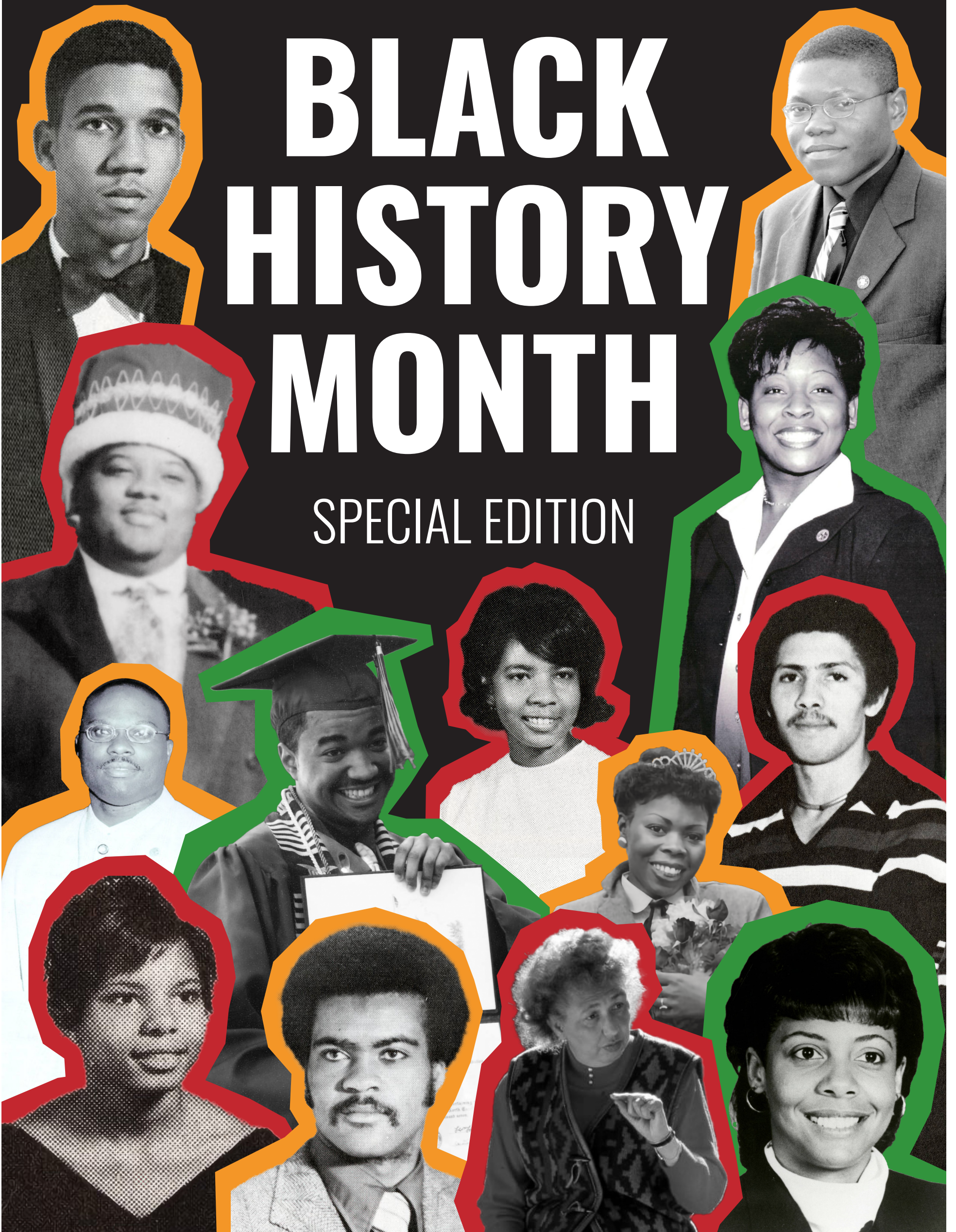


# BLACK HISTORY MONTH

## SPECIAL EDITION



Thirteen figures in Elon's history who were trailblazers of Black history. More information is listed on each person on page four.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF ELON UNIVERSITY ARCHIVES, DESIGN BY ERIN MARTIN



Black-owned business  
goes beyond serving tea

**PAGE 5 BHM**



Residents advocate for  
environmental equity

**PAGE 6 BHM**



Tuition will increase by  
3.81% in 2025-26 year

**PAGE 7 NEWS**



THE PENDULUM

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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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# Elon encourages students to celebrate Black History Month at campus-wide events



LILLY MOLINA | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Freshman Jordan Armstead poses at the Black History Month Kickoff on Feb. 2.

The CREDE is hosting events throughout the month to elevate Black legacy and innovation

Trista Panagakos

Elon News Network

Junior Adriana Clarke, student coordinator for Black Student Success and Student Mentors Advising Rising Talent, is excited for students to be able to attend the Black History Month events her and other student coordinators have been planning. She said she thinks the Black History Month Kickoff on Feb. 3 will be exciting for students to attend.

As Black History Month begins, Elon's Center for Race, Ethnicity and Diversity Education has planned nine events for students to celebrate and educate themselves about the month and their identity. The Black History Month celebrations will end Feb. 28 with the Black Solidarity Conference.

Other events include a Black Table Talk about legacy on Feb. 12 and a Health and Hustle event meant to teach students how to eat healthy on a budget while also maintaining their mental health. The CREDE is bringing a Carnaval celebration to Elon, with steel pan performers Feb. 26.

Many of the events emphasize discussing what legacy and influence looks like within the Black community and the Elon community as a whole. The CREDE has planned these events to encapsulate the theme of this year's celebration: This Is How We Do It, celebrating Blackness through influence, innovation, and legacy. Abdul-Malik Harrison, a program director for the CREDE, said he hopes this year's theme will create a conversation around the contributions and impact of the

Black community.

Last year's theme celebrated the 50th anniversary of hip-hop. The CREDE focused on the contributions of the Black community to all types of music genres including hip-hop and rhythm and blues. For Harrison, last year's theme singularly focused on music, but this year's theme will encompass a much broader range of ideas and messages.



I THINK IT'S VERY IMPORTANT FOR STUDENTS TO STEP OUTSIDE OF THEIR COMFORT ZONE AND LEARN MORE ABOUT OTHER CULTURES AND OTHER PEOPLES AND THEIR CONTRIBUTIONS TO SOCIETY, AND THEN ALSO HOW YOU CAN BE HELPFUL OR BE AN ALLY TO THEM AS WELL.

ABDUL-MALIK HARRISON

CREDE PROGRAM DIRECTOR

"This year, we're focusing on music, on art, history and economics. This one was probably a little bit more broader in its scope of what we'll be talking about," Harrison said. "When you really think about it and boil it down, we're talking about Black people's contributions to society."

Clarke, along with her partner Mikayla Williams, have designed the Health and

Hustle event to be both budget friendly and an environment for students to get together and discuss issues surrounding mental health in the Black community. Elon counselor Charles Evans will be at the event to facilitate this conversation.

"We will be cooking meals that are on a budget but are healthy for college students," Clarke said. "That is what I am most excited about, cooking."

The events this month are planned with input from student coordinators, such as Clarke. She said she believes having student input on the events will make them more authentic and relatable to student attendees.

"We can give input of this is what's going on, on campus with our peers and with Elon. We get input on what will engage the students that look like us," Clarke said. "Trends come and go and if we go by what the trends are going to I feel like they will be more engaged, rather than it being so formal and from an adult perspective."

For Harrison, bringing the entire Elon community together regardless of race is important. During these events, Harrison said he hopes students across campus will take part so they can uplift the stories and experiences of their Black peers and learn to be a better supporter of the Black community.

Harrison encourages students from all backgrounds to participate in these events. Harrison said he believes the events will be a great way to build Elon's community while having fun and becoming a well-rounded person.

"I think it's very important for students to step outside of their comfort zone and learn more about other cultures and other peoples and their contributions to society, and then also how you can be helpful or be an ally to them as well," Harrison said. "We're all on the same team here at Elon."

CORRECTIONS

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

**BLACK HISTORY MONTH CALENDAR OF EVENTS**

**FEB. 7**

**TINY SHELF CONCERT**

5:30 TO 6:30 P.M. | BELK LIBRARY

HOSTED BY THE CREDE, BELK LIBRARY AND JAZZ STUDIES DEPARTMENT, THE TINY SHELF CONCERT WILL HIGHLIGHT BLACK ARTISTS AND ELON JAZZ STUDIES.

**FEB. 12**

**BLACK TABLE TALK: LEGACY IN MOTION**

5:30 TO 7 P.M. | MCKINNON HALL

THROUGH ACTIVITIES AND DISCUSSIONS, THE EVENT HOSTED BY CREDE WILL HONOR BLACK HISTORY WHILE SHAPING ITS FUTURE AT ELON.

**FEB. 17**

**HEALTH & HEALING**

5 TO 7 P.M. | EL CENTRO KITCHEN

THIS CREDE EVENT WILL EXPLORE THE POWERFUL CONNECTION BETWEEN NUTRITION AND MENTAL HEALTH.

**FEB. 21**

**BLACK HISTORY MONTH BASKETBALL RECOGNITION GAME**

7 P.M. | SCHAR CENTER

THE WOMEN'S BASKETBALL TEAM WILL TAKE ON THE UNIVERSITY OF DELAWARE WITH SPECIAL PRIZES.

**FEB. 23**

**MOVIE SCREENING: "SHIFT: EVERYBODY'S WORK"**

6 TO 8 P.M. | LAROSE THEATRE

"SHIFT: EVERYBODY'S WORK" EXPLORES RACISM IN NURSING AND HEALTHCARE FOLLOWED BY A PANEL DISCUSSION.

**FEB. 26**

**CARNAVAL CELEBRATION**

5 P.M. | MCKINNON HALL

ELON'S CARNAVAL WILL BE A MULTICULTURAL CELEBRATION, BLENDING AFRICAN, INDIGENOUS, LATINX AND OTHER CULTURAL TRADITIONS AND PERFORMANCES WITH ACTIVITIES AND FOOD.

**FEB. 28**

**BLACK SOLIDARITY CONFERENCE**

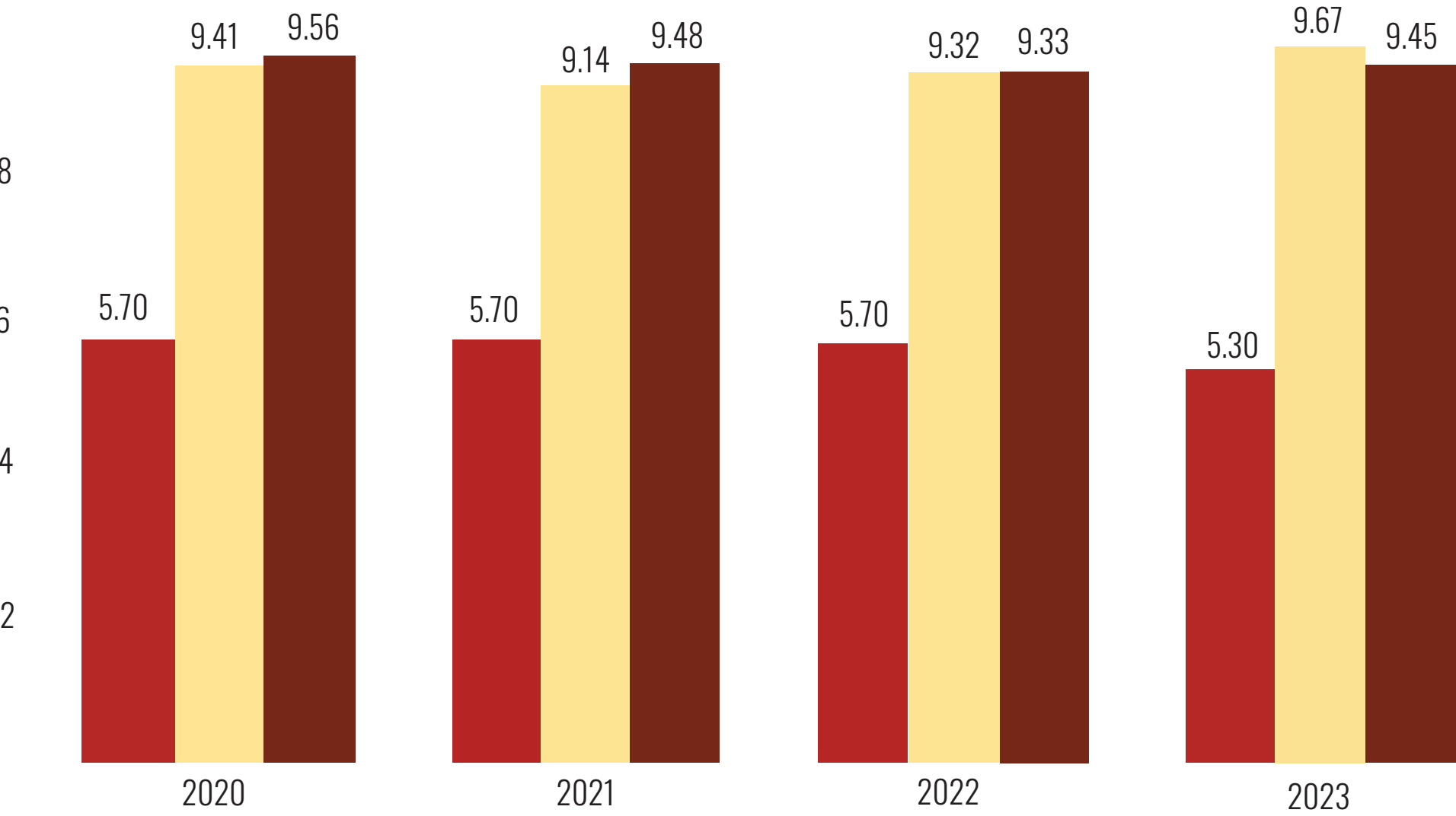
NOON TO 5 P.M. | MOSELEY CENTER

ELON'S BLACK SOLIDARITY DAY AIMS TO BRING TOGETHER BLACK-IDENTIFYING STUDENTS, FACULTY AND STAFF TO EXPLORE BLACK IDENTITY. THE INTER-SECTIONALITY OF BLACK EXPERIENCES AND BUILD SOLIDARITY AMONG BLACK COMMUNITY MEMBERS. REGISTRATION BY FEB. 17 IS REQUIRED FOR THE EVENT.

Percentage of Black student enrollment over the past four years

Rounded to the nearest one hundredth.

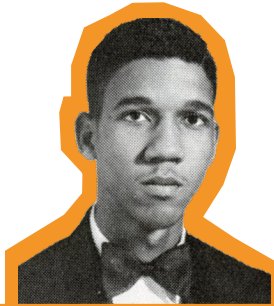
■ % of Black students enrolled at Elon    ■ % of Black students enrolled in a nonprofit private university  
■ % of Black students enrolled in a 4-year public university



Source: Elon University's Diversity Dashboard and National Student Clearinghouse Research Center. This graph shows the percentage of students who identify as Black who are enrolled within Elon University, private nonprofit and public universities. DATA VISUALIZATION BY LILLY MOLINA



# Spotlighting Black history at Elon



**EUGENE PERRY**  
**CLASS OF 1969**

EUGENE PERRY WAS THE FIRST BLACK PERSON TO GRADUATE FROM ELON COLLEGE, 1969 WITH A DEGREE IN SOCIAL SCIENCE. IN 2006, THE BLACK EXCELLENCE AWARDS WERE OFFICIALLY NAMED AFTER GLENDA PHILLIPS, ELON'S FIRST BLACK STUDENT AND EUGENE PERRY, AND HAVE GONE ON EVER SINCE.



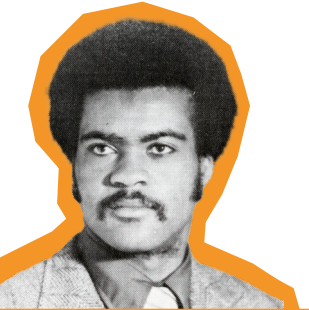
**GAIL FONVILLE**  
**CLASS OF 1970**

GAIL FONVILLE WAS THE FIRST BLACK FEMALE TO GRADUATE FROM ELON COLLEGE IN 1970. SHE HAS A ELON BLACK ALUMNI NETWORK AWARD NAMED AFTER HER WHICH IS PRESENTED EACH YEAR TO AN ALUMNA WHO HAS BEEN GRADUATED FROM ELON MORE THAN 10 YEARS.



**GLENDA PHILLIPS HIGHTOWER**

GLENDA PHILLIPS HIGHTOWER WAS ELON'S FIRST BLACK FULL-TIME STUDENT IN 1963. SHE RECEIVED AN HONORARY DEGREE FROM ELON IN 2019 AND HER PORTRAIT IS FEATURED ON THE FIRST FLOOR OF THE MOSELEY CENTER.



**JOHN RASCOE**  
**CLASS OF 1974**

JOHN RASCOE WAS THE FIRST BLACK PERSON TO THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES IN 1975. HE WAS ELECTED YOUNG ALUMNI TRUSTEE AFTER GRADUATING CUM LAUDE FROM ELON IN 1974. WHILE A STUDENT, HE WAS A MEMBER OF THE ELON FOOTBALL TEAM.



**BRYANT COLSON**  
**CLASS OF 1980**

BRYANT COLSON WAS THE FIRST BLACK PERSON TO SERVE AS EDITOR-IN-CHIEF OF THE PENDULUM IN 1978 AND WAS THE FIRST BLACK PERSON ELECTED PRESIDENT OF THE STUDENT GOVERNMENT ASSOCIATION IN 1979.



**DONNA HILL OLIVER**  
**CLASS OF 1972**

DONNA HILL OLIVER WAS THE FIRST BLACK PERSON TO BE RECOGNIZED AS A YOUNG ALUMNUS OF THE YEAR IN 1987. SHE WAS NAMED THE 1986 NORTH CAROLINA TEACHER OF THE YEAR AND THE 1987 NATIONAL TEACHER OF THE YEAR.



**MARY CARROLL**  
**CLASS OF 1981**

MARY CARROLL WAS ELECTED HOMECOMING QUEEN IN 1979. SOME WHITE STUDENTS, HOWEVER, BOOED CARROLL WHEN SHE WAS CROWNED AND THAT YEAR THE YEARBOOK DID NOT INCLUDE THE TRADITIONAL HOMECOMING SPREAD, WHICH ACCORDING TO ELON'S INFORMATION OFFICER WAS DUE TO A MISSED DEADLINE.



**WILLIAM WALKER**  
**CLASS OF 1993**

THE REV. WILLIAM WALKER WAS THE FIRST BLACK PERSON TO SERVE AS PRESIDENT OF THE STUDENT UNION BOARD IN 1991 AND GRADUATED IN 1993. HE ALSO BECAME THE FIRST BLACK PERSON TO SERVE METHODIST UNIVERSITY AS THE VICE PRESIDENT FOR STUDENT DEVELOPMENT.



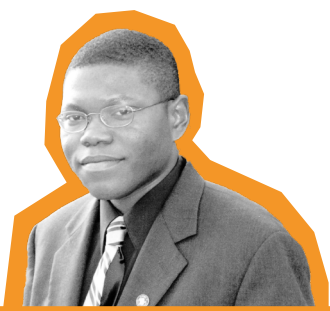
**DAVID BYNES**  
**CLASS OF 1997**

DAVID BYNES WAS THE FIRST BLACK PERSON TO BE CROWNED HOMECOMING KING IN 1993. BYNES WAS A COMMUNICATIONS MAJOR AND REPRESENTED THE BLACK CULTURAL SOCIETY DURING HOMECOMING. THE THEME OF THE HOMECOMING WAS "HATS OFF TO HOLLYWOOD."



**AKILAH WEAVER**  
**CLASS OF 2000**

AKILAH WEAVER WAS THE FIRST BLACK FEMALE TO SERVE AS EXECUTIVE PRESIDENT OF THE STUDENT GOVERNMENT ASSOCIATION IN 2000. SHE GRADUATED FROM ELON WITH A DEGREE IN BUSINESS WITH A CONCENTRATION IN MARKETING AND ECONOMICS.



**DARRIS MEANS**  
**CLASS OF 2005**

DARRIS MEANS WAS THE FIRST BLACK MALE TO SERVE AS PRESIDENT OF THE INTERFRATERNITY COUNCIL IN 2004. AFTER GRADUATING, HE HELPED FOUND ELON ACADEMY, A COLLEGE ACCESS PROGRAM FOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS WITH FINANCIAL NEEDS OR NO FAMILY HISTORY OF COLLEGE AT ELON.



**WILHELMINA BOYD**

WILHELMINA BOYD FOUNDED ELON'S AFRICAN/AFRICAN AMERICAN STUDIES PROGRAM. SHE WAS ALSO A PROFESSOR OF ENGLISH AT ELON AND BEGAN TEACHING AT ELON IN 1987 AND WAS THE ONLY BLACK PROFESSOR ON STAFF. SHE TAUGHT FOR 18 YEARS, SERVING AS A MEMBER OF THE MINORITY AFFAIRS COUNCIL, A HAND TO HAND MENTOR AND ADVISER TO THE BLACK CULTURAL SOCIETY.



**DAVID MORROW**  
**CLASS OF 2007**

DAVID MORROW WAS THE FIRST BLACK STUDENT TO SERVE AS DRUM MAJOR OF ELON'S MARCHING BAND. HE GRADUATED FROM ELON IN 2007 AND FROM ELON LAW IN 2010. IN 2013, HE WAS NAMED A TOP 10 UNDER 10 ALUMNUS OF ELON.



# Huemanity of People showcases inclusive excellence through storytelling

The project is meant to spark conversation on people’s role in diversity, equity and inclusion

**Lilly Molina**  
Elon News Network

Last year, junior Nailah Ware was working with Randy Williams, vice president of inclusive excellence and education, on a podcast called “Tell It Til’ It’s Told,” highlighting inclusive excellence through student’s stories. Not long after that, she got an email from university communications, asking her if she would be interested in being featured in the Huemanity of People project for the work she has done with diversity through her music. Ware said she was speechless when she received the email and felt honored to be featured later that year in April.

“I hope it gives people hope,” Ware said.

The Huemanity of People is a storytelling project sponsored by the Office of Inclusive Excellence and Education. Its goal is to showcase the wide range of diversity that makes up Elon, according to Williams.

For Ware, she isn’t afraid to create a platform centering around diversity. As a musician and producer, Ware said she creates her sound in hopes of making people aware that diversity isn’t going anywhere, and she was able to showcase this on the project. Ware said it felt special to be seen and hopes this project gets students engaged in conversation about diversity, equity and inclusion. She said Huemanity of People is “laying the blueprint” for student engagement on DEI.

The project started with a blank wall. Williams said when the division of inclusive excellence and education emerged out of the COVID-19 pandemic, there were many empty walls within the second floor of the Powell Building where their offices are located.

“We need to get some decorations, spruce this place up that’s reflective of inclusive excellence,” Williams said.

Director of Interior Design Holly Hodge wanted to find a way to get students to stop near the Office of Inclusive Excellence and Education and interact with art in a storytelling setting. She didn’t remember where she got the idea for the wall installation, but Hodge said she gets her ideas for designs through multiple platforms such as Pinterest and the Association for University Interior Designers.

“I hope they’re being more aware and gaining knowledge about the university as a



Outside the Office of Inclusive Excellence and Education lies the Huemanity of People, which is a project started to get students engaged in topics such as diversity, equity and inclusion.

LILLY MOLINA | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

whole and the diversity we have here at Elon, and I’m just hoping that people engage with it and kind of take it to the next level,” Hodge said.

It became more than just pictures on a wall, there were stories behind these pictures. The Huemanity of People is made up of students, faculty, staff and alumni that reflect some aspect of inclusive excellence, Williams said. People can be nominated by their peers and not only will they be featured outside of Powell 208, but also in Elon Today and The Magazine of Elon.

“So the idea is that people are inclusive excellence,” Williams said. “Inclusive Excellence is within people. And so by telling these stories, we’re telling inclusive excellence.”

For Williams, this comes down to the

shared responsibility everyone at Elon has to the mission of inclusive excellence. He said inclusive excellence is more than just social identities such as race and sexuality, but rather bringing people together across differences. Williams said the Huemanity of People can be a platform for spectators to realize that they can contribute to DEI.

Williams said the Huemanity of People has remained a signature program and has received praise outside the higher education world. He said a successful company commented about Huemanity of People and how they want to do something similar at their company.

“We’ve been very strategic in crafting stories that will bring forth people’s identities and how they are different and how they are

alike and how they’re seeking this human flourishing, essentially,” Williams said.

For now, the installation remains right outside of Powell 208, but Williams said he hopes one day fill empty walls across campus with Huemanity of People as they continue gathering more stories. One goal, Williams said, is to feature more than just students, faculty and staff. He wants to maybe feature parents, donors or even trustees. He said there is not a science to how they go about picking their next subject, but they do look for someone who feels comfortable sharing their story.

“If people can see this, if people can identify how they can contribute, then we’re all in moving toward this whole high goal of student success,” Williams said.

## Ora Teahouse brings handcrafted, ethically-sourced tea to North Carolina cafes

Black-owned business partners with local coffee shops, her mission expanding beyond tea

**Liya Rike**  
Elon News Network

For Trista Sanford, founder of Ora Teahouse, tea isn’t just a beverage; it’s a means of connection, care and empowerment. After running a bakery and welcoming her daughter in 2018, Sanford wanted a business that aligned with her growing identity as a wife, mother and entrepreneur. The mission of Ora Teahouse goes beyond tea.

“It’s to inspire people, especially women of color, to take a moment for themselves. We live in a hustle culture, and just taking the time to make tea is a radical act of love and self-care to me,” Sanford said. “My business is built on intention, inspiration and love. While I hope people use tea as part of their self-care, it’s about encouraging mindfulness in whatever way works for them.”

Reflecting on her childhood, where tea symbolized comfort, she found her answer.

“Growing up, tea was a big part of my life,” Sanford said. “My mom made tea for us when we were sick or down. It wasn’t fancy — just the Lipton tea you’d warm in the microwave. But from that, it became the way I nurtured people. In 2020, I started playing around with some tea blends, and that’s where Ora came from.”

Ora Teahouse, launched in 2020, offers

handcrafted tea blends and sustainably sourced products from countries like Japan, China and India. Customers can order online for shipping or find its products in select North Carolina stores through local partnerships. With a background in baking, Sanford uses her skills in flavor profiles to create teas that engage with all senses.

“I want something that tastes good, looks good, smells good and makes you feel good. I make sure people are paid fairly and also try to source locally whenever possible, especially for flowers and botanicals,” Sanford said.

The business’s principles guide its partnerships. Sanford initially reached out to local businesses, like Onie Coffee & Roastery in Durham, to offer her teas. Since then, referrals and word of mouth have expanded her reach to places such as The Daily Grind in Elon, but she said she makes sure all partnerships align with the business’s values. Despite its success, running Ora Teahouse hasn’t been without challenges. Sanford described funding as a common hurdle for small Black-owned businesses.

“Funding is always a challenge,” Sanford said. “Most of my business has been bootstrapped, but grants and recognitions have helped. Being a solopreneur, I do everything — website design, fulfilling orders, blending teas, social media — it’s all me.”

Sanford’s role as an advocate for small businesses has also shaped her experience. She said she supports other entrepreneurs through consulting and promoting their ventures. Working with the Bright Black candle store and Liberation Station, a

bookstore to support their business, as well as through North Carolina entrepreneurial centers.

“I’ve collaborated with the UNC Entrepreneurial Center and businesses across the Triad and Triangle,” Sanford said. “I’ve partnered with the North Carolina Museum of Art and created bespoke tea blends for Bright Black Candle, which they take to Essence Fest and sell in their shop. I love working with organizations that highlight local, Black-owned, and women-owned businesses.”

Looking ahead, Sanford plans on

expanding Ora Teahouse through intentional partnerships, products and experiences. This September, she is co-hosting a wellness retreat in Tennessee to offer women a space for relaxation and self-reflection.

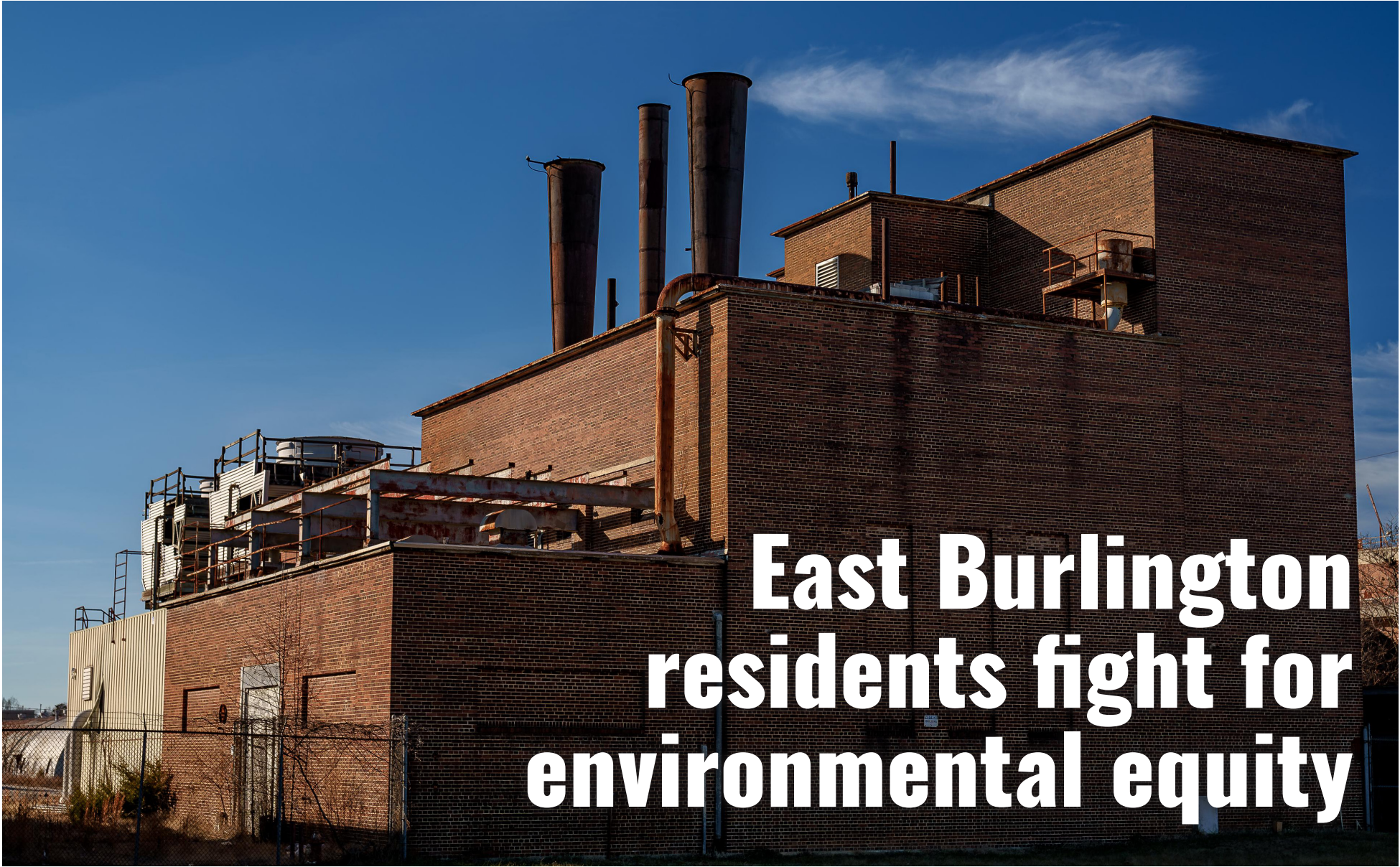
“Initially, I dreamed of working with big stores like Target but now I focus on smaller, intentional partnerships where I can maintain alignment with my values,” Sanford said. “It’s curated with women of color in mind, but all women are welcome. It’s not about being strong or great — it’s about coming back home to yourself.”



The Daily Grind, a coffee shop in Elon, sells Ora Teahouse tea.

ETHAN WU | PHOTO EDITOR





# East Burlington residents fight for environmental equity

ETHAN WU | PHOTO EDITOR

Building 18 of the Tarheel Army Missile Plant on Jan 25. The plant is located in east Burlington, a neighborhood now with mostly low-income people of color, and comes with a number of public health concerns, some residents want the building gone.

Tarheel Army Missile Plant pollutes, raises concern for well-being of neighboring residents

Julia Donaghy  
Elon News Network

Just five miles east of Elon sits a 22-acre property called by different names within the east Burlington community. Some refer to it as Western Electric, others, the Tarheel Army Missile Plant. The property's buildings are dilapidated and come with a list of public health concerns. Because of this, Donna Vanhook, an Alamance County soil and water conservation district supervisor, believes it needs to be torn down.

"My thing is, I don't trust it. It has been 30 plus years since it's closed, and I don't trust it at all," Vanhook said.

Originally constructed in 1927 as a synthetic fabrics factory, the 22-building site has a checkered past and present. The Defense Plant Corporation purchased the property in 1942, leasing it out to several different companies to manufacture components for military operations, including being used as a research and construction facility for Western Electric and Nike Ajax surface-to-air missiles in the Cold War. The U.S. Army Aviation and Missile Command held jurisdiction of the land in 1962, and it leased out the space to AT&T— where Vanhook worked as a security guard until its closing in 1992 — and Lucent Technologies. The U.S. Department of the Army sold the property in 2004.

During the Cold War, the plant provided nearly 4,000 jobs for Alamance County, as well as a small neighborhood adjacent to the property to house workers. What was once an opportunity for economic growth is now a collection of run-down buildings and broken glass, creating public health concerns for the surrounding neighborhood.

Throughout its operation, chemicals seeped into the soil and groundwater beneath the buildings due to accidental spills and poor regulation of their disposal, according to reporting done by NC Newsline. The plant has since polluted the surrounding area with a variety of contaminants including various carcinogens, asbestos, lead and even radioactive materials, according to a study done by federal contractors called Terracon in May 2023.

Vanhook said the plant has decreased the property value of the adjacent homes, creating a high turnover rate of families who live there. The neighborhood is made up of primarily low-income people of color who are moving in

and are the most affected by its pollutants.

Although it can't be exclusively attributed to the plant, east Burlington has an average lifespan expectancy 11 years shorter than west Burlington, its wealthier counterpart, according to a 2018 Alamance County health assessment. Life expectancies can be affected by a multitude of factors, including income, lifestyle, education and nutrition.

"As the plant started, it used to be booming in the area. I have talked to people who retired from there and they talk with glee about their job," Vanhook said. "People have good memories about it and that type of thing. But as I understand it, it began to be more Black and brown as the plant started to close."

“

IF I HAVEN'T MADE THAT CLEAR, THOSE LEVELS ARE ASTRONOMICAL. THIS IS A LOT. THIS IS NOT GOOD.

JESSICA MERRICKS  
ELON PROFESSOR OF BIOLOGY

Since the '90s, the past and current private owners have applied and been denied from national and state programs designed to assist in the cleanup of contaminated areas. In the mid-1990s, samples of soil from the property were taken to test for eligibility for the Superfund, a national program that brings public engagement to polluted sites, according to Newsline. Doing so would have informed the surrounding community of the hazards relating to the site.

However, the plant scored too low to be considered a national priority, although the soil test has since been questioned. Underserved communities are also underrepresented on the Superfund list, and the tests did not include the recently discovered levels of PFAS compounds, also known as "forever chemicals."

The U.S. Department of Defense and other previous owners are responsible for the cleanup of the land, according to the city of Burlington.

Jessica Merricks, an Elon professor of biology, explained how these man-made chemicals were designed to be difficult to break down. Because of this quality, PFAS compounds are used to make things waterproof, stain proof, non-stick and grease resistant. This means they can commonly be found in products like

makeup, kitchenware and clothes and usually spread to the environment through drainage and sewage systems.

"The PFAS that sloughed off of a skillet 40 years ago is still around. So that means we have seen an accumulation of PFAS compounds in the environment over time," Merricks said. "Now we are starting to see significant threats to the wellbeing of the environment and plants and animals."

In January 2023, the groundwater and soil beneath many of the buildings was found to have levels of PFAS that neared or surpassed the EPA's health advisory limit of 70 parts per trillion in drinking water. Newsline reported on these findings in April 2024, right after the EPA pushed for lowering the legal limit of PFAS compounds to 4 ppt. This is an important difference from the health advisory limit of 70 ppt, according to Merricks, which was not enforceable and had no legal consequences.

Newsline reported that the tests from the plant identified high levels of two specific PFAS compounds, PFOS and PFOA. The groundwater beneath one building at the plant showed levels of PFOS at 210 ppt and PFOA at 39 ppt. Another spot found levels of PFOS and PFOA at 43 ppt and 93 ppt, respectively.

"If I haven't made that clear, those levels are astronomical," Merricks said. "This is a lot. This is not good."

Because of PFAS compounds' structure, natural systems, such as the environment or the human body, can't break them down. This leads to the buildup of PFAS over time in both humans and animals, Merricks said. This accumulation can interfere with the endocrine system, potentially causing fertility and thyroid problems as well as increasing the risk of cancers, such as prostate and kidney cancer.

The groundwater feeds into a stream that cuts directly through the surrounding neighborhood, a stream which people wade and play in. From there, it merges with Service Creek which feeds directly into the Haw River.

Without national or state-level recognition, advocates like Vanhook have struggled to garner enough support to properly tackle the remediation process, despite concern within the community.

"I use my voice as a community member because I'm kind of between campus and the actual site, but I'm just concerned about the people," Vanhook said.

Due to a lack of tests, the levels of pollution in the air and surrounding soil is undetermined, yet many residents remain apprehensive about drinking tap water or gardening in their own backyards.

A lack of access to proper nutrition is also a concern of Vanhooks. Across from the plant

is an empty field, which Vanhook said was supposed to be a Lidl grocery store, until the plans were abandoned because of the plant. East Burlington is left with a Food Lion and Walmart to buy food from. Vanhook prefers to drive out of the area, to stores such as Sprouts Farmers Market and Wegmans to get her fresh fruits and vegetables.

Right now, the DoD is working on removing the source of contaminants, adding to the groundwater barrier and conducting research and investigation, according to the city of Burlington. According to the schedule posted on the city of Burlington's website, there will be a feasibility study conducted in April, which will lead to a proposed cleaning plan in May. There will be public comment for the plan in August.

However, after a lack of government interference, Vanhook turned to local efforts. In November 2023, a forum was held through WERA, the West End Revitalization Association, in order to fast track the clean-up process. WERA aims to promote positive environmental change in local communities of color. Additionally, some community members have formed RAB, the Restoration Advisory Board for the Western Electric Property, which informs and provides the local community a voice.

"This is shaping up so that the conversation can go beyond Alamance County. That's with all of the environmental science and that's with how to relate to the community in such a way that is not always talking about science," Vanhook said. "We're bringing it to a lay person's level."



ETHAN WU | PHOTO EDITOR

Donna Vanhook, an Alamance County soil and water conservation district supervisor, stands in front of the Tarheel Missile Plant.



# Undergraduate tuition, housing, meals to increase by 3.81% for the 2025-26 academic year

Tuition will go toward faculty, staff pay, student initiatives such as free laundry on campus

**Avery Sloan & Nia Bedard**  
Elon News Network

Elon’s tuition and fees will increase by 3.81% for the 2025-26 academic year, according to an email sent out to parents of Elon students on Jan. 31, from Elon President Connie Book. The total cost of attendance will increase by \$2,300, according to Janet Williams, Elon’s vice president of finance. Currently, Elon’s total cost of attendance is \$63,242. Next year, Elon’s total cost of tuition will be \$65,663.

Elon freshman Kaitlyn Landry was unaware that tuition was going to increase for the upcoming academic year and was upset when she first heard about the announcement.

“Tuition, in my opinion, is already very high,” Landry said. “I’m lucky enough to have been a merit scholarship recipient, but I am friends with some people that are already kind of struggling to maintain.” Last year, tuition increased by 4.96%. In 2023-24 tuition increased by 5.14%. In 2022-23 Elon’s tuition increased by 9%. Previously, tuition had not increased more than 4% for any year since the 2011-12 academic year.

The increase in tuition will go toward hiring more faculty members to maintain Elon’s 11 to one faculty to student ratio, increasing pay for faculty and staff and student focused initiatives such as free laundry across campus, according to Janet Williams, Elon vice president of finance.

“That’s a cost that we’re incurring to make sure that free laundry is across our campus,” Williams said. “Just some examples of some of the things that’s impacting our students in a very positive way.” Landry said that she hopes that the tuition increase benefits students in other ways.

“I want to know will parking be free or will textbooks be more affordable?” Landry said.

Fifty percent of the total cost for the 2025-2026 academic year will go to salaries and benefits, 16% will go to scholarships; 13% will go to operation costs; 15% will go to other costs including contingency; debt service, endowments and utilities; and 6% will go toward auxiliary costs, according to Eric Townsend, assistant vice president for strategic communications and media relations. There will be a 2% performance increase for faculty and staff, meaning each department will evaluate the employees performance and will give raises up to 2%, Williams said.

As part of Elon University’s Boldly Elon Strategic Plan, Elon’s Long Range Planning Committee chose 15 peer institutions that it feels compares with Elon based on criteria such as size, scope and resources. Compared to the other peer institutes listed, Elon’s estimated 2024-25 cost of attendance is \$3,692 to \$27,792 less expensive.

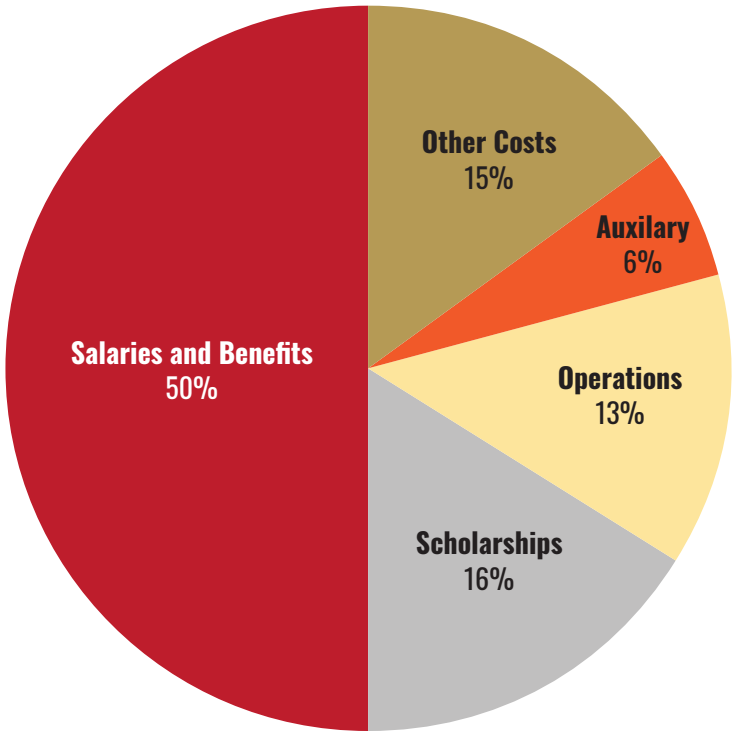
However, Elon ranks higher in total cost of attendance for out-of-state, undergraduate students when compared to the other four-year universities in North Carolina. Based on U.S. News’ 2024 top 16 colleges and universities in North Carolina, Elon ranks fourth in highest cost of attendance for out-of-state students.

In the past year, the amount of students involved in fellows programs and the amount of students receiving scholarships and financial aid has increased, which is something the university is proud of, Williams said.

“Our financial aid has increased significantly because of the numbers and because of the scholarships that we’re giving out,” Williams said. “It’s a very competitive environment in admissions and enrollment, and we are positioning ourselves to remain competitive, and we also want to make sure that our education still remains affordable.” For current students who are concerned about the increase in tuition and have had a change in their financial situation, Williams suggested they talk directly with Elon’s financial aid office.

“Our financial aid office is available

What the 2025-26 cost of attendance is going to



DATA VISUALIZATION BY NIA BEDARD

According to Eric Townsend, assistant vice president for strategic communications and media relations, this where the cost of attendance is going.

and willing to talk to them to recalculate what their financial need is and what their financial award could be,” Williams said. “I encourage students to talk to the financial aid office and to go through that exercise with them, because they are there to help.” While Williams said that the amount of financial aid has increased and that the financial aid office is willing to talk to students concerned about tuition, the cost of tuition at Elon has increased by almost 243% over the past 25 years.

42.7 million student borrowers have federal loan debt, which makes up for 92.4% of the student loan debt in the United States totaling \$1.773 trillion dollars, according to the Education Data Initiative, an organization that collects data relating to education such

as high school graduation rates and student loan debt.

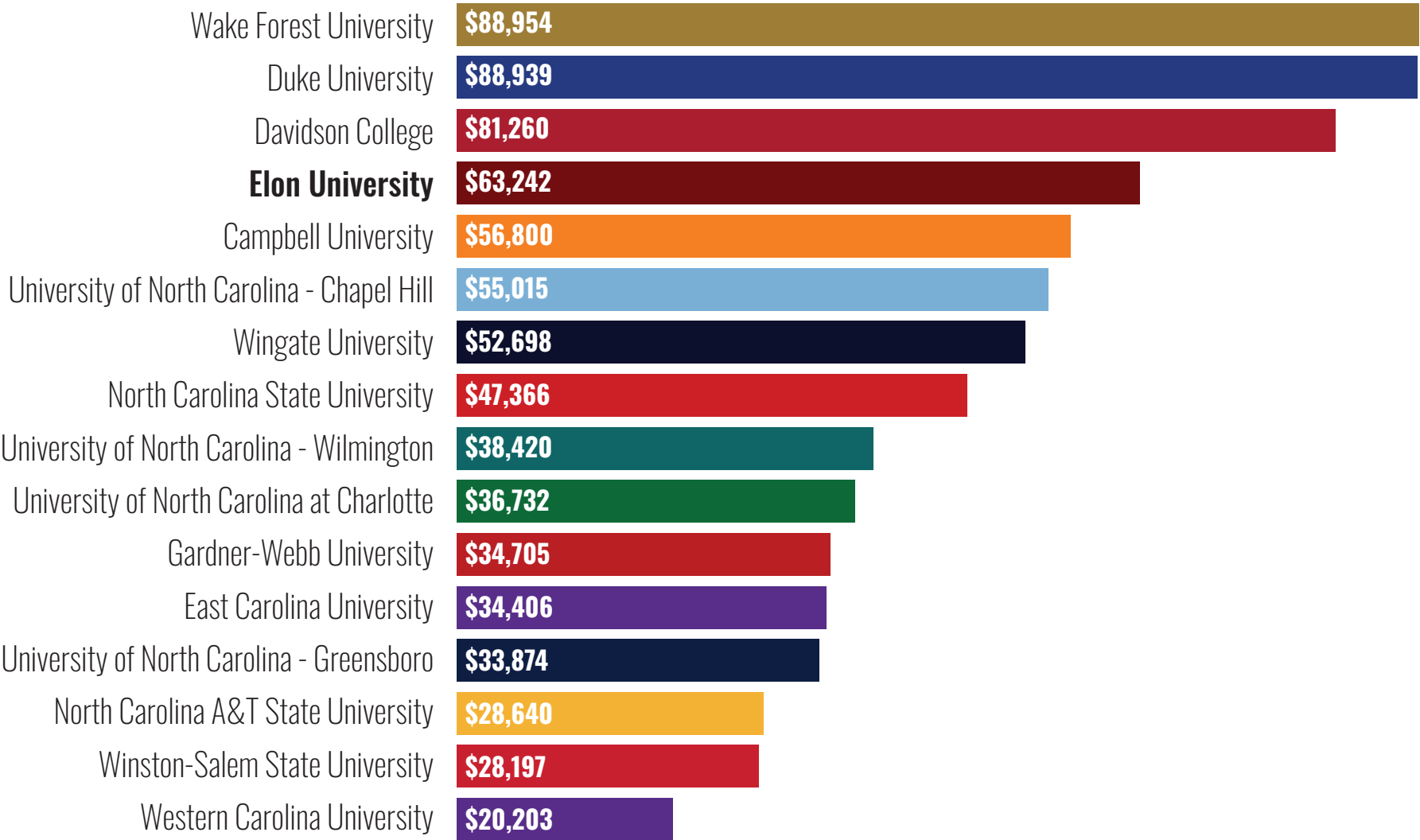
Part of President Donald Trump’s campaign during the 2024 election included closing the department of education, which creates policies for education, administers programs that provide financial aid and research, handles federal student loans and enforces laws that prevent discrimination in education.

While closing the department requires congressional approval, the Wall Street Journal reported on Feb. 2 that Trump and his advisers are considering using executive action to end certain programs and shift others into other parts of government.

Alice Morrissey contributed to the reporting of this story.

## Cost of Attendance for out of state, undergraduate students in the 2024-2025 academic year

According to U.S. News these are the 2025 top 16 colleges, universities in North Carolina.



DATA VISUALIZATION BY NIA BEDARD

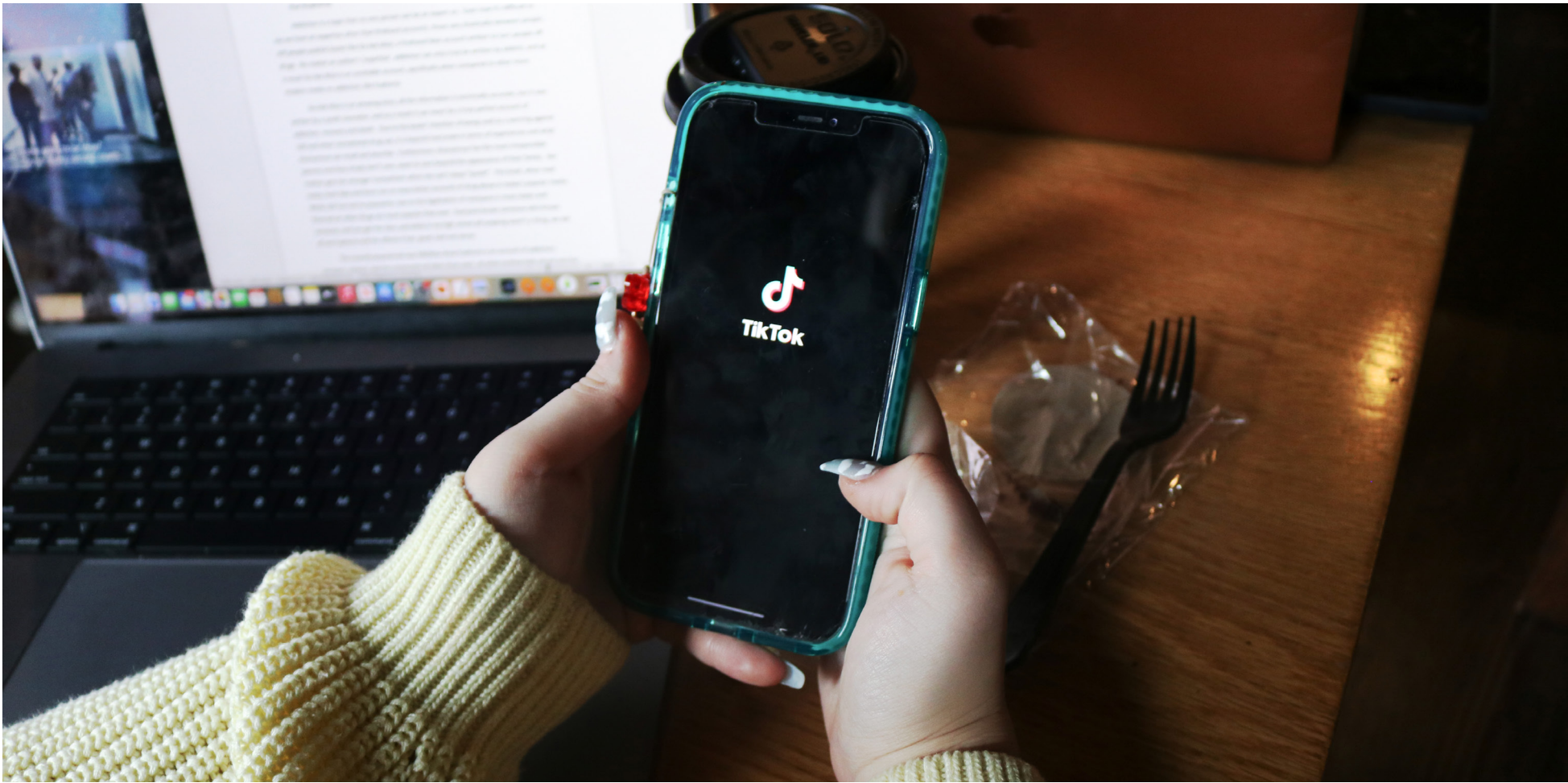
Elon University is the fourth most expensive university, compared to the top 16 U.S. News 2025 North Carolina colleges and universities.



CHEAT SHEET

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

# Professor emphasizes the impact the TikTok ban could have on the First Amendment



A photo illustration of a student using Tiktok on Jan. 19, 2023.

ENN FILE PHOTO

Elon professor Israel Balderas shares concern over the precedent set by Trump's executive order

Charlotte Pfabe  
Elon News Network

As time ticks on President Donald Trump's 75-day extension for TikTok, millions are wondering about the fate of the app and the precedent the ban may set. TikTok has been unavailable to download from the Apple App Store and Google Play Store since the platform's original ban on Jan. 19.

Last spring, Biden signed the Protecting Americans from Foreign Adversary Controlled Applications Act which gave TikTok's Chinese parent company ByteDance, until Jan. 19, 2025, to sell the platform to an American-owned entity.

Under Trump's recent executive order, he advised the U.S. Attorney General to not enforce the ban, giving the app more time to find a new owner.

Elon professor of journalism Israel Balderas, has been outspoken about the impact the executive order and ban could have on future interpretation of the First Amendment. Balderas said Trump's executive order ignored the actions of the other two branches of government entirely.

*This interview was edited for clarity.*

**Can you tell me a little bit about why you're invested in the TikTok ban and why it's important to you?**

The reason that I've been following TikTok is because what's really important to me is the First Amendment right. I teach Media Law and Ethics here at Elon University, and it's a required course. And for me, I think media law teaches students not just about the law, but about the importance of why we have the first amendment right, or why it's this beautiful cherished right that we have to be able to speak our minds and not be worried about

government intervention regardless of our thoughts, right? And so for me, the TikTok ban is a perfect illustration of what happens when the government uses its full force to silence people.

**The ban was first brought up in the Biden administration, and by Trump's first administration. Tell me more about that process.**

So originally, Trump, in his first term, wanted to ban it, and he wanted to do it unilaterally through executive authority, and that was impossible. Then when the Biden administration came in, they tried to negotiate a sale from the parent company of TikTok, ByteDance, to sell it to an American company. And we're talking about two or three years of the process. Then Congress passed a law, and essentially the law said, 'Because TikTok is a American-based company, but it's owned by a Chinese based company, and we're concerned that China's government may be influencing what ByteDance does with its algorithms, we are going to force a sale.'

The law was problematic to me on its face, because Congress would say, 'We don't like TikTok because of its values, because of its point of view, because of where it's located.' Number one, to me, that's egregious viewpoint discrimination. Certainly you know the law in the United States is that a foreign entity can't have a First Amendment right the way an American entity does. But TikTok is an American company, and so I was concerned that Congress thought it had the power to be able to do this under the First Amendment, and then Biden signed it into law, and it had a prolonged period of time. So TikTok could try to sell within that time period. I think where it really ramped up for me was the Supreme Court decision, because I thought, even if Congress passes a law, and even if Biden signs it into law, to me, the law is unconstitutional on its face.

**Do you think that this move by President Trump has the possibility of giving the government too much power over personal actions that people take with their use of social media?**

Let's at least talk about what troubles people who have strong opinions, one way or

the other, left or right. There was no outcry among young people when Congress passed the law. And remember, Congress passed this law, that is a direct law, but it was part of an appropriations bill. I mean, it was buried with other supplemental bills. But when Biden signed into law, there weren't marches. There were people saying, 'Oh my gosh, you know, I'm going to ignore what my predecessor did, signed this into law, I'm going to ignore what the Supreme Court said about this law, and I'm just going to let the process of selling the app continue,' that's problematic to me, regardless of the outcome.

Any time a president of the United States ignores the three branches of government, that is not a good thing. That is not a political issue, that's not because he's a Democrat or a Republican, it's just the president of the United States is supposed to enforce the law, and he hasn't. Having said that, who's going to say, 'Mr. President, you're violating the rule of law?' However, what I am troubled by is that he thinks, 'Well, the government can own half of TikTok.' Anytime the government owns the channels of communication, that is problematic, because the government can control that precious thing I called the marketplace of ideas, where you and I exchange what we think, what we believe. So what I always say is the government has no business controlling the highways and byways of which we communicate.

However, then the other side to that equation is that Trump is a patron president, and that is he is going to pay attention to the people who praise him the loudest, who give him the most money, and who he sees as a powerful constituency. And TikTok is a powerful constituency – 170 million people. And so he is going to do what politicians do, right? If they're not kissing babies, they're taking their lollipops, so he understands the moment, which is, 'I can use my power to give you a voice,' but I always go, 'Mr. And Mrs. America, or my young students, be careful when the government comes in and says, I've

got a deal for you, because that's not a good thing.'

**Do you think that this is going to set some sort of precedent for either other companies selling in order to become American-owned, or just the government being able to get rid of those companies' access in the United States?**

Certainly to me, that's what was concerning, right? If you're going to go after TikTok, because you're concerned about China, what about Politico, owned by a German company? What about Al Jazeera? There are lots of other entities that are foreign-owned. And we're starting to already see the Federal Communications Commission start to put this, what I call, the fist into the backs and say, 'You know, be careful what you do and how you speak about Trump.'

And so you're already starting to see that people, whether it is that Trump uses the threats of defamation law or the threats of getting rid of licenses for NBC or Comcast or CBS.

Just recently, for example, Trump was threatening to sue CBS because they wouldn't release the full transcript of a 60 Minutes interview with Kamala Harris. CBS relented. They gave them the transcript. I mean, like, 'Oh my God no, you can't do that.' You cannot turn over the material that we gathered as press people, because the government threatens. You go, 'Take me to court and let's fight it out.'

And that's what's really concerning to me, is that people are thinking, is the juice worth the squeeze? Is the fight worth it? Because in the end, is the Supreme Court really going to watch our backs? Is the First Amendment really going to be protecting us? Is freedom of speech and freedom of press and freedom to petition your government against redress? Is that really protected? Or do we give in now? And what I'm seeing is that we're giving in now and again. So you can understand why this one thing I'm saying, this is not about social media app. This is about how my students, my kids, the future of leadership in America, how are they going to fight the system? How are they going to fight the government? Because what I'm hoping is they see this and they go, 'If we don't fight for the First Amendment now, slowly and surely, we're going to lose this, right.' I'm seeing it out there. I'm hoping that my students will go, 'Oh hell no.'





Members of Sigma Kappa welcome new and returning members during Bid Day on Jan. 29 behind the Inman Admissions Center.

ETHAN WU | PHOTO EDITOR



Satan, played by sophomore Ella Schultz (center), embraces seniors Katie Kapp (left) and Deborah Han during the pick-up rehearsal of "Paradise Lost" directed by professor of theatre Susanne Shawyer on Jan. 30 in Scott Studios.

ETHAN WU | PHOTO EDITOR



Elon University's women's basketball team gather for a huddle before starting the second half of its game against Monmouth on Feb. 2 at Schar Center. The Phoenix lost 47-62.

LILLY MOLINA | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER



Junior TK Simpkins dribbles past a defender during a game against Northeastern on Feb. 1 at Schar Center. Elon won 71-60.

MILES HAYFORD | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER



Sigma Sigma Sigma recruitment director and senior Lindsey Ward uses a megaphone to get the attention of all members to begin introductions during Bid Day on Jan. 29 at Loy Center Neighborhood.

ETHAN WU | PHOTO EDITOR



# Local businesses play cupid’s helper for Valentine’s Day shoppers

Roxie’s Florist and Cakes, etc. by Cindy prepare to serve up the perfect gifts

**Megan Walsh**  
Elon News Network

The bright petals of flowers and the sweet smells of fresh-baked desserts — just two common Valentine’s Day gifts that local businesses in Elon and Burlington are ready to serve up.

As Valentine’s Day approaches, both Roxie’s Florist in Burlington and Cakes, etc. by Cindy in Elon are preparing for an increase in orders and purchases. Roxie’s Florist is already taking orders for students who are looking to purchase bouquets, and Cakes, etc. by Cindy will begin putting out Valentine’s treats and selling treat boxes this week.

Owner of Roxie’s Florist, Brandy Faircloth, said the business is already accepting orders for Valentine’s Day.

Roxie’s Florist has created many bouquets for Elon students before and has worked with Elon University for deliveries.

“We get a lot during Valentine’s Day, we end up taking a whole van just to the Moseley Center,” Faircloth said.

Mixed bouquets are the most popular offering at Roxie’s allowing customers a variety of flower types and colors. While roses are popular, they are one of many types of popular flowers, Faircloth said. Sunflowers, spray roses, alstroemeria and lilies are among the popular flowers, Faircloth said.

For students interested in ordering flowers, Faircloth suggests ordering from Roxie’s Florist’s website at least a week in advance. Also, Faircloth says students should go in with a price point in mind, with bouquet deliveries starting at \$45.

“Some people don’t realize how expensive it is sometimes, everything has gone up,” Faircloth said.

While the prices may be more than a bouquet of flowers from the grocery store, Faircloth said it is worth it.

“They’re going to last twice as long and they’re going to look so much better,” Faircloth said.

If shopping for someone with a sweet



ETHAN WU | PHOTO EDITOR

Roxie’s Florist Designer, Tonya Sheffield, decorates a flower basket filled with flowers and filler greens on Feb. 3.

tooth, another option is local business Cakes, etc. by Cindy, located in the Acorn Inn and across from the Elon University Park Place student housing.

Owner Cindy Pettiford said the shop will begin serving holiday-specific treats this week, including bringing back customers the chance to pick and choose treats to create Valentine’s Day treat boxes.

“I’ll offer special things like dip strawberries and dip cookies and pretzels and just different kinds of Valentine’s treats that you can get for somebody,” Pettiford said.

Last year was Pettiford’s first Valentine’s Day in a brick-and-mortar location, and she said she found her favorite holiday-specific treat to be the favorite of the customers as well.

“Custom cookies — that was the most popular thing last year, like the Valentine’s

decorated cookies,” Pettiford said.

Ordering ahead of time is not necessary at Cakes, etc. by Cindy and coming into the store is encouraged.

“I normally always have stuff readily available,” Pettiford said.

Pettiford prioritizes keeping prices on all of her treats fair for her customers.

“Nothing expensive, but it is custom, and it is homemade. It makes it more personal.”

### IF YOU GO

Students can order online at or at 336-226-0215.

Students wishing to purchase baked goods from Cakes, etc. by Cindy should stop by the store at 301 W Haggard Ave, Elon, NC 27244.

**SCAN TO ORDER  
FROM ROXIE’S  
FLORIST**



## VALENTINE’S DAY HOROSCOPES



### TAURUS

Romance thrives through deep connection and cozy moments.



### LEO

Grand gestures and passionate moments steal the show.



### LIBRA

Charm and romance are effortlessly in your favor.

### ARIES

Expect excitement and spontaneity in love today.

### SCORPIO

Intensity and deep emotions make love irresistible.

### GEMINI

Flirty conversations could lead to unexpected sparks.

### CAPRICORN

Commitment and sincerity strengthen relationships.

### VIRGO

Thoughtful actions speak louder than words in love.

### PISCES

Dreamy romance and heartfelt moments create magic.

### CANCER

Emotional bonds deepen, bring warmth and closeness.



### SAGITTARIUS

Adventure and spontaneity keep things exciting.



### AQUARIUS

Unconventional surprises make love feel fresh.







PHOTOS BY (TOP ROW) SONY PICTURES, 20TH CENTURY STUDIOS, (BOTTOM ROW) BANDWAGON, PARAMOUNT PICTURES, WALT DISNEY PICTURES AND COLUMBIA PICTURES

# Elon Watches: The Top 10 Films of 2024



**Rylan Ammerman**  
Reviewer

2024 was a rocky year for movies. In the wake of last year's Hollywood strikes, the number of great films plunged, with major releases like "The Fall Guy" and "Kung Fu Panda 4" not living up to high expectations of their target audiences. However, that's not to write off the best of 2024 cinema. This year brought some gems that unfortunately missed the top 10 overall; "Heretic" served as a thrilling commentary on the complexities of religion, "Snack Shack" compels with its summer coming of age story, and "Abigail" continued the hot-streak of horror filmmakers Matt Bettinelli-Olpin and Tyler Gillett. These films brought superb entertainment, though the next set of films did find a higher gear. That said, here are my picks for the top 10 movies of 2024, ranked from great to masterful.

## 10. Bad Boys: Ride or Die

While "Bad Boys: Ride or Die" is the fourth chapter in a now 30 year old franchise, it doesn't take its foot off the gas. Will Smith and Martin Lawrence return as wise-cracking Miami detectives, Mike Lowrey and Marcus Burnett, forced to go on the run after becoming mixed up in a conspiracy meant to frame their late former Captain. However, the real secret sauce comes from the ingenuity of directors Adil El Arbi and Bilall Fallah. Their action set-pieces burst with stylish creativity, constantly spiking adrenaline. This was the action flick of the year.

## 9. Alien: Romulus

"Alien: Romulus" is the series's best since the 1987 classic "Aliens." Not only is it wonderful to see the formidable Xenomorph's back, but tension constantly brews around the new group of space colonizers. By bringing in director Fede Álvarez, his token close quarters, time-bomb storytelling gets to thrive. Álvarez has excellent attention to detail, pausing on minor moments that payoff with dire consequences. The film's tagline read "in space, no one can hear you," but audiences were most definitely hollering in theaters.

## 8. Thelma

In "Thelma," an elderly woman, Thelma (June Squibb), treks across Los Angeles to find the phone scammers who duped her out of \$10,000. During this adventure, the film thoughtfully explores aging, framing simple tasks like climbing stairs as action sequences, while pausing to let Thelma reflect on her old age. The message that people can always reinvent themselves is especially touching, explored best between her and her grandson (Fred Hechinger). Through warmth and whimsy, "Thelma" is a crowd-pleaser.

## 7. Smile 2

With fearless direction, terrifying jump-scares and riveting suspense, it's hard to point to a filmmaking weakness in "Smile 2." Director Parker Finn blew his first film away, upping the scope of this demonic possession story while getting a devastating lead performance out of Naomi Scott. From the opening scene to the final cut, nothing is as it seems in the best of 2024 horror.

## 6. Inside Out 2

Nine years after the original film, "Inside Out 2" didn't disappoint. Not only do the emotions get another powerful arc, but Riley gets to stand alone as a well-rounded character. Given that her journey is framed through middle school sports, there is more excitement along with a sense of anxiety as she's continuously confronted with difficult choices. The film is subsequently both relatable, but also important in portraying the complexity of teenage mental health.

## 5. Saturday Night

"Saturday Night" is hilarious. In a retelling of the scramble before Saturday Night Live first broadcasted, the film follows producer Lorne Michaels, played by the energetic Gabriel LaBelle, as he attempts to wrangle his high-octane, hot-tempered cast and crew. Although SNL has been the eminent sketch comedy show over the past 50 years, the film compellingly portrays them as the underdog. This is the story of how grit, genuine humor and a firm artistic vision overcame the doubters.

## 4. Civil War

"Civil War" doesn't make a political statement, instead playing out a nightmare future for a divided America. Through deafening gunshots, hauntingly beautiful sequences of battle and gut-wrenching moments of tragedy, director Alex Garland urges his audience to see where they might fall amongst the chaos. No matter if they try to be "objective" like the film's core journalist characters or act vengefully like Jesse Plemons as a sketchy soldier, bloodshed inevitably swallows everything in its path.

## 3. Deadpool & Wolverine

Multiple cameos, CGI action and overplayed pop songs are all present in "Deadpool & Wolverine," yet the film utilizes these often criticized Marvel elements to stand out. It's clear that the filmmakers wanted to do justice to these iconic characters, and they succeeded with incredible humor and heart. Where Deadpool (Ryan Reynolds) can joke a mile a minute, Wolverine (Hugh Jackman) brings the gravitas to balance him out. They are a match made in heaven, headlining a fulfilling love letter to the Fox-owned Marvel films of the past.

## 2. Challengers

"Challengers" mesmerizes with some of the year's most electrifying direction from Luca Guadagnino. His work sweats with style, crafting tennis matches and a love triangle that are unbelievably thrilling. Also, while the film spans 15 years, eye-catching costume design and makeup seamlessly bounce the audience through the non-linear narrative. "Challengers" is a lot to take in, but when Josh O'Connor and Mike Faist face off on the court with Zendaya looking on, it's impossible to look away.

## 1. Dune: Part Two

It's difficult to fully capture the masterpiece that is "Dune: Part Two." From Hans Zimmer's majestic score to Greig Fraser's otherworldly cinematography and Denis Villeneuve's assured directing pulling it all together, this film is technically perfect. These proficient filmmaking elements also assist in capturing both the victory and tragedy of messianic lead Paul Atreides (Timothée Chalamet). His unconventional hero's journey brings a morally gray nuance that led audiences to the greatest cinematic paradise of 2024.



PHOTOS BY A24, MARVEL STUDIOS/20TH CENTURY STUDIOS, METRO-GOLDWYN-MAYER AND WARNER MEDIA.



# Women’s basketball star lights up the court in freshman campaign



MILES HAYFORD | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Freshman Jayda Angel sets up a play during a game against William & Mary on Jan. 31. The Phoenix lost 59-64 with Angel leading the team in scoring with 14 points, six rebounds and two steals.

Jayda Angel is off to a hot start to her Elon career after securing CAA Rookie of the Week four times

**Miles Hayford**  
Elon News Network

It was in the summer after her junior year of high school when Jayda Angel realized it. Her visit to Elon University’s campus cemented the bond she and Elon women’s basketball head coach Charlotte Smith had crafted over the phone.

“The moment I arrived on campus, and I toured, and we talked about things, it just felt right,” Angel said. “At that moment, I was like, ‘This is the place that I want to be at for the next four years.’”

Angel said Smith and her future teammates made it feel like she was joining a family and it felt like home. Angel, who boasts an impressive high school career where she led North Carolina in scoring her senior year at Cape Fear High School, said a key factor in her decision to choose Elon was the fact that they were her second ever offer and never lost contact with her.

Another influential factor was Smith. Angel felt an immediate bond as she grew comfortable talking with her beyond basketball, she said. Smith, who scored the game-winning shot in the 1994 NCAA National Championship, also brings lots of prestige to the program, which attracted Angel.

Smith said Angel’s innately competitive nature made her stand out and played a role in Smith’s recruitment of her. She also was impressed by Angel’s shotmaking ability and believed in Angel to return the program to dominance — a belief that has been proven right with Elon’s 11-9 start

after only winning 11 games last season.

“She’s a closer, she’s the type of player that can create her own shot when the game is on the line,” Smith said. “She wants the ball in her hands. So, we knew that that would be something important to get our program headed back in the right direction.”

“

SHE’S A CLOSER, SHE’S THE TYPE OF PLAYER THAT CAN CREATE HER OWN SHOT WHEN THE GAME IS ON THE LINE.

**CHARLOTTE SMITH**  
ELON WOMEN’S BASKETBALL HEAD COACH

Angel has certainly lived up to the hype as she has had an explosive debut in her first 20 games as a Phoenix. Angel hasn’t waited her turn to get involved on the floor as she has spearheaded the Phoenix by swiping balls, shooting 3-pointers and securing rebounds. From the opening tip-off, Angel’s nimble and elusive playstyle proved to be a fearsome force on the court. Her speed allows her to go from coast to coast, streaking across the court as she swipes the ball away from defenders and runs to the other side to pull up for a mid-range jumper. There are some youthful mistakes in her defense and turnover tendencies, but she is a team leader.

She began her Elon career with a combined 35 points and 9 rebounds in her first two games. She currently leads the

team in 3-pointers with 18 and averages 10.6 points per game and has 44 steals — two categories that she ranks second on the team in. She also has notched the third most assists and rebounds on the team. Angel has been a standout star across the Coastal Athletic Association as she has been named CAA Rookie of the Week four times.

This wasn’t a surprise to the Fayetteville native. She worked hard in practices before the season to impress her coaches. Angel said she utilized every practice as an opportunity to illustrate what she was all about. She was confident that she would get involved early on due to her strong mindset.

“I just had a feeling to stay ready for when my time comes, so I can execute it,” Angel said.

Smith expected this start from Angel. Smith said Angel is an elite level player and expected her to be a closer who can carry the load by taking the ball into her hands when the team needs it.

“She can score the basketball. I mean, that’s the impressive thing about Jayda, is that she’s not intimidated by any level of competition,” Smith said. “We played USC, we played Virginia Tech, and she has the same mindset, mentality in those games as well.”

Smith has also been impressed by Angel’s professional approach to the game. “She’s a consummate professional,” Smith said. “She is professional about taking care of her body, getting the rest that she needs, fueling her body; she just treats it like it’s a business.”

Despite her impressive start, the transition into college hasn’t been all easy for Angel. Angel said it was hard to adjust to the increase in skill from high school to college.

“Everyone can play. It was different in high school,” Angel said. “You would have maybe two star players, but everybody can play on the collegiate level.”

Angel also said it was hard to be away from family but believes Elon provides sort of a second family. She cited redshirt sophomore Raven Preston and senior Iycez Adams as teammates who have mentored her along the way. She said they gave her the confidence to be herself from the jump.

The numbers showcase an excellent season for Angel, and the freshman is happy with how she has played, and in particular, her mid-range game. Angel has said her mid-range shots have been vastly improved from her high school days. There’s still more to be improved, however. Angel believes she can get more efficient from beyond the 3-point line, and Smith hopes she improves in her understanding of their opponents’ defensive schemes.

“We just talk about 1% better every day, and just grabbing the reins of that point guard position when we have her in at point guard, and being able to get the team organized,” Smith said.

Smith has high hopes for the player that she calls a “Swiss Army Knife.” Over the next three years, Smith believes Angel can become one of the best players in program history thanks to her elite scoring ability, along with her rebounding and defensive skills. Angel has her eyes on similar prospects.

“My goal here is really to try to be the best, be the leading scorer, and to do everything I can to take Elon to the next level, and just to break records,” Angel said.

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Points at Elon through the first 20 games of the season