

SGA WRESTLES WITH LOW STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

Members of Elon University's Student Government Association consider causes and solutions to low voter turnout and lack of attendance

Samantha Hinton
Elon News Network

A LACK OF PUBLIC ATTENDANCE at Elon University's Student Government Association's recent meetings and a 68% decrease in voter turnout for freshman class elections compared to the year prior have some members of SGA reconsidering the organization's methods to engage students.

Class of 2026 President Selma Maric said she's worried that low student engagement with SGA, especially within the freshman class, is due to a lack of awareness about what SGA is. According to junior William Wood, SGA's vice president of communications, SGA is a multifaceted organization dedicated to serving all members of the Elon community by advocating for the rights, opinions and interests of the student body.

Earlier this month, 179 freshmen cast ballots in their representative election, according to Elon News Network's previous coverage. This is 10.6% of the 1,692-member class, which is the largest class in Elon's history.

During the class of 2025 election last year, 552 freshmen voted — a participation rate of 23% within the 1,591-member class. Also according to the university's fall registrar's reports, SGA freshman elections have increasingly had less voter turnout for the past seven years, despite class sizes increasing.

"I feel as if numerous students here have either never heard of SGA or don't know what SGA does," Maric said. "Students want to participate in events and support their school, but they aren't exactly sure how to do that without the blasting of events online

or in person. ... I think there is a lot of progress that can be made towards student engagement, especially geared to the first-years who are just starting out at Elon and want to feel a larger sense of community."

Maric said based on her experience talking with voters, it was not that freshmen don't want to vote, it was that many simply did not know how to. Maric said Phoenix Connect, the university's website for students to join campus organizations and vote in SGA elections, wasn't heavily advertised to freshmen, and most don't know how to even access it.

Freshman Andrew Weiss did not participate in the recent election and said he was unfamiliar with Phoenix Connect. He said he was unsure about what SGA does and how it impacts the student body.

"It is in charge of leading and deciding on what goes on in the school, I guess," Weiss said. "That's my best guess. I have no idea. I really don't know."

Maric said a lack of knowledge among students about SGA doesn't necessarily demonstrate a lack of interest, but limited understanding also means students see no clear pathway to get involved. Weiss agreed, emphasizing the importance of visibility to increase SGA's presence within the student body and get better feedback from students.

"They could send out polls on what students want. If they're trying to help out the students, then they should ask what they want help with and try to do that," Weiss said.

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Elon nursing improves interactive environment for second year

Elon nursing students and faculty reflect the program's development since it began last year

Julia Penchuk
Elon News Network

Sophomore Maddie Xerras said she fell in love with the medical field at a young age when she would go with her father, who is a doctor, to his office.

Nursing was perfect for Xerras because after only four years as an undergraduate, she could become a registered nurse — as opposed to going to medical school after college. She chose Elon because she loved the campus and the size of the school and was excited about the new nursing program.

"This year feels a lot more organized than it did last year," Xerras said. "We have great resources and staff that we can always reach out to if we are struggling with something."

Inaugural Department Chair of the Department of Nursing Tiffany Morris said the major difference between the program's second year and first year is the connection and relationship they've fostered within the program.

"I think there is a more broader acceptance of nursing as a presence on campus," Morris said. "We've formed more relationships with our campus partners and have learned lessons including how we can help students navigate scheduling, registration and those kinds of things."

According to Morris, there has been an increase in faculty and students in the department this year. The class of 2026 is up to 47 students, compared to 35 from the class of 2025 last year. The maximum number of students the Elon nursing department can seat for each grade level is 56.

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Professor of nursing Jeanmarie Koonts teaches students in the 2022 accelerated Bachelor of Science in nursing cohort on Sept. 20. The 2022 cohort is the second in Elon's history.

SOPHIE ROSENTHAL | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

THE PENDULUM

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CHEAT SHEET

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

COMPARING MONKEYPOX TO COVID-19:

The difference between a global health concern and a pandemic

Biology professor Kevan Schoonover McClelland explains the implications of the global health concern

Avery Sloan
Politics Director | [@averylsloan](https://twitter.com/averylsloan)



Kevan Schoonover McClelland

Monkeypox was declared a global health concern over the summer and on Aug. 19, Alamance County had its first case of monkeypox. This is a disease that, according to the CDC, is spread through physical contact on the monkeypox rash itself, through touching objects that have been used by someone else with monkeypox or contact through saliva.

Kevan Schoonover McClelland, professor of biology, shared what this means for students compared to COVID-19 and how it is transmitted.

This interview was edited for clarity

Compared to COVID-19, what are things that students should be aware of, regarding transmission about Monkeypox?

So the big difference between COVID and monkeypox is that monkey pox appears to require actual physical skin-to-skin contact with the lesion in order to be transmitted. So, transmissibility is a lot lower than COVID. And then the other thing is in terms of how severe the illness is, a lot of times it is not going to be as severe as COVID.

So you might feel crappy, and you're going to have lesions, but I actually looked up the data this morning and the mortality rate worldwide is less than 1%. In the United States, we've had one reported death out of almost 25,000 cases. So it's not as deadly, it's

not as transmissible and it's a lot more treatable, since it is related to viruses that we've already made, vaccines and treatments for. So it's not nearly as bad as COVID in terms of the severity of everything.

How will it affect vaccine roll out?

I don't think it's going to really change much. Right now, the guidance is that only high risk groups need to get vaccinated. And that is primarily with folks who have multiple sexual partners, since there is a lot of physical contact, they're in regular physical contact and extended physical contact. For the most part, most folks do not need to get vaccinated and in terms of actual treatment, they also are suggesting that unless you are at risk for having a severe case, they don't really want you taking any antivirals either, and basically just ride it out. Not really something huge to worry about, in terms of mass vaccinations. Just being a little bit smarter about washing hands, paying attention to your own symptoms. As of right now, it does not appear that it's transmissible unless you are actually having the symptoms of the lesions on your skin. And so just being very aware of that, and if you have any questions, reach out to a healthcare professional.

What does it mean that it was declared a global pandemic?

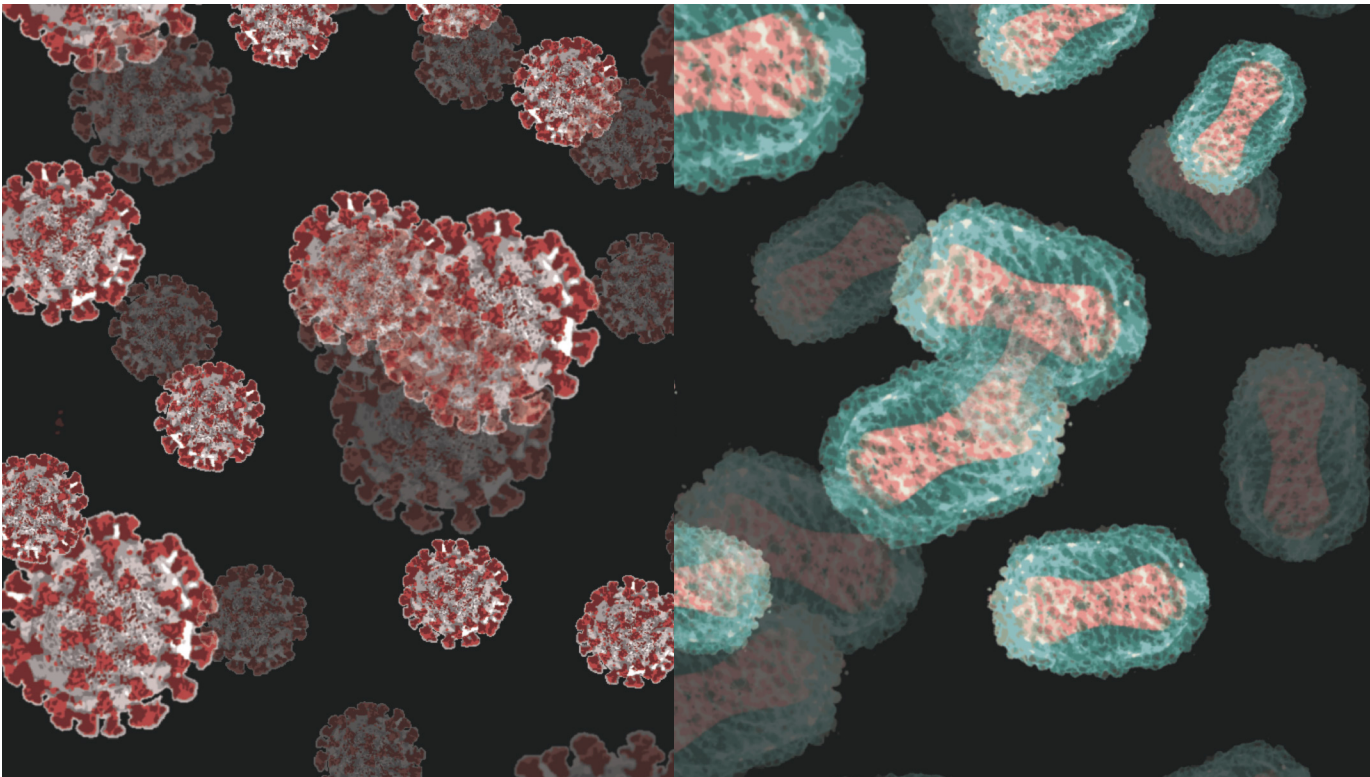
I don't know what the WHO or the CDC definition of global pandemic is, but it is currently present in I think 104 countries and overall, it has a much wider spread than it typically does. Up until this recent wave of infections, it had been highly localized to the Congo Basin and Sub Saharan Africa because that's where it developed. They think it originated with rodents and non-human primates. So chimpanzees, bonobos, things like that. And then, the reason why it's so widespread now is just due to all the international travel going on. The fact that a lot of folks didn't know what the symptoms were and so there was a lot of skin to skin contact before we really knew what monkeypox looked like. We actually had a monkeypox outbreak in America almost 20 years ago. Because of infected prairie dogs, someone had prairie dogs as pets. And the prairie

dogs were housed with other animals. And those animals had monkeypox and that spread to prairie dogs. And then the prairie dogs gave it to the folks who had the prairie dogs as pets. So it's not like it hasn't gotten around, it's just how prevalent it is this time. That's the novel thing that's going on. In terms of pandemic, the definition of pandemic has to be there's a certain number of cases that you have to hit in a certain number of countries. But I will say that, the word pandemic is very scary, but if you actually look at it, in this case, it really has to do more with how prevalent the disease is and not the severity of the disease. That's actually true in most cases where the word pandemic does not mean that there's some deadly thing out there. It just means that there's a lot of it and it's all over the place.

Is this something that you should be concerned about with this?

I don't think they need to be overly concerned. I'm not 100% sure how many cases North Carolina has had. I recall there being a couple of cases in Greensboro at one point, but so long as you're washing hands regularly. To be completely honest, the majority of transmission in the United States is between gay men through sexual contact, and so just being aware of how many people you're coming into contact with and being aware of your own symptoms. And what monkeypox symptoms actually look like. Just be aware, but it's not it's not a huge thing to worry about now.

You probably will be out of class for between three and five weeks because that's usually how long it takes for the lesions to go and you're contagious until the lesions have completely healed. So you wouldn't be out of class, but in terms of long term health effects, it seems that the outlook is very good in terms of recovery and going back to normal.



CAROLINE MITCHELL | DESIGN CHIEF

According to biology professor Kevan Schoonover McClelland, the largest differences between COVID-19 (left) and monkeypox (right) is that monkeypox requires physical, skin-to-skin contact and is far less transmissible and deadly.



Members of the Huepa Culture and Arts Institute kick off Hispanic Heritage Month in an El Centro-sponsored event on Sept. 15 at Medallion Plaza.

ALEX NETTLES | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER



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Performing arts professor Jiwon Ha dances alongside freshman and sophomore BFA dance majors at National Dance Day GSO on Sept. 17 in LeBauer Park.



ERIN MARTIN | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Tibetan Buddhist monk Geshe Palden Sangpo fills the outer circle of the Green Tara Sand Mandala he constructed Sept. 14 to 16 in Numen Lumen Pavilion. On the final day, he swept it away in a symbolic act of impermanence.



Elon University freshman and defensive line Cazeem More celebrates Elon's victory over Gardner-Webb on Sept. 17. Elon won 30-24 in its first home game of the season at Rhodes Stadium.

JOESPH NAVIN | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Elon University welcomes second class of nursing students

NURSING | from cover

The nursing program is very intensive at Elon, as explained by Morris. Students pursuing their four-year Bachelor of Science in nursing must complete all of Elon's core requirements, nursing prerequisites and 65 credit-hour nursing curriculum — including 17 nursing courses and 540 total clinical hours.

"I feel like it's definitely overwhelming in the sense of classes and keeping up with everything, but that is what nursing school is," Xerras said. "Whenever I feel stressed, I try to remind myself that it will all be worth it and, in the next three years, I will have my nursing degree."

According to Morris, all nursing students get hands-on learning experience about how to give bed baths, take vital signs, give injections, start IVs and more.

Morris also said she is hopeful that the stress levels of these students will decrease over the next few weeks.

"I think the first two weeks were very intense for them because they hadn't done their first clinical,"

Morris said. "But talking to them recently, there were more smiles."

Xerras said she feels supported by her peers and educators, which also helps relieve her stress. The nursing students have created their own community, a place to rely on each other.

"They did a great job with team bonding and making sure everyone knew everyone in the program, both staff and students," Xerras said. "Students set up study groups and sessions in the library."

For example, Morris said students have created an "electronic community," meaning they use social media and text to stay in touch with each other.

"When we go to the clinicals, we take pictures and upload them for the group to see," Morris said. "I think it helps them feel more connected."

The nursing department also hosts socials and dinners which allow the professors to check in with students.

Morris explained the importance of creating an interactive and fun environment for the nursing school and its students. To do this, Morris created Training Day — an eight-hour immersive experience



Students listen in a NRS 2100, Foundations of Nursing Practice, class on Sept. 20.

SOPHIE ROSENTHAL | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

designed to give students hands-on opportunities from active experts in the field.

"We called the day Training Day and all wore our caboose hats," Morris said. "We had excellent clinical faculty — from outside our faculty — which gave the students a sense of comfort

because they were working with current nurses."

Morris said the nursing program is also working on a Student Affairs Committee to provide mentoring opportunities between grade levels. She hopes this will also allow the program to continue to grow in the future.

Overall, Morris said she is proud of the program's progress so far.

"These students simply exceed my expectations every day," Morris said. "They are highly intelligent, very compassionate and are eager to do what they need to do in order to make it through this program."

SGA members propose solutions to lack of engagement

SGA | from cover

Senior Class President and Elections Committee Chair Lily Kays said she believes increasing voter turnout is simply a matter of spreading the word.

"I believe higher voter turnout would happen if more students were engaged in sharing about SGA elections. ... Elon's campus runs on word of mouth," Kays said. "Person-to-person talking will always be the best."

Word of mouth is an effective strategy, according to Maric. She said her campaign was accomplished primarily by talking to Elon students she had met during the summer, going from dorm to dorm to hang up posters and telling people to vote. Despite not engaging in the election, Weiss said most of what he knew about this year's election was from candidates telling him to vote during class.

As for solutions to a lack of

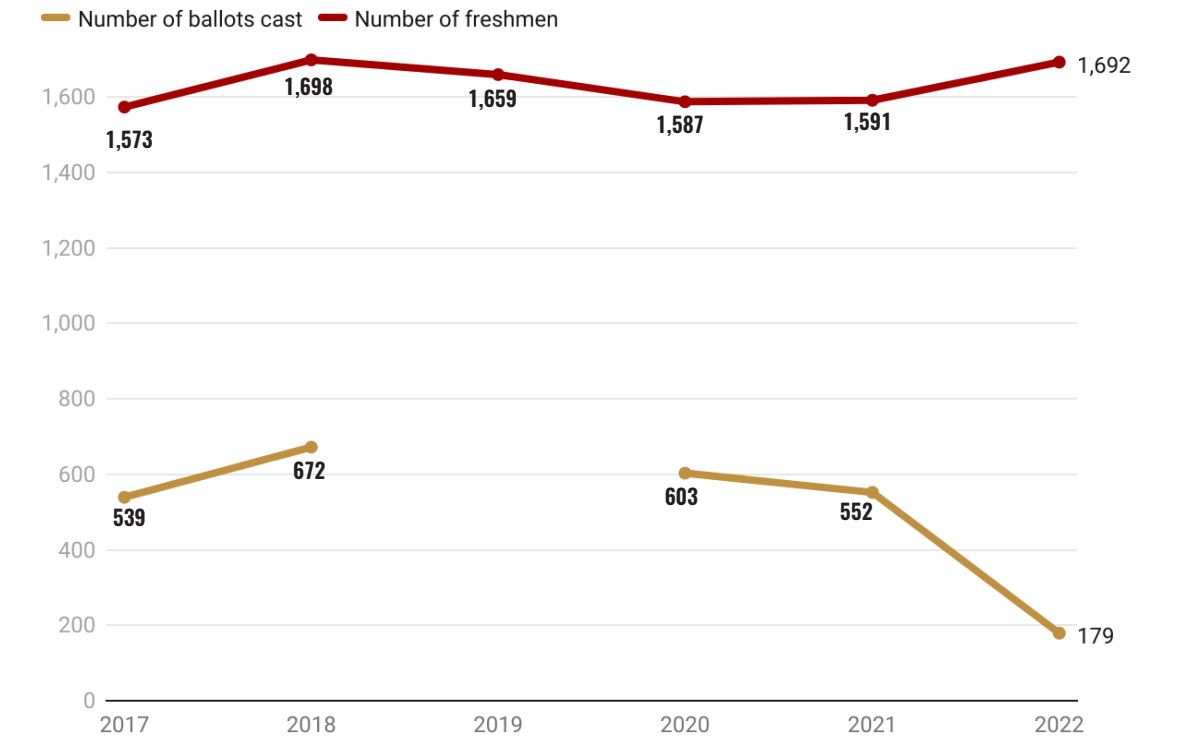
student engagement, Kays said members of SGA have been discussing various ways to make SGA more accessible to the public. On Sept. 9, SGA held its annual town hall but saw no attendance from the student body, sparking a conversation about moving business meetings to a more public space rather than the current spot on the second floor of Moseley Center.

SGA hopes to garner greater awareness around its \$436,000 annual budget, according to Kays, and promote the ways SGA is available to financially support both organizations and the student body as a whole.

Maric said she is optimistic about SGA's goals for the year, both in terms of increasing student engagement and otherwise.

"Coming to Elon and seeing the beginnings of growing school spirit is amazing," Maric said. "I am just hoping SGA can be a part of the change to make it grow even bigger."

BALLOTS CAST IN FRESHMAN SGA ELECTIONS OVER TIME



SOPHIE ROSENTHAL | DESIGNER

The number of ballots cast in freshman class SGA elections, according to Elon News Network coverage, and the number of freshmen in a class, according to corresponding fall registrar's reports, since 2017. Data on ballots cast in 2019 is not available.

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From left: Sophomore Abby Lee and juniors Katherine McCormick and Tori Kelleher share voting resources on Sept. 20 in the Speaker’s Corner on Young Commons.

MICHAEL LEUNG | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

ELON EXPANDS EARLY VOTING ACCESS

The Kernodle Center and Elon Votes increase outreach ahead of midterms

Michael Leung
Elon News Network

With the midterm elections approaching on Nov. 8, Bob Frigo, director of Elon University’s Kernodle Center for Civic Life, said his office and the center’s Elon Votes initiative are working to increase voter registration and accessibility across campus through nonpartisan resources and outreach.

Frigo said part of this goal will be achieved through Elon’s new early voting site in South Gym. This allows individuals from all over Alamance County to submit their ballot weeks before election day, starting Oct. 20, as well as students who are registered to Alamance County. Students who are registered in a different state or neighboring county have to submit an absentee ballot by mail or return home to vote.

“Legally, college students have a choice where they can register to vote,” Frigo said. “Students can only choose one place and cast one ballot, but college students have a choice of permanent address or their college address.”

Carrie Eaves, professor of political science and faculty fellow for civil engagement, said a benefit of this new voting site, apart from easier access to voting, is that it not only serves the university, but also the rest of the community.

“Elon prides itself on being more connected to the community and hopes that it will bring more people

to campus,” Eaves said. “People who live in the surrounding area can come here and vote early.”

According to Frigo, Elon’s early voting site was made possible through the Kernodle Center’s relationship with the Alamance County’s Board of Elections. They worked together to make sure students have access to voting resources and remove as many voting obstacles as possible. For example, Alamance Board of Elections and the Kernodle Center have worked to correct students to not place their Elon campus box address on their registration form — as it would be invalid — and instead place their home address.

Before the early voting site was put into place, local students had to go to voting sites across Alamance County on election day to submit their ballots. Elon would provide a shuttle service to voting locations, but it was only available on election day for 12 hours. Now with the early voting site on campus, students’ window to submit their ballot has expanded as their required distance to travel has diminished.

But the early voting site is not the only resource that students have. The Kernodle Center and Elon Votes are both nonpartisan organizations that assist students with voting. The Kernodle Center helps connect students to the rest of the community through community engagement and service learning based courses, as well as co-curriculars that assist various organizations, while Elon Votes helps get the word out that voting is accessible on campus.

For this year’s midterm elections, junior Sydney Barlow and sophomore Bo Dalrymple,

coordinators of Elon Votes, said they aim to gain a more visible presence with their downstairs office. They plan on doing this by hosting a table at college coffees and downstairs Moseley Center, as well as hanging signs and digital boards throughout campus to advertise their organization.

Elon Votes will partner with Kernodle Center, and will host an event called Absentea in October where students can drink tea and work on their absentee ballot. On election day, they also intend to hold a viewing of the debate. When held previously for the 2016 elections, the entire first floor of Moseley was filled, according to Eaves.

“We reached about 300 students and then stopped counting,” she

said.

Elon Votes tracks the impact of these events through data from the National Study of Learning, Voting and Engagement, an in-depth report used by Elon since 2012 to record voter information about the demographics of students across campus. It tracks the sex, race, age and majors of students, whether or not they are registered and how many voted during specific elections.

According to the NSLVE Report, by 2020, almost 90% of all eligible students on Elon’s campus were registered to vote — a 11% increase from 2016. The voting rate of eligible students also increased by 25% between 2016 and 2020.

“In 2020, 74% of the campus

voted in the election,” Barlow said. “That was a very big data point for us.”

“First-time voters are advised to know their registration deadlines and election days for their state, as well as give themselves enough time to order and submit their ballot through the mail should they choose to vote absentee,” Dalrymple said.

When students are ready to print their voter registration or absentee ballot forms, Dalrymple said, they can go to the Kernodle Center in Moseley 232 to print, stamp and send it off through the mail.

“It might feel scary,” Eaves said, “but with just a little bit of effort, everything is accessible at your fingertips and easy to achieve when voting for the first time.”



The Elon Votes office is located in the Kernodle Center for Civic Life in the Moseley Center. Students can stop by the office for help with voter registration and absentee ballots.

MICHAEL LEUNG | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

LIFESTYLE

Gibsonville’s first female-owned tattoo studio leaves its mark

Owners Laura Murphy and Annie Bella aim to create welcoming, inclusive space at their first storefront, Frozen Pines

Kyra O’Connor
Executive Director | @ko_reports

Annie Bella dips the needle in her hand into one of the caps of ink on the table to her left. She drags the needle across Dominic Adame’s skin, adding color to a depiction of Remy from the Disney movie “Ratatouille.”

Adame’s father, Art, sits across from his son, watching Bella move back and forth on Dominic’s upper arm. Art was in Dominic’s seat earlier in the day getting a tattoo from Bella — Bella has drawn most of the art on his body, creating unique pieces for him.

“When I first got that tattoo from Annie, I just gave her a list. This is what I want in a tattoo. And she figured it out,” Art said, pointing to a depiction of heaven and hell on his calf, an image that Bella not only tattooed, but drew. “When I saw it, I knew: that’s what it was going to be about.”

When Art finished getting his tattoo done by Bella, he said he was already thinking about his next one and when he could come in to have Bella create another piece.

“You come in and they make you feel at home,” Art said. “I love it here.”

It is this close-knit, personal environment that keeps customers coming back to Frozen Pines, the tattoo shop Bella and business partner Laura Murphy own in Gibsonville. The shop is the first and only female-owned tattoo parlor in Gibsonville — a feat both owners say guides how they choose to run their business nearly two years after opening.

“We want to provide quality tattoos and a quality experience in a safe and sterile environment,” Murphy said. “You know that you’re not going to be safe just because we’re clean, but we’re also very welcoming to all members of communities. ... We’re a safe space for everybody.”

Becoming friends

Murphy got into the tattoo business when she landed a job sweeping the floors of a tattoo shop. After getting her first tattoo permit on her 18th birthday, she never looked back and has been a tattoo artist for 15 years. It was during her time at Little John’s Tattoo, a studio in Greensboro, where she met Bella.

“I’m not going to lie — I’m standoffish. And so when Annie started working at Little John’s, I wasn’t like, ‘Come give me a hug, let’s skip down the road and be BFFs,’” Murphy said. “She actually just wandered into my booth one day and liked the music



Dominic Adame receives a tattoo on his upper arm from Annie Bella, co-owner of Frozen Pines. Adame is a chef at EPCOT, and the tattoo, which features Remy from the Disney movie “Ratatouille” and script that reads “Anyone can cook,” means a lot to him.

that I was playing, which happened to be a Lord Huron song, which happens to be the band that we named our shop after.”

Bella fell into tattooing by accident. After getting her first tattoo, her dad suggested she try to be a tattoo artist herself. Bella said art has been a passion of hers since she was little, and after getting her own tattoo, she was hooked.

“It’s way harder than it seems,” Bella said. “People think we’re just ... coloring on somebody and it’s easy, and we’re just tracing. There’s a lot more work to it than people think.”

The pair both worked at Little John’s Tattoo, the place that each said made their tattooing careers. After spending a day together volunteering at the Conservator’s Center, Bella and Murphy became fast friends and now business partners.

“We hung out that day and kind of became inseparable ever since,” Murphy said. “I tell everybody, she’s my first best friend.”

Going into business

When Murphy decided she wanted to open up her own shop with Bella, it was about growth, and challenging herself to do something she had never done before. But

even more so, she wanted to be an example to her daughter, Cecelia.

“I wanted to be an example for her that, if you want something bad enough and you work hard enough for it, you can get it,” Murphy said. “If you would have told 18-year-old tattooing Laura that she would open a shop in her hometown, I would have told you you were crazy. But being back home and having this and being that example for my little girl is really the most important thing to me.”

After deciding on the storefront on Main Street in Gibsonville in 2021, Bella and Murphy began building their business. From setting up their website and social media platforms, to building a local clientele, both women said the physical tattooing is often not what takes the most time compared to the preparation.

Bella said she can spend hours drawing and creating a design for her clients. From pre-consultation emailing to the tattoo itself, Bella said people often do not realize that her job is more than “just doodling.”

“Especially now owning this, they don’t realize all the hours that we put in that aren’t even tattooing,” Murphy said. “The tattooing part of our job is actually quite small compared to the preparation and then the administration work that goes into it as well.”

For Art and many of Frozen Pine’s clients, a tattoo is not simply ink on their skin. It is a piece of art with meaning.

“It’s my expression. It’s what means something dear to me,” Art said. “It’s those special meanings to me that I had to have kind of long-term, permanent.”

Building something different

Walking into a tattoo studio can be intimidating, Murphy said. The stereotype of all leather interiors and male-dominated spaces can be discouraging for some, which is one of the reasons Bella and Murphy chose to build their space differently.

“Tattooing is a very vulnerable and intimate experience,” Murphy said. “You’re putting a lot of trust and vulnerability in us by letting us alter your body for the rest of your life. That’s why it was really important for me to create a space where people would want to come and hang out, and they want to

come and spend time here.”

And as a female tattoo artist, Bella said the atmosphere of the shop was particularly important to her.

“I remember going into shops and it would be very intimidating and scary because there are big burly men, and it’s dark and scary looking,” Bella said. “When we talked about opening up a studio, that was my biggest thing too. I wanted to create a space that didn’t have that vibe as soon as you walk in, like something that feels welcoming and bright.”

Whether a customer is coming for their fourth piece or is walking into the studio ready to get their first tattoo, both Bella and Murphy said they want people to feel at home at Frozen Pines.

“Creating that space that from all walks of life, all ages, it doesn’t matter, you can come in here and feel like you belong,” Murphy said. “You never feel like we’re the cool kids and you can’t sit with us. ... You can sit with us. Come sit with us.”

Bella and Murphy’s mindset is what sets them apart as artists, according to fellow tattoo artist Chris Chavis — who works at Little John’s. Chavis said that even though he has not spent a lot of time at Frozen Pines watching Bella and Murphy work, he can tell from the time he has spent that it is a great spot.

“They’re very humble and obviously very hardworking, and those are two great combinations,” Chavis said. “I look forward to seeing it grow through more than it already has, especially in this community.”

Both Bella and Murphy look forward to building a community at Frozen Pines in the years to come.

“We’re just two regular people trying to create an environment that’s comfortable for everybody while doing what we love,” Murphy said.

IF YOU GO
Frozen Pines Tattoo
Where:
104 W Main St. Gibsonville, NC 27249
When:
Tuesday to Saturday, 10 a.m. - 6 p.m.



Annie Bella, co-owner of Frozen Pines, got her start in the tattoo industry after she got her first tattoo. Now, she co-owns Gibsonville’s first-female owned tattoo studio in Gibsonville.

Elon University represents on Broadway

Theater students, alumni share humble excitement after Playbill Big 10 mention

Sarah T. Moore
Elon News Network

Elon University received an honorable mention on Playbill's annual ranking of the top 10 colleges and universities represented on Broadway — evoking mixed feelings of pride and hesitation within Elon's Department of Performing Arts.

Playbill, a national magazine and website for theatergoers, released its 2022 Big 10 list earlier this month, ranking American colleges and universities by the number of current students and alumni who performed on Broadway from Aug. 22, 2021 to May 4, 2022. Elon tallied 17 alumni on Broadway this year, but it was not the university's first time being featured on Big 10. It

received an honorable mention in 2016 and was No. 10 on the list in both 2017 and 2018.

Julios Matos Jr., the director of Elon's music theatre program, said while Elon's ranking inspires pride in the program's alumni, he does not consider it a sole indicator of success.

"Working on Broadway, it means that the training is working, ... that the formula is working," Matos said. "But we're also celebrating the students who are in national tours, who are in regional work, who are also going off and doing music directing or doing a whole different field, a related field in IT or real estate."

Playbill only includes actors in its list, which Matos said ignores the contributions of choreographers, set designers, production managers, costumers, directors and other crew members.

Elon alum Michael Callahan '13 was featured on this year's Big 10 list

for his role in the Disney musical "Aladdin" at New Amsterdam Theatre. Like Matos, Callahan is critical of Playbill's decision to only recognize Broadway actors.

"There's some kickass theater people from Elon who are not necessarily on the stage, and they need shoutouts," Callahan said. "Some of them are in my building, some of them are in the New Am[sterdam] Theatre, and I'm bummed they don't get the same recognition. ... A lot of the people keeping the show alive are not on that list, they're not performers, and I think that our industry needs to do a better job of giving equal recognition."

Senior music theatre major Jackie Mate said she remembers finding Elon through the Playbill website while still in high school.

"I literally Googled 'best musical theater schools in the country,'" Mate said. "I did find Elon through ... something on Playbill."

Giselle Watts, also a senior music theatre major, takes Elon's repeated placement in Playbill's Big 10 as a source of school pride and inspiration — especially given Playbill's respected reputation among Broadway and professional theatre communities.

"It just constantly reminds me that I made the right choice," Watts said. "Being able to come here, and then see like the fruit, how that has grown out of this experience and the amazing people that have gone on to have better and great careers and everything. ... It also shows just kind of that Elon spirit that never leaves you."

Watts said that the structure of Elon's performing arts department has already helped her pursue a variety of opportunities, such as "Into the Woods" at Tulane University's Summer Lyric Theatre.

"It definitely is setting the standard and setting the stage for every other job and opportunity that

I will get outside of this," Watts said. "It prepares me in more ways than I can honestly expect."

While Watts and Mate have dreams of being Broadway performers, Callahan said he wants them, and the rest of Elon's music theatre students, to know that "there is no exact pathway to being a successful performer."

"The biggest mistake theater people make, especially coming from BFA programs, is that they assume, 'If I am not on Broadway within the next one or two years then I have already failed,'" Callahan said. "That does a disservice to the talent that comes out of these schools and a disservice to the idea of what theater is about and how it exists."

The Department of Performing Arts' next musical, featuring Mate and other music theatre students, will be "Head Over Heels," opening on Oct. 28. Tickets go on sale Oct. 7 and will be available for \$15 or free with an Elon ID.



CAROLINE MITCHELL | DESIGN CHIEF

Elon debuts university's first show choir club

A sophomore duo founded the group to bridge their acapella and choir interests

Betsy Schlehuber
Elon News Network | @betsyschlehuberl

When sophomore Jordan Kelberg arrived at Elon University last year and met fellow sophomore Holland Cogan, they noticed a lack of a performance groups that fit their niches.

"We saw an opportunity to create something because Elon has acapella groups, Elon has a choir, but they didn't really have anything in between that," Cogan said.

Unlike acapella groups and traditional choirs, Kelberg and Cogan wanted to go beyond using only vocal ability — they wanted to do choreography as well. They combined those elements and worked toward creating a show choir group.

Elon Muses — Muses for short — is the first organization established of singers, dancers and musicians that focuses on all genres of music, from pop to musical theater. According to Kelberg, Muses' performances are like musical numbers, but instead of a storyline tying the songs together, they are a showcase of talent.



BETSY SCHLEHUBER | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Sophomore Jordan Kelberg leads Elon Muses in choreography practice. Dance rehearsals are held every Thursday and vocal rehearsals every Tuesday at 8 p.m. in Alamance 202.

Kelberg and Cogan first considered starting a show choir in September 2021, but they did not pursue anything seriously until the spring 2021 semester according to Cogan. By May 2022, Elon Muses was born with the help of now-music director and sophomore Jenny Molyneaux.

Kelberg's introduction to music was through musical theater, an art she's been exposed to ever since she could walk. She said musical theater was what made her obsessed with performing.

"I think I'm a stronger dancer than I am a singer, but in terms of liking them, any sort of performing I love to do," Kelberg said. "It doesn't

really matter what it is as long as I'm performing."

Cogan also started her musical journey with theater, first performing in the fourth grade. Although she mostly focuses on singing, she said she loves performing and all things arts-related.

"I've always been drawn to the stage and performing, and I honestly feel the most like myself when I'm performing," Cogan said. "It just makes me feel alive."

Fall auditions for the show choir occurred Sept. 1 and 2, according to Elon Muses' Instagram @elonmuses. After discovering Muses at the organization fair freshman Brooke Gustafson auditioned for the group and said the process was simple and kind.

After auditions, Muses now has 14 performers — Kelberg and Cogan included — who all happen to be women. Despite this, Kelberg said all genders are welcome to be Muses performers. Cogan said more auditions will be held in the spring and no experience is required.

"We are just really looking for strong singers and then we can teach you how to dance," Cogan said. "If you're not a singer and you want to help with instrumentals or arrangements, we are also looking for people like that."

Kelberg noted that the first Elon Muses performance is set to happen in December, with a spring performance in April 2023. As Elon Muses starts holding rehearsals, crafting choreography

and arranging songs, Kelberg is looking forward to watching the music happen.

"I'm excited to see what it's going to look like by the time I'm a senior, to see how many performances we're going to have under our belt and how big we can grow and maybe even do competitions," Kelberg said. "It's all the what-ifs that excite me."

Cogan said she is excited to see all the friendships that form because of Muses, especially for the freshmen who have found a place within the organization.

"I remember as a freshman, I was just looking for a support circle on campus," Cogan said. "Now I'm seeing all the freshmen being so excited to take part in this journey with us."

Gustafson expressed a similar excitement for the future of the group, particularly possible performances and making connections with other Muses performers.

"I can already tell that we're all going to be really good friends, and I cannot wait for the products that we put out there," Gustafson said.

With the debut of Elon Muses, Kelberg's goal is to make Muses a place where theater and music performers can thrive together and feel accepted.

"If I could wave my crystal ball and then come back to Elon, I would really love to see Muses grow into something that stays here as long as it can," Kelberg said. "I want it to grow and be a safe space for people that love music."

SPORTS

WOMEN'S CLUB RUGBY: LACING UP AND SPEAKING OUT

The team is back after its lengthy hiatus due to COVID-19

Grace Stetler
Elon News Network

Two and a half years after the women's club rugby team was sidelined due to COVID-19 and Elon University's restrictions on contact sports, the team is back with a new mission in mind — empowering and educating women.

Junior and club president Caroline Moses said the mission is not only the guiding force behind the team this semester, but the reason behind why they play.

Moses first joined club rugby two years ago and knew she had to bring it back after it had been discontinued, not just for the community, but for herself.

"It just never got picked up again," Moses said. "This summer, I played in Asheville, North Carolina, with a club team, and just realized I can't go back to school not having a team and not having rugby. So I decided to start one myself, so I could have that environment again."

As president of the team, Moses takes on other roles, such as team captain.

However, her experience on the team has not only improved her playing skills, but also her leadership style.

"Leadership can come in a lot of different forms," Moses said. "I am the president, I also serve as captain, and a lot of other members of the executive board are captains as well. So leadership can be really collaborative, and it can be whatever you want it to be, but having other people help you mold that is really, really important."

Because of her efforts, this year's women's club rugby team has amassed twenty women who practice each Tuesday

and Thursday night under the lights from 6 to 8 p.m. on the intramural fields.

Sophomore player Ugochi Okonkwo said rugby has always been in the back of her mind, but outside forces consistently stopped her from playing.

"I always wanted to play football, but since it was a men's majority sport, I knew it would just be odd and different," Okonkwo said. "I did track growing up in high school, and all my coaches were all football coaches as well, so I would always watch that. And my coaches would always tell me if I were a guy, I would be good at football."

Okonkwo said this message has pushed her to both work at the sport she now has a passion for, as well as break down the stigma surrounding male-dominated sports.

"I feel like the women are just as good. Women's sports are always underrated, that is just how it is unfortunately," Okonkwo said. "But honestly, just being on the team and watching women's rugby, I know there is nothing different between the men and the women. They are all good, they are all strong, they all work hard, especially the women."

Both Moses and Okonkwo said they

believe in the importance of equal opportunity and women's sports, even beyond the athletic components.

For Okonkwo, the women's club rugby represents a passion brought to life, and she is mindful to share her experience with those unfamiliar with the team.

"I know for myself, ever since I signed that paper that, yeah I am doing rugby, I have told almost everybody that I have come in contact with ... if we have conversations I'm like, 'Yeah, I play on the rugby team,'" Okonkwo said. "I just feel like, with the way we are talking to people and bridging awareness ... we brought it back."



GRACE STETLER | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Six members of the newly reinstated club women's rugby practice on the intramural fields. Club president Caroline Moses said she brought the club back from its COVID-19 hiatus because of her passion for the sport and the importance of empowering and educating women around the stigma surrounding male-dominated sports.

Elon football set to begin CAA conference action

Phoenix prepares to extend winning streak facing William & Mary in CAA opener

Kole Noble
Elon News Network

Elon football starts preparation to begin conference play this week, as the team is set to face off against the Tribe of William & Mary this Saturday.

The Phoenix rides a two-game winning streak heading into conference play after knocking off Gardner-Webb in a nail-biter at Rhodes Stadium on Sept. 17. After winning 30-24, Elon currently ranks sixth in the Colonial Athletic Association with a season record of 2-1.

After finishing 5-3 in conference play last season, head coach Tony Trisciani is confident in his team and the experience his players bring to the table this time around.

"Like most teams in our league and in football right now, a lot of us have experience coming back," Trisciani said. "For us particularly, being a developmental program, we've been able to retain our players, so we do have some experience

coming back."

The Phoenix's offense got off to a hot start through three games, averaging 29 points per game with 10 total touchdowns.

Senior quarterback Matthew McKay has started coming into his own leading the offense while receiving help from redshirt freshman running back Jalen Hampton. Hampton, who burst onto the scene against Gardner-Webb, has allowed Elon's offense to become more complete and harder to defend.

"We want to run the football," Trisciani said. "We know that's going to open things up on the perimeter, and we've had a lot of success the last couple of weeks here with the play-action pass. If teams are going to load the box on us, we gotta take what they're giving us."

The defensive front has been the fuel for Elon's defense throughout the first three games of the season, totaling 10 sacks and eight quarterback hits.

According to Trisciani, being able to make a difference up front allows the secondary to play "fast, free and aggressive," and there's one player in particular who has made that possible this season — defensive line Torrence Williams.

"It's been a disruptive front for us," Trisciani said. "Williams is an experienced player and a leader who's ready to really have a breakout season here in the CAA."

Williams, a redshirt senior, recorded 1.5 sacks, four total tackles and a pass break up in the win over Gardner-Webb. As a leader on defense, his impact stretches further than the stat sheet for this defense.

"The thing about our guys is, we're real close," Williams said. "We hold each other accountable. We love each other. So, when things are hitting the fan, we know how to stick together and turn it around."

That level of trust and camaraderie on defense has paid dividends on the field this season for the Phoenix. Elon's defense has only allowed 14 second-half points through three games, with all 14 points coming in the first game of the season against Vanderbilt. On Saturday Sept. 17, Elon's defense rallied after being down 24-20 at halftime, resulting in a shut-out performance in the second-half.

Elon's defense will have a monster test in the first game of conference play against No. 5 William & Mary this weekend. The Tribe's offense has averaged 37.33 points this season, riding a strong balanced



JOSEPH NAVIN | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Elon senior quarterback Matthew McKay prepares to throw the football during the game against Gardner-Webb on Sept. 17 at Rhodes Stadium. Elon won 30-24.

offense of its own that's powered a 3-0 start to the season.

The Phoenix offense will have a tough challenge of its own preparing for William & Mary's defense, which features three weapons who have been captivating headlines all season: junior defensive lineman Nate Lynn, redshirt freshman cornerback Jalen Jones and sophomore linebacker John Pius.

Lynn, the CAA's preseason defensive player of the year, made five All-American teams last season.

Jones was named the FedEx Ground Football Championship Subdivision national defensive player of the week after a three-interception performance against Campbell. Pius was named the CAA football defensive player of the week this week after an eight tackle, 3.5 sack performance at Lafayette.

The stage is set for a great matchup that will be taking place at 3:30 p.m. Sept. 24 in Williamsburg, Virginia to kick off the start of CAA action this season.