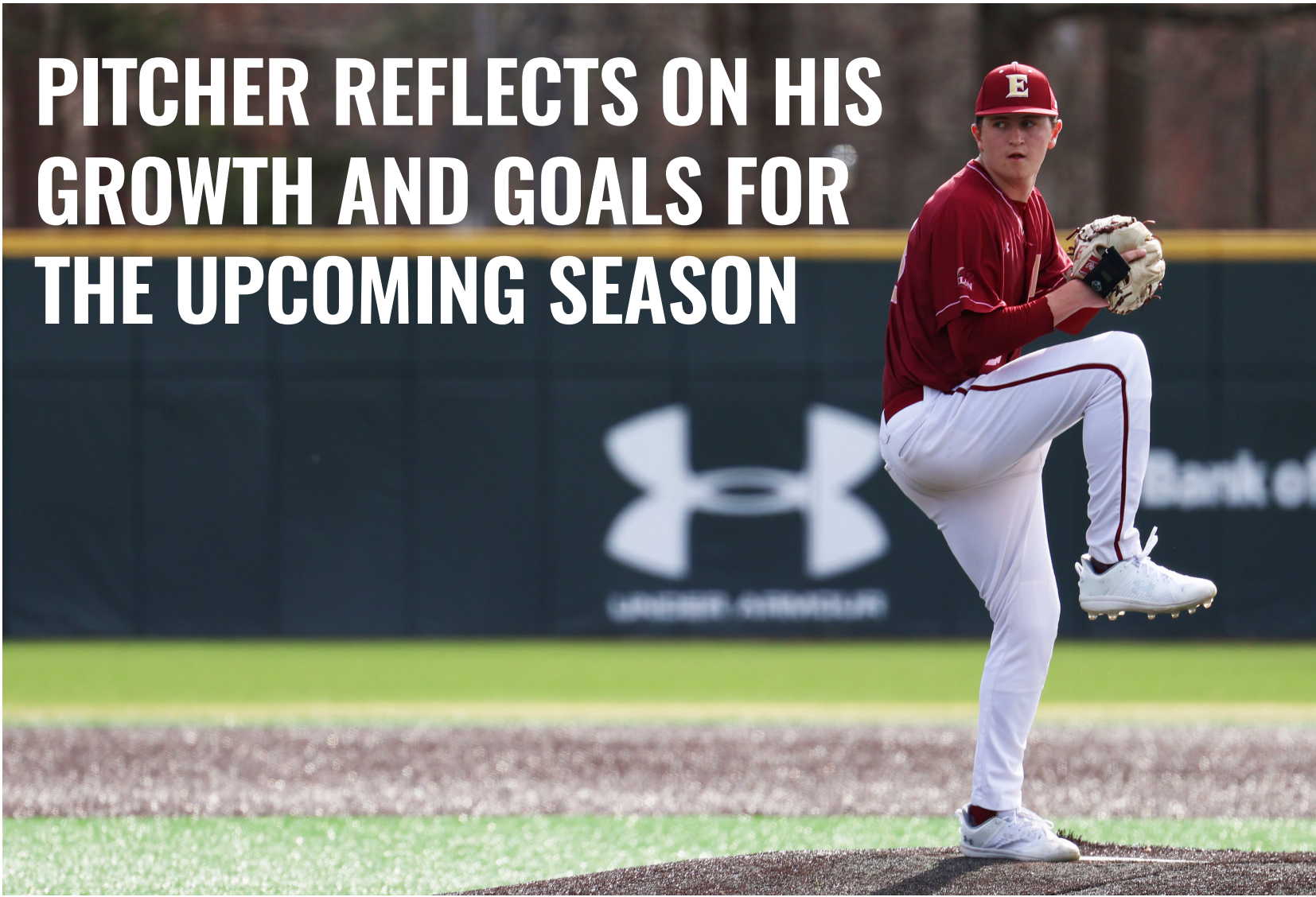
**APR 11** UNCG  
6 PM

**APR 14** RADFORD  
2 PM

**APR 21** NC A&T  
2:30 PM

**APR 20-23** CAA CHAMPIONSHIP  
WILLIAMSBURG V.A.

# PITCHER REFLECTS ON HIS GROWTH AND GOALS FOR THE UPCOMING SEASON



ERIN MARTIN | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Sophomore pitcher Shea Sprague pitches at an afternoon baseball practice on Feb. 10.

Shea Sprague shares mental, physical journey in preparation for successful season

**Hope Valenti**  
Elon News Network | @HopeValenti12

Sophomore left-handed pitcher Shea Sprague stares at the batter from the mound. Mumbling the lyrics to “Should’ve Ducked” by Lil Durk, he calms his restless mind. To him, the anticipation leading up to his first pitch is the best part of playing.

“I love the thrill,” Sprague said. “Getting really, really anxious before, and then going out there and having

success. I can’t wipe the smile off my face.”

Sprague said he always knew he wanted to play at a collegiate level. Since first picking up a ball in kindergarten, his life has revolved around baseball. Sprague said it came naturally to him, and he fell in love instantly. The Boston native was introduced to the sport by his parents, who took him and his two brothers to Fenway Park every summer to watch the Red Sox. Now, his family comes to his games to support him any chance they get.

“Last year when we played Northeastern, it was my third start,” Sprague said. “I probably had like 20 family

members and my entire high school come to watch me play. I threw really well and we won, so that was a really cool moment.”

After a successful freshman season, Sprague said he’s ready to play again. As the year progressed, Sprague found himself becoming more comfortable in his abilities and team. He said he faced a lot of uncertainty in the beginning but was just proud to be playing at Elon.

“Last year had a lot of good learning moments and experience,” Sprague said. “Pitching in some big games definitely is going to help out going into this year from a nerve standpoint.”

Head coach Mike

Kennedy said Sprague has made significant physical gains, but Sprague is most proud of his mental growth. Sprague said he’s developed an understanding of how to handle his anxiety before a game and has learned to adapt to obstacles. He said developing confidence has been pivotal in building his skills as a pitcher, as he no longer compares himself to his teammates.

“I was trying to size everyone up,” Sprague said. “I just wrote myself off a little bit in the fall, saying, ‘Oh, I don’t throw as hard as these guys.’ I was limiting myself. But once I found my groove, I really found some success.”

Sprague said escaping

that mindset has presented new opportunities to him as an athlete. He and Kennedy describe baseball as a game of failure — one where mistakes are necessary. Sprague said he now uses defeat to his advantage, learning from it and building on his game.

Kennedy also said Sprague’s greatest attribute is his drive. He is always looking for ways to improve and propel the team forward.

“Obviously he was our best arm last year,” Kennedy said. “But he’s got a high level of competitiveness. I think that really sets him apart from most of the guys. He just refuses to lose. He battles. That’s a huge part of being successful at this level!”

BY THE NUMBERS

41

Strikeouts in his Elon career

19

Appearances in his Elon career

1.89

ERA in his Elon career

1.02

Walks plus hits per inning pitched in his Elon career

In the off-season, Sprague strengthened his preexisting pitches. He said he would practice and train on a daily basis in preparation. While bettering his fastball and changeup, Sprague focused on adding a new throw to his repertoire. Kennedy said this development has made him even more of an asset to the team.

“The goal in the fall was to develop a third pitch,” Kennedy said. “The ability to add a breaking ball slider is huge for him. It gives him another element to attack hitters with.”

Sprague said he anticipates taking on a bigger role as a player and leader this season. He hopes to help newer players enhance their skill set, the same way his teammates did last year. Both he and Kennedy are optimistic and have high expectations for the 2023 season. Sprague said he sees a lot of power in the lineup.

“We have a lot of experience and talent,” Sprague said. “So if we can piece that together, I think we’d be a dangerous team in the NCAA.”

## A different vision: athlete’s unique experience with lacrosse

After medically retiring from the lacrosse team, senior Rachel Mikolay now experiences a new role

**Joanna Dwyer**  
Elon News Network

Senior Rachel Mikolay will always remember the day her life changed. The former goalie for the Elon University lacrosse team was a freshman at the time preparing for the upcoming season like any other day. After weeks of cardio training, 5K marathons and bike rides, Mikolay lost vision in one of her eyes one day.

“I really started to freak out because I literally could not see through my left eye,” Mikolay said.

Mikolay committed to Elon University for lacrosse with dreams of playing at the collegiate level, but after her vision accident in July 2020, her path to being a college athlete changed. She saw multiple doctors and was never given a diagnosis as to what caused her eyesight issues. Mikolay was forced to medically retire after two and a half years of Division I lacrosse after not being cleared to play by her doctors.

“That’s when it kind of set in that there’s a possibility I’m not going to be able to play again, which was always so crazy, because that was my dream, to play college lacrosse,” Mikolay said. “I kind of felt let down by myself because I never got to play

in a game.”

Now, she is still part of the active roster, but she’s accomplishing different things in a new role: social media manager for the lacrosse team. Mikolay, who didn’t know where she’d be at, said her perseverance and persistence is what pushed her to continue on a different journey.

### A Different Experience

Before her accident, Mikolay spent her freshman year spring at home because of the COVID-19 pandemic, training for the field. Even though she didn’t know at the time that her life would change, she was committed to preparing for her return.

“I made a personal goal for myself that I was going to see the field in the 2021 season,” Mikolay said. “I had nothing else to do because everything was shut down because of COVID. So all I did was train every single day.”

When Mikolay first visited Elon, she said she was impressed with the coaching staff and the campus.

“There was no doubt in my mind that I was going to come to Elon,” Mikolay said.

Head coach Josh Hexter is the one who recruited Mikolay to join the lacrosse team four years ago, and he’s also the one who encouraged her to become the team’s creative content editor, producer and social media manager.

“Rachel has always had this way of making everybody feel comfortable,” Hexter said. “She’s comfortable in her own

shoes, in her own skin and makes you feel warm when you’re around her. Not everybody is like that.”

### On the Field to Behind the Scenes

Taking time to reflect and recognize the changes was important for Mikolay. She went from running drills to creating entertaining social media content.

“I’m a firm believer that everything happens for a reason, whether or not I know the reason why it happened with my eye,” Mikolay said. “I’ll never know why, as a 19 year old, I had to lose my vision in my left eye. But, it’s gotten me to where I am now — the people I’ve met, the experiences I’ve had.”

Mikolay said she credits her job as the social media coordinator as the reason why she is still at Elon. The role opened the door for internships with Elon Athletic Communications, the Elon football team and even study abroad opportunities such as going to Greece with the lacrosse team over Thanksgiving break.

While technically being medically retired, Mikolay’s name is still listed on the active roster. Hexter said that he sees Mikolay’s role as positive for both her and the team.

“I call it a win-win because we were so positively impacted by Rachel, wanting to still stay on and do our social media, and I know it helped her as well,” Hexter said.

Although she’s not running on the field with her teammates, she’s supporting them

from the sidelines. Her role has made her look at the positive side of this experience.

“I’m not just going to quit and give up, I’m going to make something out of this,” Mikolay said. “I’m going to learn and grow. I just hope people understand, when you do get injured and, not even in just an athletic sense, when things go wrong in life, it happens for a reason. It went wrong, and now you just have to make the best situation out of it.”



KATHERINE MARTIN | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER



# NEWS

Elon to introduce university-sponsored healthcare plan for 2023-24 school year  
PAGE 10

Elon Challenge, Outdoors promote benefits of environmental connections  
PAGE 12

## Elon University to increase tuition, housing by

# 5.14%



JOSEPH NAVIN | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Elon University students walk through campus past the Inman Admissions building Feb. 13 following the announced tuition increase of 5.14% by the university Feb. 10. The tuition increase will take effect for the 2023-24 academic year.

President Connie Book cited 5.14% increase in total cost for 2023-24 academic year in email to parents

**Kyra O'Connor & Ellis Chandler**  
Elon News Network

Elon University will increase tuition, lodging and meal plans by 5.14% for the 2023-24 academic year.

The plans to increase the following year's tuition came from an email announcement from Elon University President Connie Book to parents Feb. 10. This new cost for the university will include tuition, fees, food and housing, the total cost for the 2023-24 academic year will be \$59,014. Broken down separately, this is a 5.43% tuition increase and a 4.26% food and housing increase between the 2022-23 and 2023-24 school year.

Indirect costs — including books, transportation and miscellaneous expenses — total to \$3,500, and when added to tuition, fees, food and housing, the total cost of attendance comes to \$62,514, according to the university's admission website.

For the fiscal year that ended May 31, 2022, 74% of Elon University's operating revenue was derived from tuition and 18% from auxiliary services, which includes room, board and athletics, according to university spokesperson Owen Covington.

Remaining revenue came from grants, returns on investments and other sources.

"Elon is highly reliant on student charges — 92% of our revenue comes from students' revenue, tuition, room and board," Vice President for Finance and Administration Janet Williams said. "Elon creates a very, very responsive curriculum and programming around students' success."

Student Government Association President and senior Nadine Jose said she believes there's a lot of wealth disparity at Elon, and decisions like these mean something different for everyone.

"For some people, it's not a big deal, they don't even know how much it is, and for some people, they might not be able to go to college next year," Jose said. "However you're feeling — any sort of way — that's completely a valid way of feeling and that is going to be a little stressful, but hopefully, we could work it out."

Williams said the reasoning behind the university's budgeting process is to align with the Boldly Elon strategic plan. The tuition increase allows for the university to making a market compensation adjustment for staff and faculty, adding new positions across the university in areas such as STEM and health sciences, and increasing financial aid budget. The budgeting process also accounts for contingency or unexpected expenditures.

"This supports the admissions process

and helps us to make sure that our wonderful education here is accessible to students," Williams said. "This is primarily scholarships for students like the Fellows Scholarships, merit and need-based scholarships."

For the 2022-23 year, the university raised tuition over 9%. Students can see the impact of their tuition dollars in places like Elon University's health and wellness initiatives, such as Health EU and Timely Care, and the new Innovation Quads opened in the fall of last year.

"Aligning our goals and our budget with our Boldly Elon Strategic Plan will allow students to very visibly see where their tuition dollars are going," Williams said.

Jose said some of those expenses come at the cost of students, but she expects tuition to be on SGA's meeting agenda in the coming weeks.

Jose also said SGA cannot directly provide students with financial aid and, if it were up to her, tuition for all Elon students would be free. She said she was lucky in her Elon application process and received a lot of aid. It was her cheapest option, but Jose knows that isn't the reality for many students.

She advises students who are concerned to work with faculty and staff to see if there are any open scholarships or opportunities to decrease a potential burden for existing students that could be added on to their existing degree or aid.

"I know for some students, if they didn't

get to have the scholarships they applied for, they wouldn't have gotten here, or they wouldn't have gone to college at all," Jose said. "So tuition prices are obviously very important to a lot of people, it's the main reason they go to a particular school. When it goes up, it is very much understandable and an incredibly daunting and stressful thing to happen to them."

She encourages students to attend SGA business meetings because it's an opportunity for them to learn more and potentially advocate for themselves and for transparency.

"I think money is hard," Jose said. "It's really hard to run an institution like this, and I am definitely not the No. 1 person in the world who understands all the intricacies of endowments and the role of the vice president of finance. But I think we're all in this together. I think giving each other grace and understanding when talking about financial things like this is really important and we should try not to minimize each other's struggles."

Program assistant in the Provost's Office Renee Makin said Provost Rebecca Kohn is unable to comment at this time.

Elon News Network contacted the President's Office and was told that Book was unavailable to comment at this time.

Vice President for Strategic Initiatives Jeff Stein declined to comment to Elon News Network.

# Elon University will offer health insurance for students in upcoming academic year



ERIN HRONCICH | PHOTO EDITOR

A student walks out of Ellington, Elon's Center for Health & Wellness, on Feb. 13, 2023.

Health Services will also change its billing process next year, though these changes are not yet finalized

**Naomi Washington & Kyra O'Connor**  
Elon News Network

Elon University Student Health Services will be offering health insurance for students and changing their billing process next academic school year, according to Vice President for Finance and Administration Janet Williams.

Students who do not have health insurance coverage will have the ability to pay for the new Elon University BlueCross BlueShield of North Carolina plan.

"There is an increase in the cost for the students separate from the tuition increase because not all students will be opting into Elon BlueCross BlueShield plans," Williams said.

According to Williams, copayment fees will be paid by the university in the new plan. The change that will occur next year allows Elon Student Health Services to file a claim with the student's health insurance plan for the additional costs beyond a co-pay, according to university spokesperson Owen Covington.

For sophomores Madison and Morgan Williams, opting in to the health insurance provided by Elon depends on what the plan's coverage looks like and how it compares to their current health insurance.

But Madison and Morgan both said because neither of them are "well versed" in health care, they have a lot of questions. From wondering how easy it is to apply for insurance to where the

insurance can be used, both sophomores have more questions than answers.

"What are the details, what does it do for you?" Madison said.

Health insurance has always been a requirement for students, Williams said, and this will not change in the upcoming academic year. According to a statement from the university, the student health insurance plan will be made available to complement the existing requirement.

"This is an opportunity where we are offering health insurance to students who don't have health insurance," Williams said. "We believe that it's an ethical and really proper thing to do."



THIS IS AN OPPORTUNITY WHERE WE ARE OFFERING HEALTH INSURANCE TO STUDENTS WHO DON'T HAVE HEALTH INSURANCE. ... WE BELIEVE THAT IT'S AN ETHICAL AND REALLY PROPER THING TO DO.

**JANET WILLIAMS**  
VICE PRESIDENT FOR FINANCE AND ADMINISTRATION

Many of Elon University's peer institutions have health insurance plans available to students as well. At a majority of Elon's peer institutions, students are automatically enrolled in the university

health insurance plan unless they opt-out or submit a waiver. The most expensive university health insurance offered out of Elon's peer institutions is Fordham University. The Aetna Student Health plan has a premium charge of \$3,905.

Today, if a student visits health services for an appointment, they don't need to show their insurance card or pay a copayment. Students only pay a student health fee annually and a fee for issued tests or immunizations through their bursar's bill or out of pocket.

Students who already have insurance through a personal coverage plan or a plan under their guardians will not have to opt in to the insurance the university offers. The university has not announced whether or not the health insurance plans are only for students, or can include other family members, such as a student's children or spouse.

Dean of Students Jana Lynn Patterson canceled an interview with Elon News Network regarding the new health insurance plan and declined to comment further.

Since the announcement that both tuition will be raised by 5.14% next year and Elon will offer health insurance to students, President of Elon University Connie Book has declined to comment to Elon News Network, Provost Rebecca Kohn declined to comment and several senior staff members have directed Elon News Network to a university spokesperson.

"More information will come out about how, if you already have insurance, how you can upload your insurance and then opt out of the university offered BlueCross BlueShield insurance plan," Williams said. "So this is another part of our health and wellness initiatives to support our students."

BY THE NUMBERS

**\$3,905**

The most expensive university health insurance offered out of Elon's peer institutions is Fordham University. The Aetna Student Health plan has a premium charge of \$3,905.

BY THE NUMBERS

**\$1,846**

The least expensive university health insurance offered out of Elon's peer institutions is Chapman University.

BY THE NUMBERS

**9/15**

9 of 15 peer institutions require health insurance for full time students.

BY THE NUMBERS

**\$59,014**

The total annual cost of tuition, fees, housing and food for 2023-24 after the 5.14% increase from 2022-23.

# Prospective students consider tuition increase

High school junior, senior prepare for undergraduate careers

**Miranda Ferrante**

Managing Editor of Elon News Network  
@ferrantemiranda

Cole Clark walked around Elon University's campus on a gloomy day in January. The prospective student toured what he thought could be his future home, especially after being informed about Elon's academics, campus life and post-graduate opportunities.

"You couldn't ask for a much better experience and it was on a rainy day," Clark said. "I think that was what helped — this is on a rainy day, what could it be like if it's sunny?"

The high school junior from Virginia still has one year until he needs to commit to a college. He's considering other colleges, but he knows he still needs to keep in mind future university changes — like Elon's recent tuition increase.

The university announced Feb. 10 that it will increase tuition, lodging and meal plans by 5.14% for the 2023-24 academic year, which will make the total cost \$59,014. Indirect costs — including books, transportation and other expenses — add up to \$3,500, bringing the total cost of tuition to \$62,514.

Clark's main goal is simple. When he leaves college to enter the workforce, he wants to feel prepared. Clark said he will prioritize resources and facilities when applying to colleges, despite tuition that's on the rise.

"With a tuition increase, the thing that comes to mind is you hoping the university will use it for its students to be able to help them out, give them the advantage in the most successful way possible," Clark said.

## Elon University total cost over time

Elon University's cost of tuition, fees, room and board, or the total cost, from 2000-01 to 2023-24.

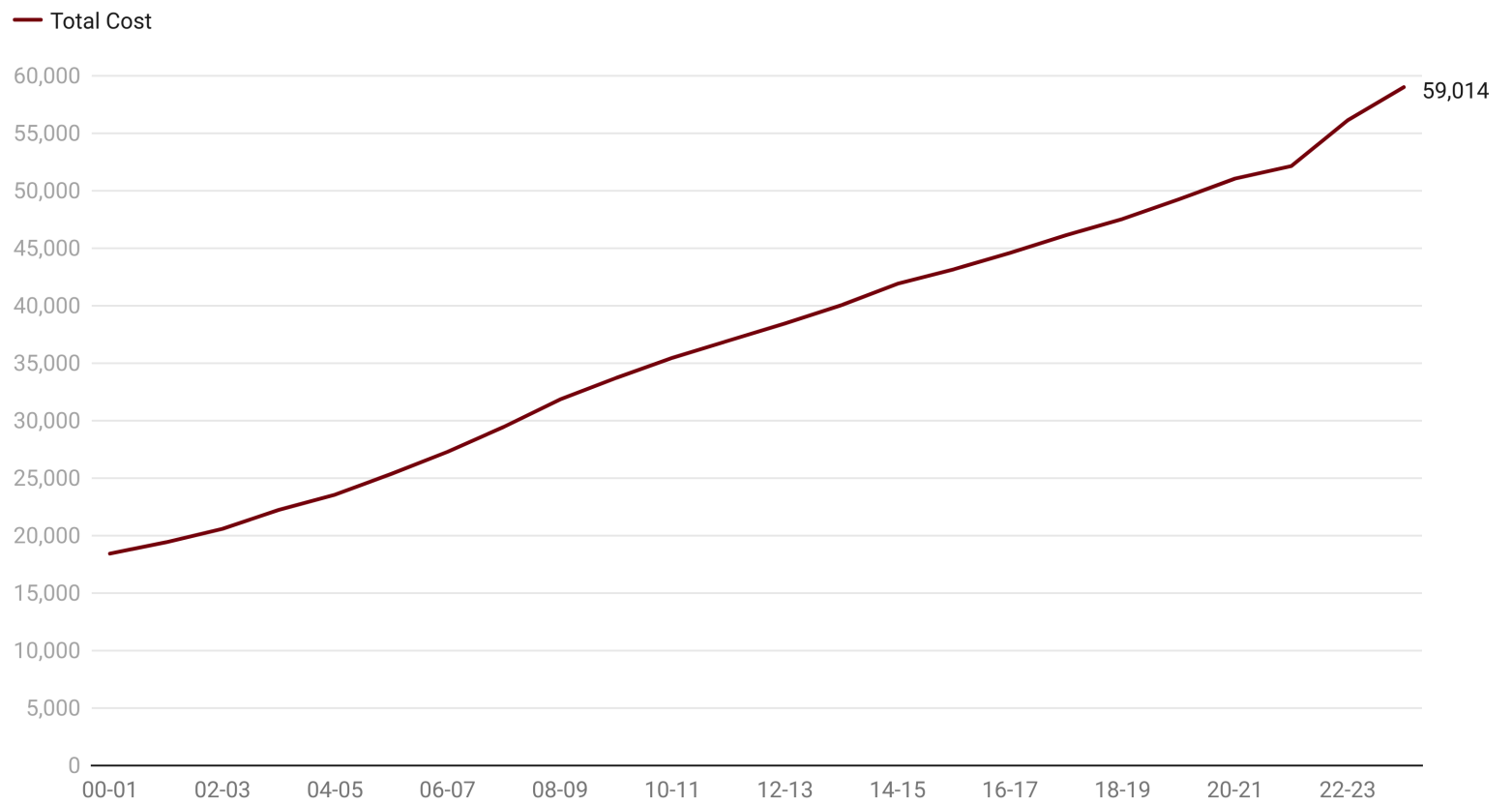


Chart: Kyra O'Connor & Avery Sloan • Source: Elon University • Created with Datawrapper

### Where is the money going?

Current Elon students can see the impact of their tuition dollars in areas such as the university's health and wellness initiatives like HealthEU and the extension of TimelyCare.

In a Feb. 10 interview with Elon News Network, Vice President for Finance and Administration Janet Williams said the university's budgeting process aligns with the Boldly Elon strategic plan.

When current juniors applied during the 2019-20 academic year, Elon's total cost of attendance was \$52,756. As seniors, they will be facing a sticker price that is \$9,758

higher than it was when they applied.

In those three years, the campus has seen additions such as opening of Innovation Quad in fall 2022 and the Inn at Elon in January 2020. The university also purchased three properties on East Haggard Avenue in early October 2022 and will break ground on the construction of a new residence hall in June.

Williams said tuition increases support campus growth, as well as merit and need-based scholarships.

In an email to Elon News Network, Vice President for Enrollment Greg Zaiser said scholarships help students access Elon and allow recognition for academic success and involvement, though scholarships for current students will not increase.

"Two years ago we increased the size of these awards for incoming students and these increases have to be built into the budget for each class," Zaiser wrote. "For example, Presidential Scholarship went from \$6,000 to \$7,500 annually for new students. That's an increase of \$1,500 per student for approximately 15% of the FY class. This will be an annual budgetary allocation for four years until the increase is fully part of the university budget."

According to Zaiser, presidential, and other scholarships such as Elon Engagement, scholars and fellows are generally not endowed scholarships, instead they "are funded by the operating budget of the university."

Aries Falloni, a high school student, said Elon is currently their top choice for college. Falloni hopes the surplus from the tuition increase will contribute to raising the amount of money awarded through scholarships.

"I think for my personal interest in Elon, it would be really cool to see them have diversity-based scholarships," Falloni said. "They have merit and need-based scholarships, but some other schools that I've looked at have had specifically leadership and diversity-related scholarships that I think could be a focus of Elon,

“

WITH A TUITION INCREASE, THE THING THAT COMES TO MIND IS YOU HOPING THE UNIVERSITY WILL USE IT FOR ITS STUDENTS TO BE ABLE TO HELP THEM OUT, GIVE THEM THE ADVANTAGE IN THE MOST SUCCESSFUL WAY POSSIBLE.

**COLE CLARK**  
PROSPECTIVE STUDENT

especially since they talk about diversity so much."

Faloni said they and their parents anticipate a tuition increase due to inflation, but hope Elon remains focused on raising scholarships too. Faloni currently attends a private school in Maryland and said they're privileged to not have to consider money when looking at schools.

"In my personal situation, I don't think that it would affect my decision on whether I'd be going to Elon, but that's purely because I have the opportunity to be able to make decisions with minimal financial liability if the price varies," Faloni said.

### Considering costs

Clark's mother, Nicole, said she enjoyed her time visiting campus during her son's prospective student tour. While she wasn't immediately aware of the tuition increase, Nicole believes funding future facilities at Elon would make the experience worth it for her son's education.

"It was just nice to see a clean, crisp campus and a campus that seems to serve the student's needs," Nicole said. "One of the things that I enjoyed was the fact that they showed you life beyond college. It seems like Elon prepares you for life after college. ... The focus was on the students themselves to get them out of school."

Despite her attraction to Elon, Nicole said a potential increase in tuition again before Cole enters college could create concern for her and her husband as parents.

"For us to see a campus that didn't have any deficiencies so to speak, you just wonder, 'OK, what's going on that's causing the drive?'" Nicole said. "What's the push? What other options do we have that Elon could possibly put out there without the student body having to carry the burden directly every year."

Though Nicole and Cole agree Elon will be a top contender in Cole's college search, he won't begin applying until the fall.

"I think it's still a strong option on my list," Cole said. "Yes, it's a tuition increase, but I think some things are worth sacrificing."



PHOTO COURTESY OF COLE CLARK

Cole Clark, a high school junior from Virginia, still has one year before he makes a final decision on where he'll go to college. Elon University, he said, is high on his list, but his family will continue to monitor changes like the recent tuition increase.

# LIFESTYLE

## EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING AND OUTDOOR ADVENTURES EXPLORES NATURE, BUILDS COMMUNITY

Elon Challenge, Elon Outdoors give students opportunity to connect with nature, one another

**Ruth Cruz**  
Elon News Network | @RuthCruz24

When sophomore Caroline Putman applied for the Experiential Learning and Outdoor Adventures program in her freshman year, she didn't realize how much she would enjoy the position.

"I applied in my first semester freshman year kind of on a whim, but I knew that I wanted to get involved," Putman said. "It was one of my goals to come into college and experience the outdoor community because it's something I really enjoy."

Within the ELOA program, which is under Campus Recreation and Wellness in the Koury Center, Putman works in Elon Challenge, a team development program that helps promote authenticity, creativity, innovation and community building.

Elon Challenge has many low ropes and high ropes activities that engage students in building new relationships. According to the Elon Challenge website, low ropes activities help build communication, trust, problem-solving skills and relationships.

These activities, like the bridge, promote experiential education to bring groups together. The bridge is a low course activity that requires students to stand on a wooden platform and maneuver themselves to find balance.

Meanwhile, the high ropes activities focus on individual and team support. By challenging themselves with activities like zip lining, students learn to



Lydia Cohen and Caroline Putman sit at their desk during their shift at Experiential Learning and Outdoor Adventures office in Alumni Gym. Cohen and Putman work for Elon Challenge, a "group transformation leadership experience program" within ELOA.

RUTH CRUZ | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

accomplish tasks through cooperation and encouragement. Any organization can participate in Elon Challenge, and one of Putman's tasks is to help people build new connections with organizations both on and off campus.

"It's a great way to connect with the Elon community and something that I love about it is that I wouldn't interact with a lot of these organizations outside of ELOA," Putman said. "In the fall, we worked with the Boys and Girls Club in Burlington. Then we visited UNC Greensboro and

worked with their master's students. It's a great way to meet people from all different walks of life and different work areas."

Putman said that outside of learning, communication and leadership skills, ELOA values sustainability and accessibility to students on campus interested in exploring the outdoors to deepen their connection with nature.

According to the Elon Challenge website, the benefits of outdoor experiences include reducing stress, easing depression, boosting the immune

system, lowering blood pressure, gaining better concentration and improving sleep. They believe that "nature is the best nurture" and allow students to find peace in the outdoors.

"It's really just a chance for all of us to come together and share this passion within the Elon community," Putman said. "We are a student organization that gives Elon the best nature experience, especially during our trips."

Elon Outdoors, another program within ELOA, holds outdoor weekend trips that any students are welcome to attend. Its February events include indoor rock climbing, ice skating, and hiking. During Spring Break in March, they will visit the Grand Canyon and Zion National Parks. Elon Outdoors also offers social events on campus, such as S'mores With Outdoors.

Sophomore Sadie Smith said she joined ELOA in hopes of pursuing her passion for the outdoors. Smith works in Elon Outdoors as a trip leader and said she enjoys the new friends she has met who share similar hobbies.

Smith said she urges students to get involved with ELOA to experience what Elon has to offer other than academics.

"I think outdoor activities are super fun in such a great way to experience different places and get a sense of the world," Smith said. "I really love how the outdoors gives me a sense of community at Elon."

Students can join by contacting Elon Outdoors through PhoenixCONNECT and follow them on Instagram @elonrecwell. To register for an Elon Outdoors trip, visit their website.



## Phoenix Leaders blaze path for future Elon students

Incoming students are given opportunity to grow as leaders, individuals through Center for Leadership program

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When freshman Zach Weitzen first came to Elon University, he knew he wanted to make a difference. Weitzen was eager to join campus after taking a gap year to participate in the Nativ College Leadership Program in Israel. He found a way to do this after attending the Organization Fair in the fall when he was introduced to Phoenix Leaders — an organization devoted to helping underclassmen develop leadership skills.

"I really was looking to continue on that path," Weitzen said. "So when I learned about it, I just had to apply. And I'm glad I did because it's been amazing."

The program is run through the university's Center for Leadership, where Weitzen now works as the new education leadership intern, organizing events.

CFL Assistant Director Olivia Brown said Phoenix Leaders is geared toward "emerging leaders" — those who will contribute to the betterment of Elon. To Brown, Weitzen is a prime example.

"It's for students who have not yet had the chance to hold these positions but want

to," Brown said. "So mostly it consists of first years, but there are also some sophomores and transfers."

Members of the cohort partake in a series of activities, including retreats and workshops called "leaderships." Brown said the objective of these activities is to foster an awareness of how students can utilize their personal strengths to help others. The first semester is focused on developing a deeper understanding of leadership and Weitzen said he is most excited about applying these skills in the spring.

"It's a lot of fun to learn and grow with these people," Weitzen said. "But now we're going to be seeing how everything plays out at Elon and the real world, and that's really what it's all about."

Weitzen said he plans to contribute to Phoenix Leaders and CFL in the future by becoming a student mentor. Mentors are assigned a small group of Phoenix Leaders, offering extra support as they adjust on campus. Weitzen's mentor sophomore Belle Stephens said she decided to become a mentor after falling in love with the program during her freshman year. She said that it gave her the foundation necessary to succeed in the role.

"I'm using what I got out of Phoenix Leaders to inspire those going through it now," Stephens said. "I can't attribute all of Zach's growth to me, but it brings a smile to my face. Seeing someone become who they want to be is incredible."

Stephens said she learned how to leverage her positive nature to uplift others. For her, the community formed around Phoenix Leaders is invaluable. She said she aims to foster "a

comfortable environment for open exchange of ideas." Weitzen said that the CFL is a safe space for him — one where he can learn and have fun.

"I think people get confused or scared when they think of leadership," Weitzen said. "They don't know what to expect. But if they just came by, they would see that we're friendly. We have a good time. Leadership doesn't have to be this serious, intimidating thing."

Brown said providing incoming students with a platform to be heard is crucial to their development on campus. Doing so instills confidence in them, she said, allowing people of diverse backgrounds to bring their experiences to light. She said the CFL wants to make sure everyone knows that leadership is not exclusive. "Leadership can look a lot of different ways," Brown said. "In history, a lot of leaders look the same, but we want them to know it doesn't have to be like that."

Weitzen believes that anyone can be a leader. To him, leadership isn't a title, but an action. He said it's as simple as being authentic and making an effort to be a good person. Weitzen has gained the confidence to embrace his

differences, a development he said has helped him inspire others.

"Pulling on those unique qualities is what makes you a stronger leader," Weitzen said. "That gives you power and motivates you. I don't care what people think about me. I'll wear these rainbow earrings, I'll do what I want, and I think that is powerful."

Weitzen wants people to know that the CFL's mission goes beyond leadership. He said he believes people don't participate in Phoenix Leaders or its events simply because they don't know it exists, but if people gave the program a chance, he said, they wouldn't regret it. Weitzen said he never expected to gain so much from the experience.

"I've not only grown as a leader, but as a person," Weitzen said. "Now I just want to help others do the same. We're more than just 'leaderships' and events. We're here to build you up as a human."

Phoenix Leaders applications for the 2023-24 school year open in the fall, but the CFL welcomes involvement at any level. Interested students can sign up to attend other events and leaderships on PhoenixCONNECT.

*Phoenix Leaders 2022*



LEADERSHIP EDUCATION AND DEVELOPMENT

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