

Burlington Police implements AI technology

The technology scans unchecked body camera footage, saving hours

Fiona McAllister
Elon News Network

The Burlington Police Department is the first station in North Carolina to use artificial intelligence in its body camera footage. The department's partnership with Truleo is meant to help officers on their daily routes. Truleo scans hundreds of hours of body camera footage and highlights key points.

Capt. Dalton Majors of the Burlington Police Department said Truleo has saved Burlington P.D. millions of dollars and is helping both victims and officers.

"There's a lot of liability around those not just for the Burlington Police Department, but also for the victims associated with the incidents," Majors said. "Being able to look at those things at a fingertip quickly helps us."

Having started its use with Truleo, these past few months have shown success. In past years, Majors said they did not have the ability to look at dozens of body camera videos and did quarterly checks.



A car from the Burlington Police Department, the first station in the state to use artificial intelligence to scan its body camera footage.

FIONA MCALLISTER | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Majors said one aspect of this tool that has been helpful is reviewing the actions of officers. He said finding both good and bad officer activity has helped the overall department grow as a whole.

"I think that they have found that it's not a 'catch me doing

something wrong,' it's really 'catch me doing something good,'" Majors said. "We get to praise that and reaffirm that behavior with them daily as the supervisor looks through that video."

With Truleo making its way to big cities like New York, co-founder Anthony Tassone said his

main focus as of now is to spread this aid all throughout the U.S. and Canada. He said Truleo has already spread throughout Australia with six departments.

Tassone said his goal is to make things easier for the departments that feel looking through body camera footage takes too long.

"I thought about the hundred million plus hours of body camera footage that just goes unseen," Tassone said. "Cities and departments spend an enormous amount of money just to secure these cameras, to pay for the storage. I thought that was a real waste to learn that 99% of these videos will never be reviewed by anyone."

With smaller cities, such as Burlington, taking the initiative to take the step toward Truleo, Tassone said he is pleased that these officers are willing to take on this new aid.

"I'm really proud of Burlington's courage and their commitment to say, 'Look, we're going to set a standard at this department of professionalism and behavior below this standard won't be tolerated,'" Tassone said. "I think that's good for the profession."

With Truleo's help, Majors said he has seen proof of this tool at work right away. After watching an officer's body camera footage, he said he identified an officer safety issue in action.

"They let a suspect go into a room unsupervised on a domestic violence call, not knowing what the intentions were," Majors said. "Nothing happened from the incident, but it was a big learning moment for officers to realize."

A community's recovery through the eyes of a Blackhawk mission

The National Guard works to provide rural communities with supplies

Alex Nettles
Elon News Network

A Blackhawk helicopter hovers over the Bull Creek Valley, an unincorporated community east of Asheville. Wind-blasted swathes of trees, uprooted and gray, spread on the horizon. The commune's adults form in the field below and emerge from the picnic tables and chimney smoke. The power and water are gone.

The National Guard is working to sustain the recovery of western North Carolina's fragmented pockets. After Hurricane Helene hit Sept. 28, much of the infrastructure throughout North Carolina was severed. There are hundreds of road closures and sections of I-40 face significant damage, according to a report from the North Carolina Department of Transportation.

Around 26 people are still unaccounted for in western North Carolina, according to Gov. Roy Cooper's statement on Monday. It was the worst flooding to ever strike the area in its history, he said.

The Bull Creek community sits at the foot of the Swannanoa mountains. Less than one

thousand people live in its valley. The military-grade helicopter lands on what used to be a bee farm in Peace Rock, a commune. The National Guard gets out with the propellers still running and shake the hand of a local man as other gathered around.

"We are happy you are here at all after Milton," he said.

Near Bull Creek, all power lines were severed. The only road into town, the Bull Creek Bridge, was destroyed. The day of the mission, most supplies were provided from the air.

The National Guard added a strategy after providing essentials like food, water and insulin. Now they are focused on the long term. The priority is maintaining livable conditions with generators and blankets, according to Crew Chief Dylan Ebert.

"There are entire areas that are cut off, and sometimes, we are the only asset that is available," Ebert said.

The warming waters in the Atlantic contributed to abnormally high amounts of rainfall in the Appalachian mountains. The region was crippled by "flash flooding, landslides, rock fall, road washouts and bridge collapses."

While waiting for the generators in Hickory, Specialist Leonardo Lopez said it was important to work together as a community during emergencies.

"Disaster could happen to

anyone," Lopez said.

Over one million customers had no power when the outages reached their worst point on Sept. 30. As of Oct. 22, there are 5,227 without power, according to PowerOutage.us.

Helene struck two weeks prior and Bull Creek was still reeling from damage and requiring long term aid. Erik Bendix, a resident of 42 years, considered himself lucky.

"We just had wind damage, no flooding here, we didn't end up like Asheville or some of the other places," Bendix said

The trees fell "like dominoes" at the storm's peak, according to Bendix. He suffered a chainsaw injury clearing the fallen trees near his property. A rescue party from the community was able to find him within minutes.

During the peak of the storm, the men and women of Bull Creek banded together to prevent a death in the community. Randy Lehman, 62, led the chainsaw wielding rescue after one of the residents suffered from a broken neck. He was bundled with blankets into a borrowed sled and carried by an ATV to the nearest medical attention.

North Carolina reported 95 deaths after Helene. Forty-two of those were in Buncombe County, where the Bull Creek community is. No one in the Bull Creek valley lost their life, despite the



ALEX NETTLES | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

The Blackhawk crew lift a generator at the Hickory Airport.

flying debris, generator fires and tornadoes.

"We were fortunate not to lose anyone," Lehman said.

The community has food and water, Lehman said, but needs consistent electricity to begin modern life. Looking past the tarped roofs, Lehman shared how he thought of Helene as a sign of how human life needs to change.

"Mother nature will eventually start affecting us," Lehman said. "I don't know if I would classify it as man vs. nature, but North Carolina has to stop with the now outdated way of developing on the banks of rivers."

Before it was time to leave, the Bull Creek locals asked if their kids could come out and see the

helicopter. The crew obliged. The Blackhawk left around midday. It flew over flushed rust-colored water and untouched suburbs. Because of the generators, the Bull Creek community will be able to power heating as temperatures drop.

Stopping for a refuel, former combat veteran Leonardo Lopez waited where it was quieter. He has logged 700 flight hours since Helene struck, flying through the worst of the damage.

"That was definitely one of the better ones," Lopez said.

The region has been scarred with \$3 to 5 billion of loss, according to report by CoreLogic. It is estimated it may take years for the region to fully recover.



Elon employees donated \$32,792 to campaigns

PAGE 2 NEWS



Elon's Chinese Club bridges community

PAGE 5 LIFESTYLE



The price of injuries on Elon student athletes

PAGE 6 SPORTS

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What political campaigns are Elon employees giving money?

Elon University employees favor Democratic campaigns, OpenSecrets executive highlights influence of money in politics

Alice Morrissey

Elon News Network

Between January 2023 and Oct. 22, 2024, 146 Elon University employees made a total of 827 donations — the vast majority being to Democratic campaigns.

Using data from the Federal Election Commission, where and how many employees of any specific company are public, as people donating to political campaigns are required to share their employer.

Less than 1% of Americans contribute to roughly 77% of all campaign donations,

according to OpenSecrets, a nonpartisan, independent and nonprofit database website, dedicated to tracking where money donated to election campaigns go.

In a conversation hosted by Carrie Eaves, chair of political science and public policy at Elon University, students were able to get first-hand insights about donation tracking from Hilary Braseth, executive director of OpenSecrets, on Oct. 17.

Braseth said during the event that the database aims to pull different data sets and make those available for policymakers, journalists and the general public to be able to access why decisions might be made in government.

Throughout the conversation, Braseth covered topics ranging from donation demographics to potential influence that

funds may have on legislators.

Senior Katey Polovin attended the event and told Elon News News Network that the percentage breakdown of mega-donors — individuals who make extraordinarily large donations to a political party or campaign — was especially of interest to her.

“That’s just a lot of money donated by a very small percentage of people,” Polovin said.

Braseth said OpenSecrets aims to encourage people to use their resources to make informed political decisions through giving the public knowledge about political donations. She also encouraged people to utilize their site, especially as they begin to think about who to support this November.

“Our work is in our most critical moments right now as we lead up to the presidential election,” Braseth said.

\$32,792.51

TOTAL NUMBER OF MONEY DONATED BY 146 ELON UNIVERSITY EMPLOYEES FOR A TOTAL OF 827 DONATIONS BETWEEN JANUARY 2023 AND OCT. 22, 2024

697 donations

ACTBLUE (POLITICAL ACTION COMMITTEE FUNDRAISING FOR DEMOCRATIC CAMPAIGNS)

21 donations

WINRED (POLITICAL ACTION COMMITTEE FUNDRAISING FOR REPUBLICAN CAMPAIGNS)

36 donations

HARRIS VICTORY FUND (HARRIS' PAST CAMPAIGN BEFORE RUNNING FOR PRESIDENT)

17 donations

TEAM KENNEDY (RFK'S OFFICIAL CAMPAIGN FUNDS)

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HARRIS FOR PRESIDENT (HARRIS' CURRENT OFFICIAL CAMPAIGN FUNDS, USED TO BE BIDEN FOR PRESIDENT)

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DEMOCRATIC CONGRESSIONAL CAMPAIGN COMMITTEE

4 donations

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PTPAC, AMERICAN PHYSICAL THERAPY ASSOCIATION PAC

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SENATE MAJORITY PAC

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JEN PERELMAN FOR CONGRESS

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CORRECTIONS

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



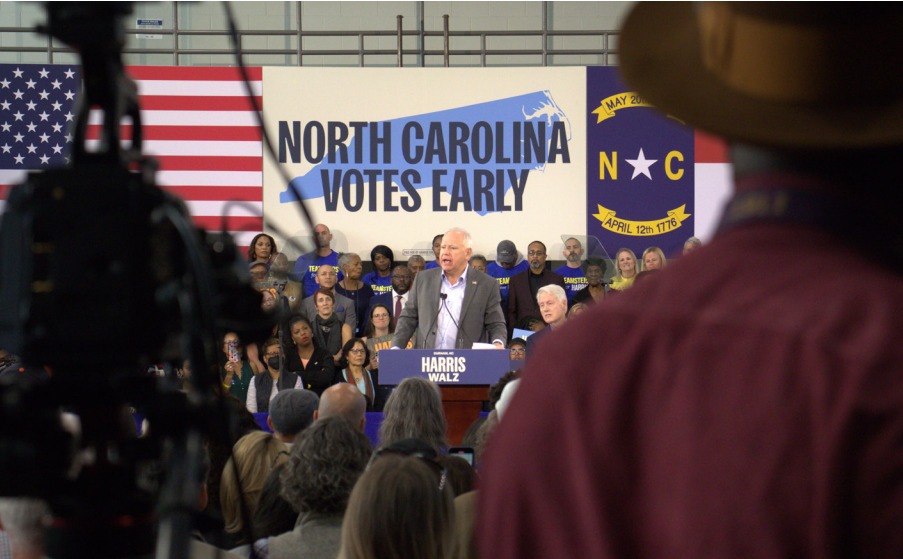
Herbalist Brandon Ruiz leads attendees into a greenhouse with an assortment of peppers Oct. 17 during his herbalism workshop at Loy Farm. Attendees collected a variety of fresh herbs and spices to make tinctures by infusing them with honey, apple cider vinegar or alcohol. ETHAN WU | PHOTO EDITOR



Elon senior Kennedy Jones fights for the ball against Hofstra University. Elon won 2-1 on Oct. 17. PAUL BARRETTO | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER



Author of “Wastelands: The True Story of Farm Country on Trial” Corban Addison speaks to attendees Oct. 15 in McKinnon Hall about the investigative and judicial efforts on North Carolina hog farms to bring justice to the victims of hog farm waste. ETHAN WU | PHOTO EDITOR



Vice presidential nominee and Minnesota Gov. Tim Walz encourages supporters to vote at his campaign rally Oct. 17 at the Community Family Life & Recreation Center at Lyon Park in Durham. FIONA MCALLISTER | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER



All-male a cappella group Rip Chord performs at the Melanated Melodies benefit concert Oct. 19 in Whitley Auditorium. All proceeds for the event went to Communication Services for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing. KATRINA HOLTZ | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

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Redshirt sophomore embraces switch from quarterback to wide receiver

Will Lankford surprised, excited about recent position change

Benjamin Berfield
Elon News Network

Redshirt sophomore Will Lankford didn't anticipate a position change would occur before the 2024 season. Lankford had completed his redshirt freshman year for Elon University football as quarterback playing in six games. It wasn't until preseason camp where he got asked about switching from quarterback to wide receiver.

Offensive coordinator Drew Folmer said injuries at receiver and the lack of depth contributed to Lankford's transition. He approached Lankford about the idea and said all Lankford cared about was whether it would benefit the Phoenix.



MILES HAYFORD | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Redshirt sophomore Will Lankford became a wide receiver during preseason camp after finishing his redshirt freshman year as a quarterback.

“

YOU PRACTICE A LOT AT ONE POSITION, BUT I WAS EXCITED TO GET TO THE RECEIVER'S ROOM AND BE THE BEST VERSION OF MYSELF.

WILL LANKFORD
ELON FOOTBALL WIDE RECEIVER

“We lost some receivers,” Folmer said. “We had some guys go down with injuries during camp so we were thin at the position. The initial thing was to move him there as a stopgap to help get us through camp and when I asked him, the only question he really asked was if it's going to help the team.”

Lankford described his reaction to the change as mixed emotions. He said he

was surprised to hear he'd be switching to receiver but was also excited for the new opportunity.

“You never think it's going to happen,” Lankford said. “You practice a lot at one position, but I was excited to get to the receiver's room and be the best version of myself.”

This also wasn't the first time Lankford played the position as he was also a receiver in high school.

“The transition was a little smoother,” Lankford said.

Lankford also credited wide receiver coach Kyle Perkins for helping him grow more accustomed to being a receiver. He credited Perkins for giving him enough experience through repetition in practices.

“Perkins made it 1,000 times easier,” Lankford said. “He let me get a lot of reps to become more acclimated to the position. He wants the best from you every single day.”

In Elon's season opener against Duke University, Lankford was already seeing action at the position. He caught one pass for 18 yards in the 26-3 loss. It remains his only reception so far.

Lankford said playing receiver hasn't been much different than the last time he played the position. He noted a few minor changes but said his mindset is still the same.

“It's pretty much the same,” Lankford said. “Some minor details and wording is different, but nonetheless the job is to see the ball, catch the ball, and score.”

Folmer said one major contribution Lankford has made toward the position group is using his quarterback experience to put other receivers in a position to excel.

“He's got a different perspective playing quarterback so he understands what everybody should be doing,” Folmer said. “As a quarterback, you have to

know what all 22 guys are doing, not just the 11 on offense, and he's brought a different demeanor in that regard.”

Folmer added that Lankford's toughness has really impressed him given that quarterbacks are known for avoiding contact. He credited Lankford's blocking ability and knack for making tough catches with multiple defenders in the area.

“A really pleasant surprise is the physicality that he's brought to the position with the way that he blocks,” Folmer said. “He's also willing to go across the middle and catch footballs because quarterbacks usually don't have to run through traffic, but he doesn't shy away from any of that.”

Lankford said he wants to fully establish his knowledge about the position throughout the upcoming season. He looks to improve small areas of his game such as his release off the line and running routes based on the look

the defense gives.

“I think it's getting a better IQ in terms of what release I should take, how should I run this route whenever I see this, and that will come with more time,” Lankford said. “I love playing football and I love learning about it more.”

While Lankford has embraced the position change, Folmer said the door isn't shut on Lankford returning to quarterback in the future. He added that the coaching staff still gives him some reps in case they need him at some point.

“He's still tied to the quarterback position because he's played it now for a couple years,” Folmer said. “He is not totally removed and there's things we do from a meeting and practice standpoint to make sure that he is ready.”

That scenario occurred against East Tennessee State University where Lankford completed a 26 yard pass on a trick play.

“

A REALLY PLEASANT SURPRISE IS THE PHYSICALITY THAT HE'S BROUGHT TO THE POSITION WITH THE WAY THAT HE BLOCKS.

DREW FOLMAR
ELON FOOTBALL COACH

As of now, Lankford said he is happy with the progress he has made since switching to receiver. While he expressed the desire to be more consistent, Lankford believes he has come a long way.

“I think it's a night and day difference from where I was, to how far I've gone,” Lankford said. “But sometimes I do revert back to being inconsistent, which you never want to be. I want to be consistently at my best.”

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The price of play and the impact of injury on student-athletes

Season-ending injuries are frequent in college athletics and have both physical and mental tolls

Miles Hayford
Elon News Network

Around 210,000 college sports-related injuries occurred from 2009-14, according to a Centers of Disease Control and Prevention study. Within that number, almost 4,000 athletes each year experience a season-ending injury, according to a study published in the Journal of Amateur Sport. These injuries are more than just a number, though. Each one affects a student-athlete in a different way, each grappling with the absence of sport and recovery process differently.

It was Elon men's soccer redshirt junior Ryan Manna's sophomore year, and the team had recently played the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill. The following day, the team had a light training session, and that's when he heard it.

Manna's teammate went in for a tackle, but rather than acquiring the ball, he hit Manna's knee, and Manna heard the all-too-familiar pop.

Manna had torn his ACL, forcing him to undergo his third major knee surgery in his soccer career. It took a year for Manna to fully recover, and the rehab process took a mental toll on him. Manna said it's a different feeling when you are on the sideline, standing there, uninvolved.

"It was my third one and it takes a toll on you sitting out from the sidelines and wishing you were out on the field," Manna said. "I would go out there and do anything for them, run as many miles as I could for them, or do as many sprints. So it kind of sucks when they're out on the field and I'm there, and I can't give them my all."

Manna said the rehab process was very painful at times, and it took a while to get over the hump of the mental aspect. One way he got over it was through his brother Jake. His brother, who has had two ACL surgeries, comforted and mentored Manna through this difficult time that they shared. Manna distinctly remembers when Jake looked him in the eye and asked him what he really wanted. Manna replied, saying that he wanted to go pro and be the best he could for Elon once he recovered.

After this, Manna's brother helped him focus on beating the injury that plagued him twice before and gave Manna a rigorous schedule to follow. For the entire 2023 season, Manna got up at 5 a.m., was on the field training by 5:30, trained with the team at 8, and after the team was done, Manna would continue to train or lift.

While Manna was rehabbing, he would attend many of the team's games, offering support to his teammates. As Manna started to heal and get closer to a point where he could put his foot to the ball and play like he used to, his mindset changed.

"In the beginning you have that thought of, 'Oh, I might not ever be able to get back to where I was,'" Manna said. "But then now looking at how much progress you made within that time, it really gives you motivation to keep going because you know that you can get better, no matter what, you can always get better."

After tearing his ACL midway through the 2022 season, Manna was fully cleared to play at the end of Sept. 2023. However, because the season was already in progress and Manna had missed a year's worth of not playing, the team decided to ease him back in. Manna didn't play at all in the 2023 season, rather was implemented into training sessions with the team.

Manna has finally returned to action this season, scoring 2 goals and 3 assists so far, and is trying to prove himself.

"There's definitely a chip in my shoulder to go out there and, not only prove to everybody else, but prove to myself that I didn't put all this work in for nothing," Manna said.



PHOTO COURTESY OF ELON ATHLETICS

Elon women's soccer redshirt sophomore Isa Murdock was coming off a freshman year where she played in every single game and ranked third on the team in points, tied for third in goals and tied for fourth in assists. It was after the season in the spring of 2023 when she tore her ACL, delaying her prospects of a successful sophomore season.

After getting surgery in May of 2023, Murdock went home for the summer, staying immobile most of the time, trying to adjust to her first-ever injury. Murdock said it was hard not being active.

"One thing people don't take into consideration is, yeah, you can't play soccer, but you can't do anything that you normally used to do," Murdock said. "I like playing spikeball, I like to run, I like to do all that stuff and, that's just all ripped away from you."

When she returned in the fall, Murdock — who has never had to sit out of soccer her entire life — had to learn how to support her team in a new way.



PHOTO COURTESY OF ELON ATHLETICS

"Every day you show up and you just got to sit there and watch," Murdock said. "It was just like a different kind of aspect that I had to learn. I had to find a different joy in it."

Murdock went to every practice but was often separated from the team while she did rehab work. During games, her primary role was supporter. Murdock said this separation made her feel disconnected from her teammates at times especially when she didn't travel with the team, preventing her from getting to know her teammates well enough.

The Phoenix had a rough 2023 season, going 3-9-5, and it was hard for Murdock to watch without being able to help. She said the season felt long, but eventually realized that she couldn't help the team on the field and had to focus on strengthening her knee and getting back in shape.

"It was really hard to just sit there and watch, but I just tried my best to be positive when everything wasn't going that great," Murdock said. "On the sidelines, I just tried to be super supportive and cheering everyone on, and then I would talk to everyone. I would just kind of listen to complaints about why people were frustrated."

A monumental moment in her recovery process was when she started moving again. She said it was important when she was able to take a step without being scared to do it.

"You took the little wins as big wins and obviously the confidence slowly came back, but just took time," Murdock said.

When she first got cleared to play soccer again, she said it felt awkward and didn't feel like herself. Murdock said she felt slow and it took time to get used to the level of contact soccer after months of rehab where people didn't touch her.

Going into this season, Murdock set goals for herself to make sure her hard work paid off and has had a strong start to the season this year, co-leading the team with 5 goals.

Luke Duska, a redshirt junior offensive lineman on Elon's football team, has battled through a pair of devastating injuries during his time at Elon. It began with his left knee. On the fourth practice of fall camp of his freshman year in 2021, one of Duska's teammates ran into the back of his leg and it snapped forward, tearing the ACL. Two years later, in August 2023, during the last scrimmage of fall camp, Duska tore his ACL again, this time in his right knee.

"It was kind of just on a normal play," Duska said. "I was just in pass protection, and I planted on my right knee, I guess a little too hard, and my ACL tore in that knee completely."

Duska — who said a player can return to sport after 12 months, but it takes two years to fully recover from a torn ACL — had two of these injuries in a span of two years.

"It took a second for me to get over the disappointment of it happening again, and then getting the surgery and knowing what was in front of me because I'd done it before, and then knowing that I was about to go through it again, it was kind of it was tough, for sure, to envision myself doing it," Duska said.

After surgery, the mobility in his knee was completely shut off. Duska said he felt helpless at the beginning of the rehab process. He said early on during the rehab he tried to get his quad moving so he could get mobility back in his knee. Once he got mobility back, he began strength training and started running again around the three month mark.

For the remainder of the recovery process, Duska focused on strengthening his knee to a position where he could play football. Duska often rehabbed at practices while the team conducted a standard practice session. Duska said rehabbing was isolating when the rest of the team would be preparing for a game, while he was off to the side doing his own training.

"It's tough when you're not practicing every day, you're just naturally going to feel a little isolated from what everyone else is doing because everyone else is kind of on the same routine and doing the same things every day," Duska said. "You're still around the team, but you're off to the side doing your own specific thing every day going through your rehab."



PHOTO COURTESY OF ELON ATHLETICS

Even as Duska got better and progressed through rehab, it was hard to build confidence that he would be OK.

"As much as you rehab and gain confidence doing weight training and individual drills and things like that, until you're actually playing football, it still takes time to kind of trust yourself mentally," Duska said. "But you just can continue to gain confidence as you go along and just keep doing what you've done in the past, and it just comes back naturally over time."

Duska has returned to football and has played in every game so far. He said it was a surreal experience to return to the sport he loves. Duska acknowledged recovering from season-long injuries is extremely tough, but believes perspective is the key to overcoming them.

"Once you're able to put it in perspective and realize it's not the end of the world, it's just a minor setback that you can overcome if you put in enough work to do it, once you get to that place, it all kind of happens naturally," Duska said.

SUSTAINABILITY WEEK: A CALL FOR CHANGE



Carlie Jo Lindsey
Columnist

Elon University recently held its campus-wide Sustainability Week, an event designed to raise awareness and inspire action on environmental issues. As part of the week's events, students and faculty had the privilege of attending a keynote address by Corban Addison. Addison is a prominent author and attorney whose work focuses on environmental and social justice. Addison's latest book, "Wastelands," examines the devastating environmental and human impacts of large-scale industrial farming, particularly in North Carolina. Addison's message carries particular weight for Elon students, as it emphasizes that the environmental challenges posed by industrial farming extend far beyond rural North Carolina. This is just one example of a larger environmental crisis impacting communities across the nation. For students at a university that prioritizes sustainability, this issue hits close to home. The pollution and environmental degradation caused by large-scale industrial agriculture threaten not only the well-being of rural residents but also the ecosystems that sustain us all. Addison's call to action is clear: it is our responsibility to stand up for North Carolina, to protect our home and the communities we care about. Elon students have the opportunity — and the obligation — to contribute to the broader fight for environmental justice. Addressing these challenges requires local leadership and collective action, and the Elon community is uniquely positioned to lead such a charge.

The environmental impact of such industrial farming operations is staggering, yet it is often hidden from the general public, particularly those living in urban areas far removed from these rural communities. Addison's work not only exposes the harsh

realities of environmental degradation but also highlights a broader conversation about the environmental costs of meat consumption. In the U.S., meat consumption averages over 100 kilograms per person annually, significantly higher than the global average of around 43 kilograms. This industrial-scale meat production is a major contributor to American culture. However, it is also a massive contributor to deforestation, water shortages and greenhouse gas emissions, exacerbating environmental issues both locally and globally. As Addison argues, these practices are not only harmful to the environment but also to the health and well-being of local communities, particularly those in marginalized areas. There is an urgent need for systemic change and more sustainable practices in food production.



THE CHALLENGE LIES IN BALANCING THE EXCITEMENT OF CONSUMPTION WITH THE NEED TO SUPPORT PRACTICES THAT CONTRIBUTE TO A HEALTHIER PLANET.

CARLIE JO LINDSEY
COLUMNIST

In addition to Addison's focus on the community struggles in North Carolina, he urges and hopes for a cultural shift in the American diet.

This discussion ties into the broader conversation on the environmental consequences of the U.S.'s meat-heavy consumption. According to a report from the Food and Agriculture Organization, livestock production is responsible for about 14.5% of global greenhouse gas emissions, with the U.S. being a major contributor due to its large-scale industrial operations. The U.S. consumes more than twice the global average of meat, which has led to an agricultural system that is heavily reliant on factory farming methods. As Addison emphasized, the environmental and social costs of this industry are immense, and it's clear that reforms to consumption patterns are necessary. With the global impact of these practices in mind, it's critical for U.S. consumers to become more mindful of the environmental footprint of their food choices, especially when it comes to meat.

Encouraging shifts toward plant-based diets or reducing meat consumption could play a pivotal role in alleviating the environmental strain caused by U.S. agriculture. Multiple studies have shown that reducing meat intake, particularly from resource-intensive animal products, could significantly lower carbon emissions, deforestation rates and water consumption associated with the meat industry. A 2018 report from the World Resources Institute found that dietary changes in the U.S. could contribute to a reduction of up to 60% of agricultural greenhouse gas emissions. Additionally, the U.S. is a key player in global sustainability efforts, and its influence on food systems is far-reaching. By addressing consumption habits, individuals can help drive a transformation that supports not only domestic environmental goals but also global efforts to combat climate change.

Addison's call for personal responsibility aligns with broader sustainability initiatives, urging both individuals and institutions to take a hard look at how our choices shape the world around us and to commit to more sustainable and mindful living.

Changing the culture of consumerism poses a significant challenge because, as consumers, we are often resistant to the idea of limiting or altering our consumption habits. The allure of purchasing new and exciting products, fueled by convenience and instant gratification, forms the core of modern consumer culture. We enjoy the act of buying and of acquiring "the next best thing." This mindset is reinforced by industries that encourage continuous consumption without consideration for the environmental impact. However, the narrative that sustainability requires giving up everything is misleading. Instead, the focus should be on mindful consumption. It should be about making conscious choices about where our products come from and how they impact the world. To promote sustainable habits, it's essential to shift the perspective that being eco-friendly means depriving oneself. We can still consume, but with greater awareness and responsibility. By supporting local businesses and ethical brands that prioritize sustainability over mass production, consumers can reduce their environmental footprint without sacrificing their enjoyment of new products. This requires a societal shift toward valuing quality and longevity in products, as well as the social and environmental responsibility behind them, rather than simply opting for the cheapest or most convenient options. The challenge lies in balancing the excitement of consumption with the need to support practices that contribute to a healthier planet.

Elon Watches: 'Young Frankenstein' – A comedy classic of 50 years



Rylan Ammerman
Columnist



A ghoulish castle drenches a hill in shadow. Lightning illuminates the cobweb ridden staircases of its interior. Outside, horses whine as werewolves howl throughout the thick forest of the town below. If this sounds like the introduction to a horror film, that couldn't be more incorrect.

Director and writer Mel Brooks' "Young Frankenstein" tells the story of Dr. Frederick Frankenstein, played by Gene Wilder, a stubborn neurosurgeon who inherits his grandfather's castle before realizing his work in reanimation experiments might be possible to recreate. While narratively similar to "Frankenstein," the original 1931 film adaptation of Mary Shelley's novel, Brooks takes the spoof approach, effectively translating his token hilarity to the classic story about the man that created a monster. "Young Frankenstein" wasn't just a riot when it was released in 1974, it still stands as one of the greatest comedies of all time.

The backbone of the entire project is Wilder. Best known for his role as the titular character in "Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory," Wilder is utterly valiant, delivering the strongest performance of his career here. Not only are his hysterical outbursts of anger wonderfully wild, but he can immediately tone them down in favor of a more classy comedic pause. Most memorably, perhaps, the doctor reminds people to pronounce his last name "Fronkensteen," an enjoyable bit, and a key indicator of his struggle with his destiny and familial legacy. Dr. Frankenstein is on the brink of insanity,

and while it's very entertaining to watch, it's also somber as his drive to excel in science leads to the birth of a monster. He's unsure what to do with his experiment, but it's certain that he needs comfort as much as his monster does. Despite Frankenstein's hard outershell, Wilder plays everything so sincerely that he's hard not to adore.



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COLUMNIST

Brooks' approach to comedy is a far cry from the modern approach. While films like "Superbad" and "The Interview" are great, they rely on straightforward vulgarity, sex and drug jokes instead of genuine wit. Wit is Brooks' bread and butter, allowing him to deliver the low-hanging jokes through a stacked supporting cast of characters. Whether it's the lovable hunchback, Igor (Marty Feldman), the lab assistant, Inga (Teri Garr), the crazy castle caretaker, Frau Blücher (Cloris Leachman) or Frankenstein's Monster (Peter Boyle), everyone gets

their time to shine. Comedy comes through their characters, and everyone contributes a unique delivery that melds into a harmonious whole. This is a gold standard for ensemble filmmaking.

While Brooks' direction never steers fully into horror-comedy, he weaponizes horror tropes for the benefit of his humor. As much of the film is set in the same ghastly lab used in the 1931 film, Brooks plays up the atmosphere, beautifully capturing endless spider-webs, rain and rusted machinery through a classic black and white color scheme. Additionally, Brooks'

understands that telling a joke is similar to directing a scary scene; it's all in the timing. Whenever rising orchestral music backs the mysterious secret passageways and foggy graveyards, the only thing hiding around the corner is another gag. Brooks' direction makes fun of the audience for even being on edge. He's here not to scare, only to show them a good time.

Ironically, the largest issue with "Young Frankenstein" is that it can get tiring. A great comedy should provide laughter throughout the entire runtime, but this film is front-loaded with its best gags. That's not to say the third act is bad — it still provides a satisfying conclusion with a few more chuckles, though the climax does become plot-heavy in order to provide the proper resolution. Brooks understood the importance of cohesion and coherence in his storytelling, but he sacrificed the spontaneity that was the standout aspect up until that point.

"Young Frankenstein" might start better than it ends, though that doesn't diminish the incredible experience it delivers. It still holds up 50 years later, delivering a spectrum of humor most films wouldn't go for today. That's not because the jokes are dated or inappropriate, rather it's Brooks' standout cast that allows his script to leap off the page. Through zany wit and understated comedic timing, Brooks' gem embodies the meaning of "comedy classic."



PHOTO CREDIT: 20TH CENTURY STUDIOS
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