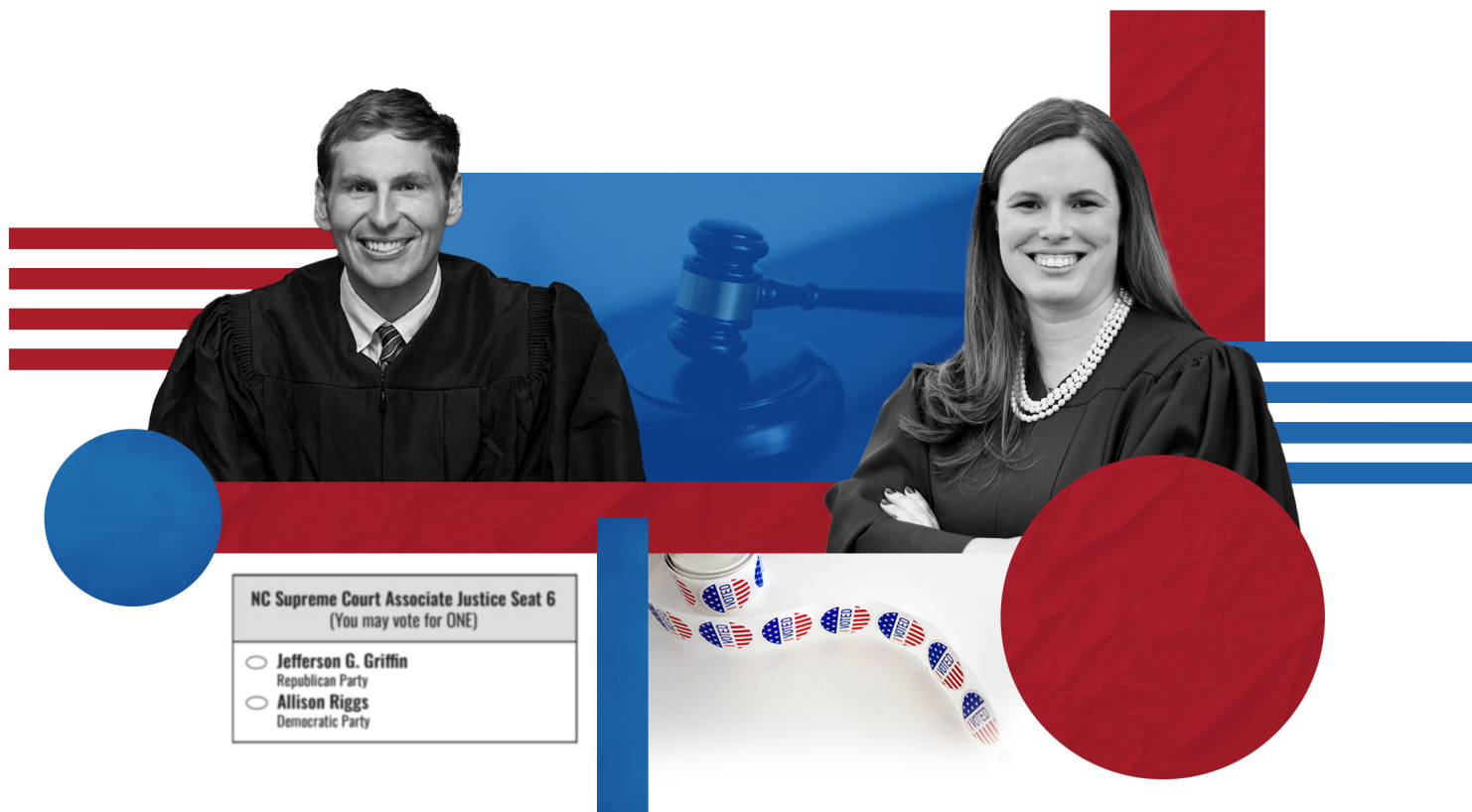


## CONTESTED BALLOTS THREATEN TO OVERTURN NORTH CAROLINA SUPREME COURT ELECTION



JEFFERSON GRIFFIN | FACEBOOK, ALLISON RIGGS, ELEMENTS DIGITAL | PEXELS

DESIGN BY ERIN MARTIN

5,000 absentee voters have 30 days to provide photo identification

**Miles Hayford**  
Elon News Network

Five months after the election, North Carolinians are still talking about who might win in the race for the highest state court.

North Carolina Supreme Court Justice Allison Riggs, a Democrat, was elected in November 2024, but her seat is still being contested by her opponent in the 2024 election, Republican Jefferson Griffin, after Riggs won by 734 votes after two recounts. Griffin challenged the ballots in November and claimed that 65,782 ballots should not be included in the election results because they failed to follow state law. This is the only statewide race from the November 2024 election that remains uncertified.

According to the list of challenged voters and the Elon University student directory, the 65,782 challenged ballots included votes from at least 19 Elon University students, but the state Supreme Court most recently ruled on April 11 that only challenged military and overseas absentee ballots are at risk of being thrown out if no photo ID is provided. A federal judge heard the case on April 12 and ordered the North Carolina State Board of Elections to enforce the state Supreme Court's ruling but blocked certification of those results until further order from

that federal court.

Jillian Auditori, a lecturer in political science and public policy at Elon University, said she believes Griffin continuing to pursue the contesting of the election after two recounts shows how fragile America's democracy is today.

"They're looking for other avenues to win races and that's not very democratic," Auditori said. "It's not a sign of a strong democracy when you start to try to find new and innovative ways to win elections."

Auditori said she does not believe all of the challenged voters will take action because of the confusion surrounding the process.

"It's going to be an effort for those voters, and likely they're not all going to make that effort to ensure that their vote ultimately is counted," Auditori said.

On April 4, the North Carolina Court of Appeals ruled that the challenged voters have to provide proof of identity to the North Carolina Board of Elections within 15 business days or their ballots will be thrown out. This means the election could be overturned as Riggs only won the race by 734 votes. Griffin currently serves on the Court of Appeals but recused himself from the case deliberations.

Griffin challenged three groups of voters: a group of more than 60,000 people whose voter

registration lacked the last four digits of their social security number or a driver's license number, thousands of military and overseas absentee voters and a few hundred absentee voters who have never lived in North Carolina but are connected to the state through their parents.

Of the estimated 60,000 voters who were challenged for incomplete registration, 722 are registered in Alamance County, including 80 in the town of Elon and 19 Elon University students. Sophomore Benjamin Doeringer-Smith is on the list and said he was pretty concerned when he first heard that his vote was in limbo. However, he believes that the voting mistakes he may have made should fall on him.

"The whole point of the process is to be secure. So if there was some kind of security breach due to wrong information or me filling out something twice or incorrectly, that falls on me," Doeringer-Smith said. "But at the same time, I do have that right to vote. So making sure it's maintained well and I'm doing the right things on my end, holding myself accountable while also holding other people accountable is important."

He said he believes he should have been made aware of his

mistakes earlier on in the process rather than being allowed to vote incorrectly.

"I feel like somebody should have told me earlier in the process," Doeringer-Smith said. "It definitely makes me feel a little violated in that sense of, 'Why did I stand in line for an hour at the ballots?'"

Bob Frigo, director of the Kernodle Center for Civic Life, wrote in a statement to Elon News Network that Elon Votes — Elon University's nonpartisan campus organization dedicated to helping students vote in upcoming elections — is following the guidance of the Alamance County Board of Elections. Frigo declined an interview and wrote that Elon Votes does not have a stance or perspective on this issue.

Following the Appeals Court ruling, Riggs appealed to the state Supreme Court, which had previously supported Griffin's cause when it blocked the North Carolina State Board of Elections from certifying Riggs' victory in December 2024.

But a surprise ruling came shortly after the North Carolina Supreme Court, which currently has a 5-2 conservative majority with Riggs on it, granted a temporary halt on the ruling on April 7. Riggs recused herself from the deliberations.

**722**

Number of votes in Alamance county that were previously challenged

**734**

The number of votes Allison Riggs beat Jefferson Griffin by in the November 2024 election

## Behavioral Center to open inpatient wing

After being open for 10 months, the center is not yet fully operational

**Avery Sloan**  
Elon News Network

Despite Alamance County's Behavioral Health Center opening its doors June 19, it is still waiting on a license from the federal government to open its 24/7 inpatient care wing, according to Donald Reuss, vice president of behavioral health and intellectual/developmental disability network operations at Vaya Health.

The behavioral health center was created in partnership with Vaya Health, the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services and RHA Health Services. The goal of this center is to provide people with mental health and substance abuse issues a place they can seek treatment. While the center isn't able to currently fill its 16 beds for inpatient care, it can still help people with both mental health and substance abuse issues. In the future, though, the plan is for this to be able to be used as a center where people with mental health issues can go instead of being sent to the county jail or emergency room, according to Alamance County Sheriff Terry Johnson.

The idea behind this is also that for some individuals, this is an alternative to being sent to the county jail, which is not able to focus on providing mental health treatments for people, Johnson said.

"I run the biggest mental health facility in this county, and that's the county jail," Johnson said. "There's a whole lot of people that have committed crimes had they had the proper mental health treatment, may not have ever offended."

Another issue the center has faced since its opening is finding law enforcement to provide 24/7 security. Right now, the center does have full security coverage, thanks to the county's sheriff's department. But, the sheriff's department has been looking for local law enforcement departments to help, Johnson said.

Johnson said if needed, his department will provide security on its own, but if there is no other assistance, it will face personnel shortages.

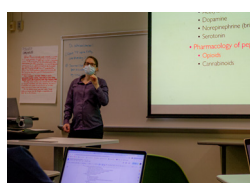
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15 students receive \$20,000 research grant

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Elon to launch new neuroscience major

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Easter travel hindered by Monday classes

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THE PENDULUM

A PUBLICATION OF  
ELON NEWS  
NETWORK

ESTABLISHED 1974 | VOLUME 54, EDITION 24  
Elon News Network is a daily news organization that includes a newspaper, website, broadcasts and podcasts. Letters to the editor are welcome and should be typed, signed and emailed to [enn@elon.edu](mailto:enn@elon.edu) as Word documents. ENN reserves the right to edit obscene and potentially libelous material. Lengthy letters may be trimmed to fit. All submissions become the property of ENN and will not be returned.

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

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The Pendulum

publishes weekly on Wednesdays

ENN Tonight

broadcasts Monday at 6 p.m.

ENN On Air

uploads Wednesdays

[elonnewsnetwork.com](http://elonnewsnetwork.com)

publishes daily



CORRECTIONS

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

# SPECIAL OLYMPICS PACKS SCHAR CENTER FOR ANNUAL SPRING GAMES

The Alamance County Special Olympics spring games returned to Elon for first time in 2 years

Abigail Hines

Elon News Network

Hundreds of athletes and volunteers filled Schar Center on April 10 for the 2025 Special Olympics Alamance County Spring Games. The athletes, ranging from elementary school age to adults, competed in a variety of events including softball throw, long jump and relay racing.

Julia Swartz is a special events coordinator for Special Olympics at Elon University and said it's important for athletes of all ages to be able to participate in these games.

"It's important to have representation of all ages like we have here because everyone deserves a chance to have fun and get a workout in," Swartz said. "I think that's why it's so important to have things like this, and it really brings the community together as well."

Throughout the day, students and adults rotated through each event, and volunteers and guests cheered from the stands as they competed. At the end of each event,

athletes were awarded a medal for their participation.

Ken Theodore helps coordinate events for residents at Ralph Scott Lifeservices, an assisted living facility for adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Theodore said the athletes from Ralph Scott enjoy this event every year.



IT KIND OF FEELS LIKE WE'VE BEEN PLANNING THIS EVENT FOR TWO YEARS BECAUSE IT NEVER HAPPENED LAST YEAR.

GEORGIA ELINSKI

SPECIAL OLYMPICS COORDINATOR

"Special Olympics is special for them," Theodore said. "We kind of agree with the motto that says, 'Let me be brave in my attempt.' As they attempt, we cheer them on, so they were definitely excited."

Since last year's Special Olympics Spring Games were rained out, the last time the

games were held at Elon was in 2023. Special Olympics coordinator Elon junior Georgia Elinski, said she and everyone else involved were looking forward to hosting this event for the first time in two years.

"It kind of feels like we've been planning this event for two years because it never happened last year," Elinski said. "That was a huge disappointment for us, so I can't even imagine for the athletes because they look forward to it so much. They've just been so excited for so long, and now that we can hold it inside, there was really no stress or anything about it being rained out. It's just great vibes all around."

Elon senior Elizabeth Price has been involved with the Special Olympics events since her sophomore year. Price said this annual event helps connect Elon to the local community and people around Alamance County.

"It's a way to emphasize how important it is to give back to our community and especially to this community of individuals with special needs," Price said. "I think it's so important that inclusion is a part of everyone's everyday life."

Special Olympics Alamance County hosts weekly events for its athletes. Students interested in volunteering can visit the Kernodle Center or the Special Olympics Alamance County website.



ABIGAIL HINES | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Special Olympics volunteers cheer for athletes as they compete in the relay race event during the 2025 Special Olympics Alamance County Spring Games on April 10 in Schar Center.

## SUDOKU PUZZLE

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## ANSWER KEY

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2	8	6	7	3	4	1	5	9
4	3	2	1	5	8	9	6	7
9	7	8	2	4	6	3	1	5
6	5	1	3	9	7	8	4	2
1	9	3	4	2	5	6	7	8
7	6	4	9	8	3	5	2	1
8	2	5	6	7	1	4	9	3





Students and community members walk throughout Elon’s campus with signs at the Together We Walk for Peace and Justice event hosted by the Elon Students for Peace and Justice Club on April 15.

KATRINA HOLTZ | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER



Attendees gather around a bracelet making station at the Trans & Queer Art Showcase hosted by the Gender and LGBTQIA Center on April 11 in McKinnon Hall.

VENUS SOTO | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER



Freshman Jillian Lebling and junior Mary Stallard perform as A and B in “Captain’s Log” on April 11 in the Center for the Arts Blackbox Theatre. “Captain’s Log” was produced by Elon NewWorks — an organization that produces student-written plays at Elon — and was about two freshman college students with social anxiety navigating loneliness, purpose and their new friendship. The play ran from April 12 to April 13.

KATRINA HOLTZ | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER



Attendees dance to popular Hispanic music with light sticks provided by the Latinx-Hispanic Union on April 11 during its signature semesterly event, La Habana, in College Street Taphouse.

ETHAN WU | PHOTO EDITOR



# State election results still yet to be certified

## JUDGE | from cover

After reviewing the case, the state Supreme Court ruled 4-2 on April 11 that the group of 60,000 challenged ballots must remain in the election count, but upheld the Court of Appeals ruling on a group of about 5,000 military and overseas absentee voters, ordering voters to show their photo ID within 30 days after they are notified, a significant increase from the original 15-day “cure period” the Court of Appeals ordered. The court also upheld the Court of Appeals ruling on absentee voters who have never lived in the state, ruling that these voters should never have been allowed to vote. One Republican and one Democratic judge voted against the decision. Democratic North Carolina Supreme Court

Justice Anita Earls concurred with the ruling on the estimated 60,000 ballots that had incomplete registration but disagreed with the court’s other rulings, saying that changing voting rules after the election violates precedent. “It is no small thing to overturn the results of an election in a democracy by throwing out ballots that were legally cast consistent with all election laws in effect on the day of the election,” Earls wrote in her opinion. “Some would call it stealing the election, others might call it a bloodless coup, but by whatever name, no amount of smoke and mirrors makes it legitimate.” Gov. Josh Stein, a Democrat, condemned the court’s ruling, calling it a “dark day” on social media on April 11 and wrote that active military voters should not have to “jump through hoops” that other voters

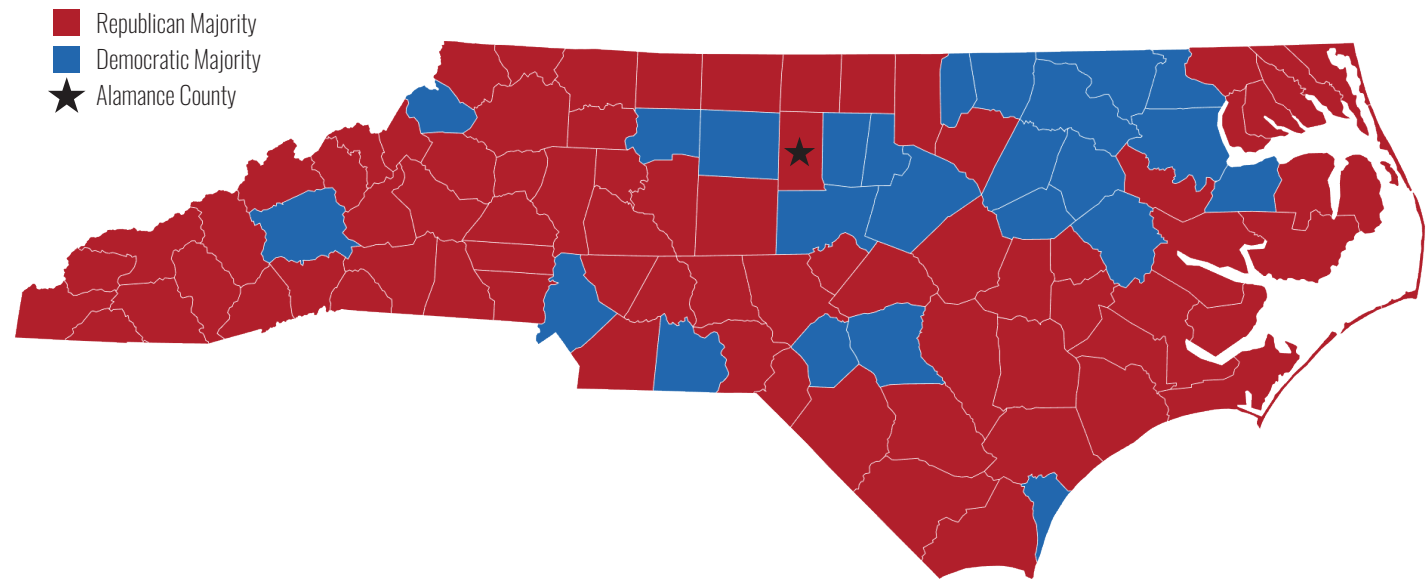
don’t as it violates the constitutional right to be treated equally under the law. Both Riggs’ and Griffin’s campaigns did not respond to Elon News Network’s request for comment. The 60,000 ballots being reinstated is a big win for Riggs, but with only a 734-vote lead, the few thousand votes from military and overseas voters could change the outcome of the election. Auditori said that despite it being five months after the election, if the election were to be overturned, it would be an easy transition for Griffin. “The Supreme Court is currently made up of five Republicans, two Democrats with Riggs. So if she loses her seat, then you’re looking at a very politically unbalanced court,” Auditori said. “But for Griffin to step into that, that will be to his advantage. He

will become part of a court that is likely glad to have him there.” Soon after the monumental decision by the state Supreme Court, federal courts got involved. After the ruling was announced, Riggs released a statement expressing her gratitude for the reversal of the 60,000 voters but promised to seek action in federal court regarding the other rulings. She filed a motion in the U.S. District Court in Raleigh asking for an injunction to prevent the appeals court decisions from being carried out immediately. “I’m the proud daughter of a 30-year military veteran who was deployed overseas, and it is unacceptable that the Court is choosing to selectively disenfranchise North Carolinians serving our country, here and overseas,” Riggs wrote. “I will not waiver in my fight to protect the fundamental freedoms for which our military service members and their families have sacrificed so much.”

US Chief District Judge Richard Myers ordered the North Carolina State Board of Elections on April 12 to begin proceeding with the state Supreme Court’s order but barred them from certifying the results of the election until further order from the court. The state board of elections will begin notifying affected voters soon as Myers set an April 15 deadline for the state elections board to provide him details on their plan to remedy the election results. Auditori said Griffin’s disputing of the election will continue to be a blueprint for contested elections in the years to come and that it only worsens the idea of unfair elections in today’s political climate. “The public is going to feel less and less convinced that we are having free and fair elections when things like this happen,” Auditori said. “It continues to undermine our system of elections when cases like this make their way into the courts and then have success in the courts.” Fiona McAllister contributed to the reporting of this story.

## NC Supreme Court Seat 2024 Election Results

(D) Allison Riggs defeated (R) Jefferson Riggs in November 2024 by 734 votes after two recounts



DATA FROM NORTH CAROLINA STATE BOARD OF ELECTIONS

DATA VISUALIZATION BY MILES HAYFORD

# Behavioral Health Center looks to local police for security

## CENTER | from cover

“We’re going to do it if we have to do it ourselves,” Johnson said. “But I believe that it’s imperative that we ensure the security of that facility.” On March 17, the Alamance County Commissioners voted to approve a memorandum of understanding to allow for Extra Duty Solution to provide security. EDS is a company that allows members of local law enforcement departments to sign up for additional security shifts. Johnson said while this is a solution, it is not without its issues, as this is getting security officers who are already working full-time to provide additional services. “I just want to make sure that when our people go to do security, their eyes are wide

open, and their ability to perform their duties to the highest state that they can do that,” Johnson said. But not every local law enforcement agency has agreed to supply officers for EDS work. The Graham, Burlington and town of Elon departments all declined to sign on, but Gibsonville and Mebane agreed to allow officers to participate. Johnson said he does not know why specifically some departments have not agreed to participate in providing security but said he thinks that each department should step up to the plate and help out. “If the city of Burlington, city of Graham had to run a detention facility, they’d be more than happy to supply people,” Johnson said. Both Burlington and Elon police chiefs declined Elon News Network’s request for

an interview but sent written statements. Burlington Chief of Police Alan Balog wrote that the county’s center is outside of the department’s scope of work, as it is a county facility. Because of staffing issues and concern participation will lead to injuries, Balog wrote the Burlington department will not participate. Balog wrote that the department already does not have enough police officers to staff already existing extra duty assignments and cannot commit to more. “The addition of another assignment that is the responsibility of another government entity will negatively impact all the other schools, churches, and businesses that currently rely on Burlington police officers for security,” Balog wrote. Balog wrote that history has shown patients will be violent, leading to necessary physical confrontation from officers. He wrote this leads to less officers able to be on duty at a given time if they are out due to injury, and that this leads to increased legal liability. He also wrote that the Burlington police already maintain 24/7 emergency calls and non emergency calls – including those at the center. “Burlington police officers are very frequently at the facility, sometimes multiple times per day. These responses have, and will continue, to occur,” Balog wrote. “This is a significant resource contribution by the Burlington Police Department to the effective operation of the Alamance County Diversion Facility, as well as facilities across the whole City.” Elon Chief of Police Kelly Blackwelder wrote the department was reluctant to participate for similar staffing issues and concerns of incurring additional financial costs to the department and taxpayers. “We have not been operating at capacity consistently in over two years. EPD has

difficulties mitigating overtime for officers to cover patrol shifts, so assigning officers to extra duty out of town only exacerbates that issue,” Blackwelder wrote. “Agreeing to do so puts our staff and community in danger by having our officers without sufficient coverage in Elon.” County Commissioner Pamela Tyler Thompson said while she thinks security for this center is imperative, it should be the local department’s responsibility, as this was the county’s project. “It’s really the county’s issue,” Thompson said. “And you can’t beat up other municipalities if they don’t want to play like that right now.” Thompson also said she feels the center is not yet fulfilling its purpose, as it is not open for inpatient care yet. “It’s going to be a year and a couple months, and we should be up and running and not missing anybody, because that was the whole point of this is to make a major difference for this population,” Thompson said. While Reuss said he does not know for sure when the license will come in allowing for inpatient care, he said it should be within the next month. Reuss said in order for the center to open last year, they prioritized its unlicensed services. Three months after it opened, the center obtained its intensive outpatient services for substance abuse license and now the inpatient facilities is the last license remaining. Johnson said this is something he is deeply passionate about and will do whatever it takes to ensure that it has security and is fully operational. “The whole purpose of the thing is to see people’s lives turned around, where they can go back into their family environment and be a productive citizen, stay on their medication or whatever is necessary to help them have a better life,” Johnson said.



EVERY SLOAN | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

An officer from the Alamance County’s Sheriff’s Office monitoring the main entrance of the behavioral health center. The center maintains 24/7 security coverage.



# Elon announces 2025 Lumen Scholar winners

15 students will be awarded \$20,000 to fund research projects with mentors

Avery Sloan  
Elon News Network

Elon’s 2025 Lumen Prize winners will receive \$20,000 to support their mentored research and creative projects over the next two years. Director of the Lumen Prize Michael Carignan announced Elon University’s 2025 Lumen Scholar winners April 10 and said it was a competitive pool of applicants and many difficult decisions had to be made.

“The ones that won are truly exceptional,” Carignan said. “These are exceptional students doing very interesting things. And so the university is, if I may speak, for the university, the university wants to support that kind of thing at this level.”

While Carignan declined to share the specific number of students who had applied, he said “dozens and dozens” of students applied — and that generally, not only are the number of applications increasing, but also the quality of

the applications is improving. One theory Carignan said he has for this is that the number of honors and other fellows programs at Elon has increased over time, and many Lumen Scholars are honors or other fellows. This year, six out of the 15 prize winners are honors fellows. Last year, there were five out of 15, and the year before, there were nine out of 15. The class of 2027, which is this year’s newly selected Lumen Scholars, has 57 honors fellows, the

“

THESE ARE EXCEPTIONAL STUDENTS DOING VERY INTERESTING THINGS. AND SO THE UNIVERSITY IS, IF I MAY SPEAK, FOR THE UNIVERSITY, THE UNIVERSITY WANTS TO SUPPORT THAT KIND OF THING AT THIS LEVEL.

MICHAEL CARIGNAN  
DIRECTOR OF THE LUMEN PRIZE

class of 2026 has 47 fellows and the class of 2025 has 24.

“These are people who are already going to do a big thesis project in their fellows program, so they’re already thinking about it as first and second year students, and so we tend to get a healthy amount of applications from those populations,” Carignan said. “And those populations are a lot bigger in the last two years.”

A theory Carignan had as to why the quality of applications is improving is that professors who mentor students are gaining more experience helping students produce undergraduate research.

“Each passing year, we have more people with experience who can help get these students kind of up to competitive speed in the few months leading up to the application deadline,” Carignan said.

Student research topics cover a wide range of topics depending on what students are studying and focus on specialized topics within their field of study, in order to produce original research within two years, Carignan said. He also said many students tend to gravitate toward a topic within a faculty mentor’s field of study.

“

THESE ARE PEOPLE WHO ARE ALREADY GOING TO DO A BIG THESIS PROJECT IN THEIR FELLOWS PROGRAM, SO THEY’RE ALREADY THINKING ABOUT IT AS FIRST AND SECOND YEAR STUDENTS, AND SO WE TEND TO GET A HEALTHY AMOUNT OF APPLICATIONS FROM THOSE POPULATIONS

MICHAEL CARIGNAN  
DIRECTOR OF THE LUMEN PRIZE

Students are selected based on the merits of their project, how feasible it is and if it is a novel idea. Applications are due the week before Spring Break, and Carignan said many students spend time in the fall semester working on their proposals, then

following Spring Break over the next two weeks, about 30 finalists are asked to interview by a panel of interdisciplinary faculty and administrators, and from there, 15 students are selected.

“Who’s got the special passion that we like, that we know will motivate a great project?” Carignan said. “Who really knows how to talk about their project? Are they really familiar with the literature?”

Students who are not selected are given feedback on what was said during the selection committee’s evaluation meetings, so that the application process can be a learning opportunity for students, Carignan said.

Carignan said he plans to ask for a bump in funding from the Provost’s office, so in the future this program can support more students to keep up with the growing demand for the scholarship.

“They keep telling me it’s a good problem to have, I’m the one who has to break the bad news to people who’ve worked hard, and some of them have been working since last fall on these projects,” Carignan said. “It’s not that we don’t think they’re great projects, it’s just that it’s so competitive we can only award 15.”



**Nicolas Alvarez**  
**Project:** Learning to Walk: Applying Lessons from Infant Motor Development to a Reinforcement Learning Policy for Locomotion of Quadrupedal Robots  
**Mentor:** Blake Hament



**Izzy Bennett**  
**Project:** Sexual Reproductive Health Knowledge and Counseling: Perspectives of Emerging Adult Women with Sickle Cell Disease and Healthcare Providers  
**Mentor:** Cindy Fair



**Jonathan Berkson**  
**Project:** Peering into Dust and Gas: Improving Environmental Modeling to Identify Intermediate-Mass Black Holes  
**Mentor:** Chris Richardson



**Gage Brinker**  
**Project:** Evaluating Sleep and Recovery in Firefighters: A Comparative Analysis of Shift Schedule Using WHOOP Wearable Technology to Optimize the Efficacy of the First Responders in Our Community  
**Mentor:** Madison Chandler



**Elise Butterbach**  
**Project:** Mathematical Modeling of Viral Myocarditis to Investigate Excessive Inflammation in the Heart  
**Mentor:** Hwayeon Ryu & Efrain Rivera-Serrano



**Jaylem Cheek**  
**Project:** Unveiling Ancient Seeds: An Improved Physical Framework to Detect Relic Black Holes in the Local Universe  
**Mentor:** Chris Richardson



**Jack DeLucco**  
**Project:** Isolating RF Signals Subject to Electromagnetic Interference  
**Mentor:** Richard Blackmon



**Makenna Grozis**  
**Project:** The Hidden Link: Endocrine Disruptors, Autoimmunity, and the Oral-Gut Microbial Axis  
**Mentor:** Jen Uno



**Monika Jurevicius**  
**Project:** Soviet Legacy and EU Influence: Examining Lithuania’s Media Landscape from 1990 to Today  
**Mentor:** Alex Luchsinger



**Aubrey Kocsis**  
**Project:** Fight Club or Boys Club? Examining Structural Inequality and Gendered Movement in Stage Combat Choreography  
**Mentor:** Lauren Kearns



**Lola Moore**  
**Project:** The Falling and the Fallen: Interconnected Short Stories on American Identity and the Restless Nature of Happiness in a Patchwork Narrative  
**Mentor:** Drew Perry



**Adam Reisman**  
**Project:** Menstrual Cycle-Based Periodized Training on Performance, Muscle Soreness, and Rates of Recovery in Active Females  
**Mentor:** Titch Madzima



**Sophie Remisio**  
**Project:** Filtering the Future: A Regenerable Approach to PFAS Filtration Using Non-Conventional Sorbents  
**Mentor:** Will Plier

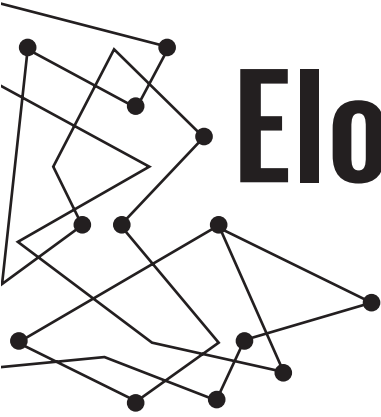


**Aidan Spoerndle**  
**Project:** Design and Implementation of a Computer Vision-Based Robot to Assist Row-Intercropping Farming  
**Mentor:** Joel Hollingsworth



**Muhammad Awal Tahiru**  
**Project:** Decoherence and the Arrow of Time: Investigating the Quantum Origins of Temporal Asymmetry  
**Mentor:** Martin Kamela





# Elon launches neuroscience major for fall 2025



Major will build on existing neuroscience minor; new Bachelors of Art, Science

**Anjolina Fantaroni**  
Elon News Network

Elon University will launch new Bachelor of Arts and Bachelor of Science degree programs in neuroscience beginning in fall 2025, in line with the university's commitment to science, technology, education and mathematics education in its Boldly Elon strategic plan.

The new major — housed in Elon College, the College of Arts and Sciences — will build on the success of Elon's existing neuroscience minor. Roughly 180 students are working toward completing the neuroscience minor, which started in 2009, according to coordinator of the neuroscience minor and professor of exercise science, Matt Wittstein.

“WE’VE FINALLY GOTTEN IT THROUGH THAT PROCESS, AND I’M REALLY EXCITED.”

**MATT WITTSTEIN**  
COORDINATOR OF THE NEUROSCIENCE MINOR

Wittstein said the university has tried to develop the major a few times in the past.

“We’ve finally gotten it through that process, and I’m really excited,”

Wittstein said. “We’ll have three majors: a B.A. in neuroscience, a B.S. in neuroscience, and a B.S. with a concentration in exercise neuroscience.”

According to Wittstein, the Bachelor of Arts will require 48 semester hours, and the Bachelor of Science will require 64 semester hours.

He said he has already received emails from advisers who said they have students interested in considering the major.

“They are excited for the opportunities that it brings in terms of potential research and undergraduate research that matches collaboration with other programs,” Wittstein said.

Wittstein said that in fall 2024, he worked together with other neuroscience and external faculty, including School of Communications and Business School faculty members, to create a mission and vision statement and plan new courses.

“Going into this summer, it’s figuring out how to operate a major that doesn’t live within its own department, as well as preparing to add some additional faculty to meet the needs of the program over the future,” Wittstein said.

Student interest in neuroscience at Elon has surged in recent years, with students adding the minor and focusing on neuroscience in their undergraduate research.

The neuroscience minor consists of one required course — behavioral

neuroscience — and 16 credit hours of electives from the departments of psychology, biology, chemistry, computer science and exercise science. The neuroscience minor has roughly 180 students because many courses from other departments that are required or elective courses correlate with the minor, according to Wittstein.

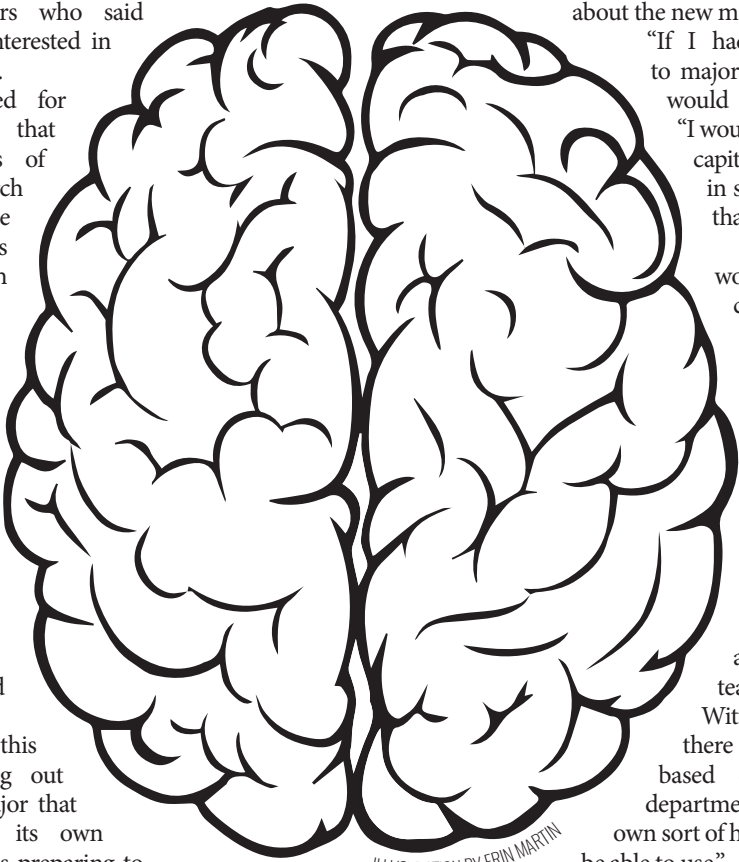


ILLUSTRATION BY ERIN MARTIN

Elon junior Hallie Beeker is a neuroscience minor on the pre-med track who is currently conducting research using electroencephalogram technology, more commonly known as EEG. EEG technology tests activity in the brain using electrodes placed on the scalp. Wittstein is her mentor.

“It is pretty tedious,” Beeker said. “My project looks at event-related potentials in people who exhibit habits of disordered eating and exercise behaviors.”

She will research how the brain reacts to pictures of foods with different calories and different levels of exercise.

Beeker said she was both excited and jealous when she heard the news about the new major.

“If I had the opportunity to major in neuroscience, I would have,” Beeker said. “I would have been able to capitalize on my interest in such a different way than I have now.”

While the program won’t initially have a centralized physical space, Wittstein said community building through departments will be a key priority.

“We’ll teach just in the same way that exercise science, and psychology, and biology, and chemistry teach their courses,” Wittstein said. “Since there are a lot of lab-based courses in other departments, they have their own sort of home laboratories to be able to use.”

Wittstein said he anticipates that the new major could bring in students who might not have considered applying to Elon. This past fall, Elon’s freshman enrollment was down 7.4%, according to the fall 2024 registrar’s report, and the top major in the College of Arts and Sciences is psychology.

Biology, psychology and exercise

science are three programs that could lose some prospective students with the start of the neuroscience major, but Wittstein said those numbers will balance out over time.

“I think there might be some short-term shifting of students, but in the long term, I think it’s going to be healthier for the whole university in each of those programs,” Wittstein said.

“I WAS THRILLED WHEN I HEARD ABOUT IT, AND I TRIED TO SWITCH MY MAJOR, OR ADD ON NEUROSCIENCE AS A DOUBLE MAJOR, BUT I JUST SAW IT’S JUST TOO MUCH. I’M REALLY EXCITED, AND I THINK THAT’S GOING TO DO REALLY WELL AT ELON.”

**HALLIE BEEKER**  
ELON JUNIOR

As the university prepares for the launch of the new major, students such as Beeker are excited to see neuroscience gain more visibility on campus.

“I was thrilled when I heard about it, and I tried to switch my major, or add on neuroscience as a double major, but I just saw it’s just too much,” Beeker said. “I’m really excited, and I think that’s going to do really well at Elon.”

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# Elon University’s lack of religious exemption for Easter Monday sparks concern among students

Easter Monday classes affect students’ plans to be with family, travel

**Rachel Holley**  
Elon News Network

Some students expressed disappointment that Easter Monday is not a religiously exempt holiday.

Last year, the last day of Spring Break was on Easter, but for at least the past five years before that, Elon University had Easter Monday off.

Easter Sunday, also known as resurrection Sunday, is a Christian Holiday that celebrates the resurrection of Jesus.

More than 40% of students at Elon identify with Christian denominations that celebrate Easter, according to Elon’s spring 2025 Registrar’s Report.

Abby Bradbury, a sophomore at Elon, said celebrating Easter traditions with her family is important to her.

“Growing up, we had specific traditions for Easter. We would go to church and then we would go to IHOP, which isn’t the most fanciest thing in the entire world, but it was a family tradition,” Bradbury said.

Because Elon University is holding classes on Easter Monday, the day after Easter, Bradbury said she won’t be able to spend the holiday with her family.

“It’s hard. I can’t go home at all. I’m from Houston, Texas, so the flight there is about

three and a half hours, and it’s not easy to get a direct flight out,” Bradbury said. “So there was just really no possibility of me being able to go home this year for Easter.”

For Bradbury, not spending the holiday with her family due to having classes on Easter Monday is unsettling.

“I am very upset that we don’t get Easter Monday off because I don’t get to be with my family,” Bradbury said. “I don’t get to continue those traditions. And although I can call them on the phone, it’s just not the same.”

“

SINCE I HAVE GOTTEN BACK INTO MY FAITH AND WANTED TO LEARN MORE, IT IS FRUSTRATING THAT I CAN’T HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO GO HOME

**ABBY BRADBURY**  
ELON SOPHOMORE

Bradbury said being away from home has made her stronger in her faith, and not being able to spend the holiday with her family at this time is upsetting to her.

“Since I have gotten back into my faith

and wanted to learn more, it is frustrating that I can’t have the opportunity to go home,” Bradbury said.

While Bradbury plans to spend the holiday with her friends in Catholic Campus Ministry, she said it won’t feel like it does with her family.

“I do have friends here that are within CCM, so I will spend Easter with them,” Bradbury said. “We do have classes Monday, so I will most likely have homework and stuff, which is not how I’d like to spend my Easter Monday.”

University Chaplain and Dean of Multifaith Engagement Kirstin Boswell said that if students are planning on missing class, having open conversations with professors will be beneficial.

“My first advice is to make sure that they’re being fully open with their professors, that they’re communicating and making sure that any missed work is made up,” Boswell said.

But for students who want to celebrate Easter that are unable to leave, Boswell advised students to take advantage of the resources on Elon’s campus.

“We have a number of communities on campus, practicing communities, and there will be many Easter services that they can choose from, whether it’s Catholic mass or our Protestant services,” Boswell said. “And so I would advise them to take advantage of that community and attend those services and be involved in that fellowship.”

She also recommends that everyone take advantage of the religious holiday

notification form provided at the beginning of each semester. While Easter Monday is not listed as one of the 29 holidays on the form, Good Friday, the Friday before Easter Sunday, is.

“We have a process that’s called the religious holiday notification form, and that process is put in place so that students can request days of observance off. Now of course, they still have to complete the work that would be missed, but it’s not considered an absence,” Boswell said.

“

MY FIRST ADVICE IS TO MAKE SURE THAT THEY’RE BEING FULLY OPEN WITH THEIR PROFESSORS

**KRISTIN BOSWELL**  
UNIVERSITY CHAPLAIN AND DEAN OF MULTIFAITH ENGAGEMENT

For those who wish to celebrate Easter locally, the Elon Community Church holds worship services every Sunday at 10:30 a.m.



Members of Alamance County gathered on April 14 in the Elon Community Church for the Palm Sunday service to celebrate the beginning of Holy Week, which ends on Easter Sunday.

ETHAN WU | PHOTO EDITOR





PHOTO ILLUSTRATION BY ERIN MARTIN

# \$6.6 BILLION BET IN FIRST YEAR OF LEGALIZED SPORTS BETTING IN NORTH CAROLINA

The North Carolina Problem Gambling Helpline saw an increase in intake calls after legalization

**Miles Hayford**  
Elon News Network

It's been 13 months since sports betting was legalized in North Carolina, and the inaugural year was a success for the state and betting operators but led to an increase in gambling addiction.

A total of \$6.6 billion in bets were placed in the first year, with players winning more than \$5.85 billion. The eight authorized sports betting operators — Underdog Sports Wagering, BETMGM, ESPN Bet, Draft Kings, bet365, Fanatics Sportsbook, FanDuel Sportsbook and Tribal Casino Gaming Enterprise — made more than \$713 million in the first year and the state received \$128 million in tax revenue. The 2025 NCAA Tournament allowed North Carolina to see record numbers in bets as North Carolinians enjoyed their first full March as legalized sports bettors. More than \$667 million was bet in just one month — the highest ever in state history, according to figures released by the North Carolina Lottery Commission. The operators received more than \$643 million.

Elon professor of sport management Bill Squadron said it got off to as good of a start as people hoped it would.

"It has generated a significant amount of tax revenue, it's given North Carolina residents an opportunity to do something legally that many people were probably doing illegally, and for other residents, an opportunity to do something that they may have had an interest in doing," Squadron said.

The legalization has made a significant financial impact on the state. The \$128 million in tax revenue comes from an 18% tax on gross wagering revenue, which is the difference between the amount players wager minus their winnings. The tax revenue will

be used in a number of ways. This includes \$1 million annually given to North Carolina Amateur Sports; \$1 million annually to the North Carolina Youth Outdoor Engagement Commission; 30% to the North Carolina Major Events, Games, and Attractions Fund; 20% will be distributed between the 13 state universities' athletic departments; 50% to the state's General Fund; and \$2 million to the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services to fund gambling addiction treatment and education programs.

Squadron said it is important to provide some of the money to be spent toward education and treatment around gambling.

“ONE OF THE POTENTIAL IMPACTS IS THAT NORTH CAROLINA, OVERALL AS A CENTER FOR SPORTS ACTIVITIES OF ALL KINDS, WILL REALLY GROW.”

**BILL SQUADRON**  
SPORT MANAGEMENT PROFESSOR

"It's certainly an important area to study very rigorously, and make sure that you know everything that can be done to help people who have issues with gambling to address them," Squadron said. "It's important to study the issue, keep a very close eye on it and take steps to mitigate it where that's possible."

Gambling saw a sharp increase in 2024 after the legalization, according to a North Carolina Problem Gambling Helpline data report given to Elon News Network. The NCDHHS supports the helpline and surrounding programs. From 2023 to 2024, the helpline saw an increase in intake calls

from 895 to 1,288. There was also a huge increase in text conversations as there were 172 in 2023 and after the legalization there were 449 in 2024. After several years of lottery and casino gambling taking up most of the gambling in North Carolina, calls about sports betting jumped up from 76 in 2023 to 262 in 2024.

Thirty-nine states and Washington, D.C., have legalized sports betting since the Supreme Court ruled that states could begin legalizing it in 2018. North Carolina's gambling addiction numbers match a national trend. A study conducted by researchers from the University of California San Diego found that internet searches for help with gambling addiction increased 23% nationally since legalization in 2018.

Hannah Jones, a press assistant for the NCDHHS, wrote in a statement to Elon News Network that the organization is prioritizing sports betting gambling as the issue grows in North Carolina.

"There are many partners who are increasingly focused on investing in responsible gambling tools and practices," Jones wrote. "This includes statewide regulations and in-app safeguards. We have also been focusing on research and data to be able to better understand the impact of this expansion, and to more quickly shift or modify our resources and programs to meet any new or emerging need."

Jones wrote that funding and awareness are the most important tools the NCDHHS has to put in safeguards that combat sports betting addiction. It is partnering with East Carolina University and Birches health to provide metrics-based gambling disorder treatment and is working with EPIC Risk Management, an NCAA funded organization that provides prevention education on college campuses to athletes about the risks involved with sports betting.

Elon professor of economics Brandon Sheridan said sports betting and the tax revenue associated with it will be beneficial to the state.

"I don't think it's something that necessarily transforms an economy ... I think it's just one of those extra sources of revenue that allows you some additional flexibility in what you spend on, how much you spend on things and what your sources of revenue are," Sheridan said. "It allows the state to be more generous in some other areas. Half of that's going to the General Fund, so in theory, they can spend that on education or infrastructure."

He said it won't be an economic boon, providing significantly more jobs, but it is an "extra pot of money" that allows the state to have increased funding for certain projects. However, Sheridan believes the state needs to be careful with relying on this tax revenue annually. Sheridan said people will be less likely to gamble when the economy is doing poorly in order to protect their savings. Also, sports betting can lead to an increase in debt in North Carolina if addiction becomes prevalent. According to Sheridan, the state should be careful how much spending they commit to based on sports betting-related tax revenue projections.

Another potential impact from the legalization that is starting to be seen is the boost of tourism and entertainment in the state. Thirty percent of the tax revenue generated is going to the newly created North Carolina Major Events, Games and Attractions Fund. The fund allows local governments in North Carolina to apply for funds to support its efforts to attract major events and stimulate economic and tourism activity.

"One of the potential impacts is that North Carolina, overall as a center for sports activities of all kinds, will really grow," Squadron said. "That's one of the potential positive impacts that can have ripple effects where it adds to jobs, it raises the visibility of North Carolina as a state that's a leader in the sports world and creates more entertainment opportunities for North Carolina residents."

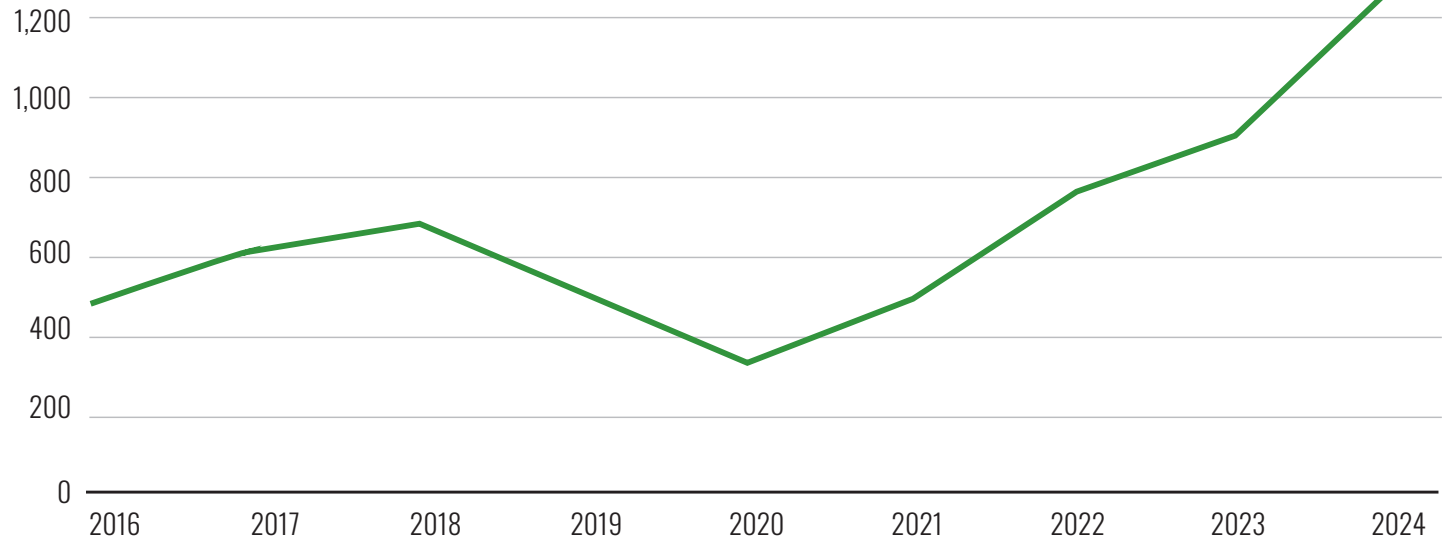
North Carolina is only a year into legal sports betting, however, and more evolution and change is likely to occur. One such change being considered in the General Assembly right now is a ban on prop bets on college sports. Prop bets aren't dependent on the outcome of a game, but rather rely on things that individual players do like scoring a touchdown or scoring a certain amount of points. A group of lawmakers recently introduced House Bill 828, which would ban prop bets and limit betting at in-person sportsbooks when college games are taking place at the facility. The bill has been supported by the NCAA due to the frequency of harassment of athletes on social media relating to prop bets.

Squadron said changes such as this are crucial for sports betting's future in North Carolina.

"It's very incumbent on regulators and legislators and academics to keep a very careful eye on how that sports betting market and activity are evolving," Squadron said. "Continuous monitoring and scrutiny makes a lot of sense. I think it is off to a very good start, but that doesn't mean that things are perfect, and you always want to look for ways to improve the situation."

## North Carolina Gambling Intake Calls Per Year

Number of calls the NC Problem Gambling Helpline receives each year



DATA FROM NORTH CAROLINA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

DATA VISUALIZATION BY MILES HAYFORD