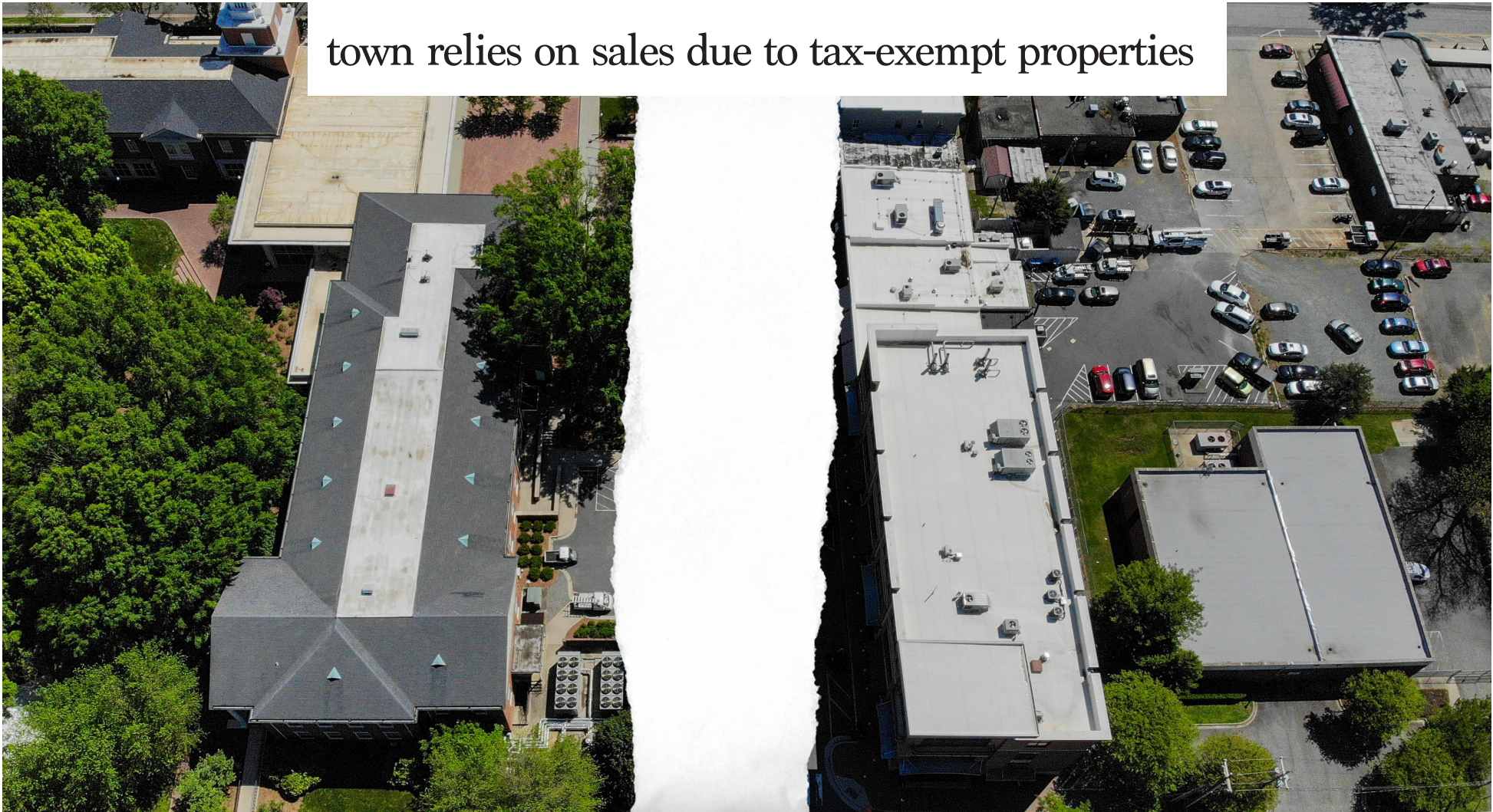


WEDNESDAY, APRIL 28, 2021
VOLUME 50, EDITION 27
ELON, NORTH CAROLINA

THE PENDULUM

EXEMPTION:

town relies on sales due to tax-exempt properties



Like other college towns across the country, the Town of Elon is dependent upon sales tax revenue as a major source of profit, whereas most towns and cities rely on property tax to fund operations.

CLARE GRANT | PHOTO EDITOR

The largest portion of the Town of Elon's budget comes from sales tax revenue due to the lack of property tax from large non-profits like Elon University and Twin Lakes Retirement Community

Mackenzie Wilkes | Executive Director | @macwilkes

A CUP OF COFFEE FROM Oak House. A tank of gas from Circle K. While full-time residents and students alike use water to take showers and sidewalks to cross town, the sales tax from shopping locally is largely where students' financial support ends.

While most municipalities fund their operations with a healthy mixture of sales taxes and property taxes, college towns such as the

Town of Elon often must rely much more heavily on sales tax revenue since their largest property owner — the university — is tax exempt.

“There's pros and cons with the higher reliance on sales tax. If your economy goes down, sales go down, you can be in a crunch, whereas with property tax, that's pretty consistent year to year,” Town Manager Richard Roedner said.

That was the fear when the

town of Elon created its budget for the 2020-21 fiscal year with the expectation that sales tax revenue would be down because of the coronavirus pandemic. To the town's surprise, sales tax revenue wasn't down, actually coming in at \$700,000, or about 25%, above expectations. But that doesn't stop the town's dependence on sales tax as a major source of revenue.

See **EXEMPT** | pg. 4

Taking a recess, how Elon Law adapted to a hybrid learning environment

Students and faculty reflect on the challenges and advantages of virtual learning, mentoring and bar exams

Jacob Kisamore
Elon News Network | @jacob_kisamore

Elon Law student Ayowunmi Kuforiji only brought two weeks' worth of clothes when she returned home to Dover, Delaware for spring break in March 2020. She packed light for the trip, expecting to relax briefly with family and return to Greensboro

to complete the final trimester of her first year. However, as COVID-19 cases begin to rise across the country, Elon Law announced it would wait two additional weeks before having students return. Soon after, the school announced the spring trimester would take place virtually.

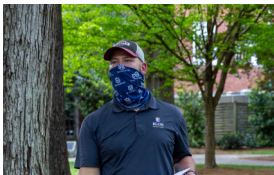
Elon Law has faced many challenges in its transition to an online learning environment, including switching classes to a hybrid model, preparing students for a virtual bar exam and making adjustments to its student mentor program.

See **ELON LAW** | pg. 6



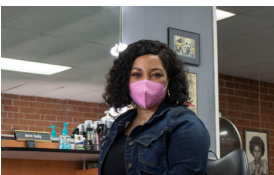
JACOB KISAMORE | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Along with his role as a student mentor at Elon Law, second-year student Daniel Esposito also serves as a teaching assistant, admissions ambassador and research assistant.



NEWS • PAGE 8

A Q&A with
Elon's Arborists



LIFESTYLE • PAGE 11

Hair salon maintains customer
service during pandemic



SPORTS • PAGE 16

Women's soccer heads to
NCAA tournament

THE PENDULUM

A PUBLICATION OF
**ELON NEWS
NETWORK**

Established 1974
Volume 50, Edition 27

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

MACKENZIE WILKES	Executive Director of Elon News Network
GRACE TERRY	Managing Editor of The Pendulum
JACK NORCROSS	News Director of Elon Local News
ELLIS CHANDLER	Social Media Coordinator
MADALYN HOWARD	Chief Copy Editor
AVA GIRARDI	New Member Coordinator
NYAH PHENGSIITHY	Design Chief
CLARE GRANT	Photo Editor
KIERAN UNGEMACH	Politics Editor
MIRANDA FERRANTE	Lifestyle Editor
KYRA O’CONNOR	Enterprise Story Coordinator
BEN MUSE	Analytics Coordinator
ANNEMARIE BONNER	Sports Director

Jacob Kisamore, Ted Thomas, Andrew Zagari, Henry Zinn, Caroline Bunder, and Livy Smith contributed to the design of this edition. Max Crider, Miranda Ferrante, Kyra O’Connor, Olivia Romano and Sophie Rosenthal contributed to the copy editing of this edition.

EDITORIAL POLICY:

ENN seeks to inspire, entertain and inform the Elon community by providing a voice for students and faculty, as well as serve as a forum for the meaningful exchange of ideas.

CORRECTIONS POLICY:

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

Contact
corrections@elonnewsnetwork.com
to report a correction or a concern.

WHEN WE PUBLISH:

- The Pendulum**
publishes weekly on Wednesdays
- Elon Local News**
broadcasts Mondays at 6 p.m.
- ELN Morning**
broadcasts Thursdays at 10 a.m.
- ENN Radio Podcast**
publishes Friday at 8 a.m.

FOLLOW US ON SOCIAL MEDIA:

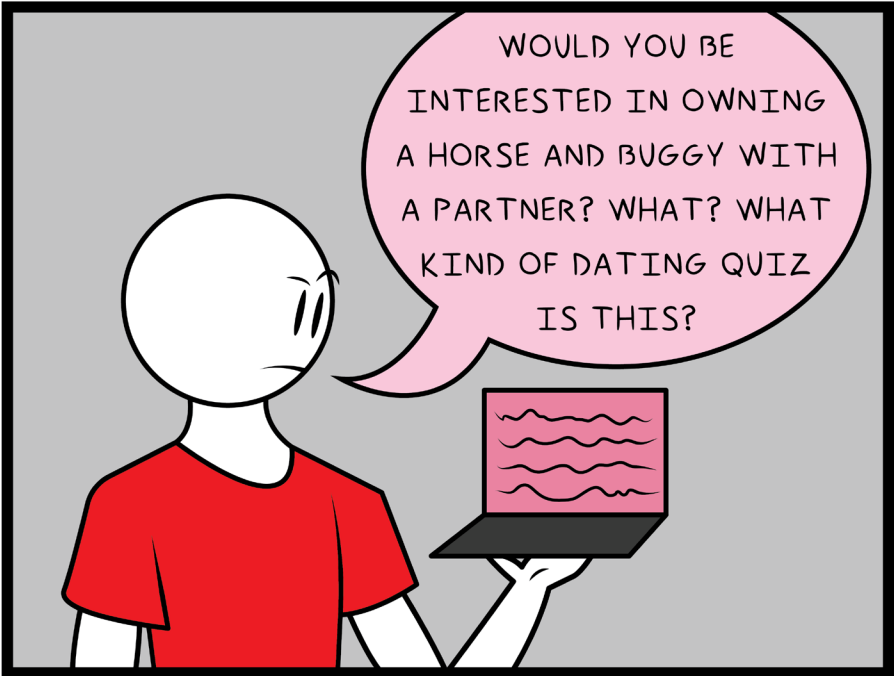
- Facebook**
Elon News Network
- Twitter/Instagram**
[@elonnewsnetwork](https://twitter.com/elonnewsnetwork)
- YouTube**
Elon News Network

CORRECTIONS

There are no corrections issued for the April 21 edition of The Pendulum.

COMIC

ELON CARRIAGE PACT



COMIC SAMS – SAM POROZOK

SCAN FOR MORE COVERAGE FROM ELON NEWS NETWORK
OR VISIT [ELONNEWSNETWORK.COM](https://elonnewsnetwork.com)



1. Open your phone camera
2. Focus on the QR code
3. Click the pop-up link

GAMES

How to Play: Guess the missing word in the five clues, then find them in the word search below. Words can be found backwards, diagonal, etc.

1. Town _____ Richard Roedner thinks the increase in revenue generated from sales taxes this year came from online shopping. *See Page 1 for answer.*
2. Elon Law student _____ Kuforiji only brought two weeks’ worth of clothes when she returned home last spring. *See Page 6 for answer.*
3. The Marriage _____ was founded at Stanford University in 2017 . *See Page 10 for answer.*
4. Paul Laparra is the co-owner of _____ Valley Farmers Market . *See Page 12 for answer.*
5. Elon’s recently rechartered the honor society Order Of _____. *See Page 14 for answer.*



Starting pitcher Brian Edgington goes 8 innings while striking out 8 and allowing 1 earned run. The Phoenix beat the University of North Carolina- Wilmington Seahawks 2-1 in extra innings April 23.



LUCAS CASEL | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER



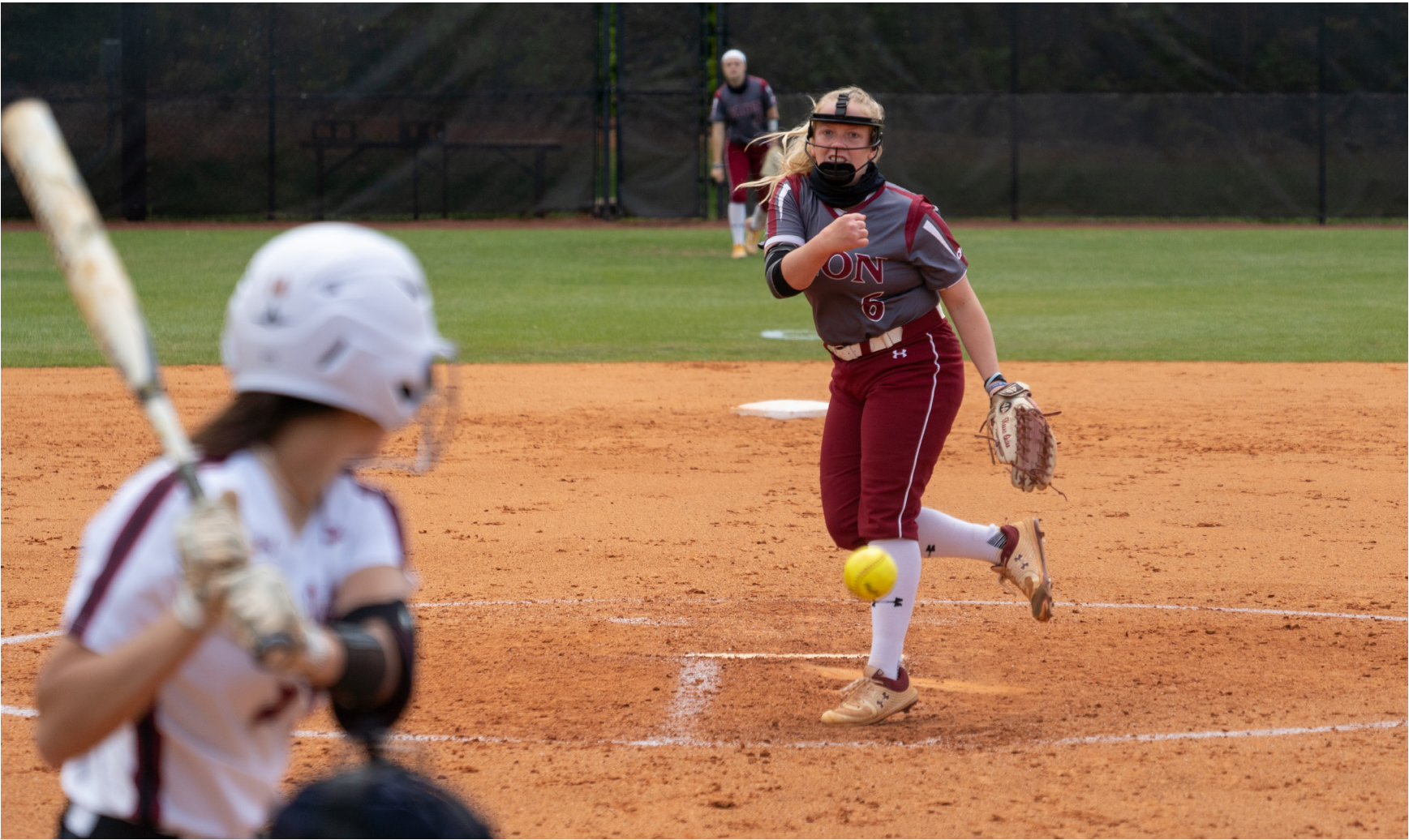
FRANCES O'CONNOR | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Senior Caroline Mansfield takes her graduation photos on April 25.



FRANCES O'CONNOR | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Junior Eliza Spear performs at the April 22 Earth Day celebration on Iconic Plaza.



FRANCES O'CONNOR | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Graduate student and pitcher Kenna Quinn pitches during Elon's game against the College of Charleston Cougars at Hunt Softball Park on April 25. The Phoenix beat the Cougars 4-0.

SALES REVENUE SUPPORTS COLLEGE TOWNS

EXEMPT | from cover

That’s one of the reasons why towns depend on people shopping locally. “You’re supporting a local business owner who also probably contributes in some way to the university, to our local community, but then also supporting our local sales tax versus another town’s sales tax as well,” Alderwoman Emily Sharpe said.

Getting coffee at Oak House, dinner at Tangent Eat+Bar and drinks at MaGerk’s supports not only these businesses but also the revenue infrastructure for the town.

If people don’t shop locally in the town of Elon, this could put businesses in jeopardy, and the town could lose sales tax revenue — a generous source of profit for the town. If a business has to close, the town could then lose property taxes as well.

“If that money is going elsewhere or not being collected because the businesses are vacant, it gets harder and harder to meet those services without raising taxes,” Roedner said. “If you want something new, you got to pay for it, and that’s the tax product part of it. And if you don’t have those businesses and that economy to support your tax base, it gets very hard to provide services that people want, new services that people are looking for.”

Roedner is unsure why the town saw an increase in sales tax revenue, but he suspects it’s because the town receives a small portion of sales tax from online purchases made by residents in the town. And although the largest stream of revenue for the town comes from sales, Aldermen and Mayor Pro Tem Davis Montgomery said this isn’t a dependable source of revenue for the town, unlike property taxes.

“LOSS OF POPULATION MEANS LOSS OF REVENUE. RESIDENTS ARE STRUGGLING TO PAY WATER BILLS, BUT WE STILL NEED TO MAINTAIN THE SYSTEM. THE RETAIL SECTOR WAS IN LARGE PART BUILT AROUND CATERING TO A STUDENT POPULATION

STEVE PATTERSON
PREVIOUS VICE CHAIR OF THE NATIONAL LEAGUE OF CITIES’ UNIVERSITY COMMUNITIES COUNCIL

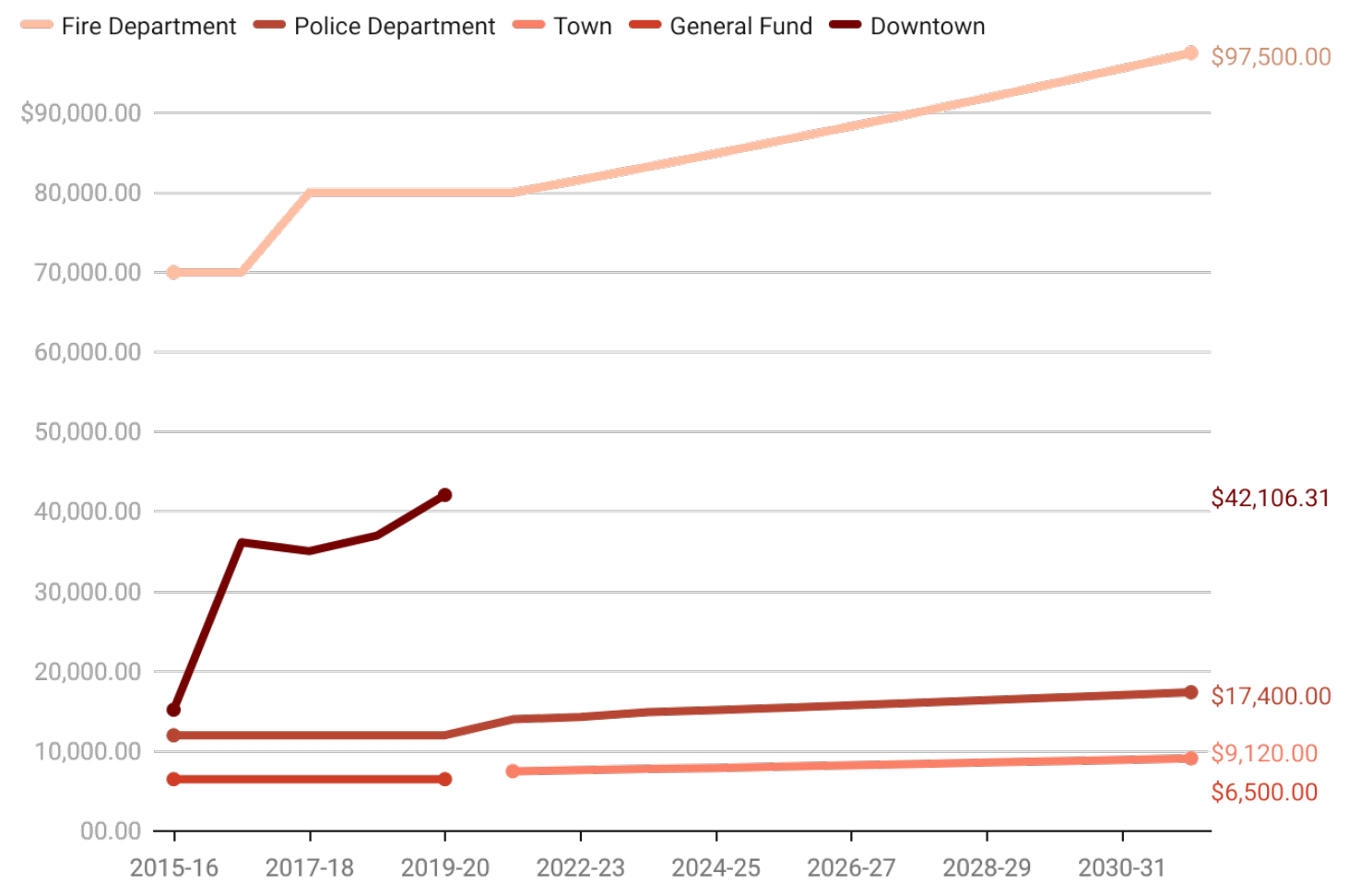
“The sales tax, while it’s there, and you can historically say it’s been within a certain range, there’s no guarantee that’s going to happen. The property taxes and vehicle taxes, they’re a little more stable,” Montgomery said. “We were pleasantly surprised this last year. So many people started shopping on Amazon that sales tax went up.”

For most cities, property tax is the largest source of revenue and a source to lean on during the pandemic, but for college towns, the tax-exempt status of universities limits the amount of property taxes the town collects.

In the early months of the pandemic, Steve Patterson, then-vice chair of the National League of Cities’ University Communities Council and mayor of Athens, Ohio, which is home to Ohio University, said there were concerns about the loss of revenue due to students leaving.

“Loss of population means loss of revenue. Residents are struggling to pay water bills,

UNIVERSITY CONTRIBUTIONS TO TOWN OF ELON



MACKENZIE WILKES | EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
Between 2015 and 2020 the university contributed over \$600,000. The town is currently discussing the university’s proposed funding over the next decade which would total over \$1 million.

but we still need to maintain the system. The retail sector was in large part built around catering to a student population,” Patterson said at a July briefing.

Non-profit entities like Elon University are tax-exempt, meaning the university does not have to pay property taxes on the 482.905 acres of its tax-exempt land. The tax value of Elon University’s exempt land, as of 2017, is worth \$285,396,239.

Although the university has tax-exempt status, it still uses services provided by the town, which cost money to run. The fire department responding to alarms going off in a dorm, town police being dispatched to an apartment and even the water running through faucets on campus all are services at the expense of the town.

“When we talk budgets, what we’re really talking about is services, meeting the service needs that the community has identified,” Roedner said. “We want nice parks. We want nice roads. We want water to flow.”

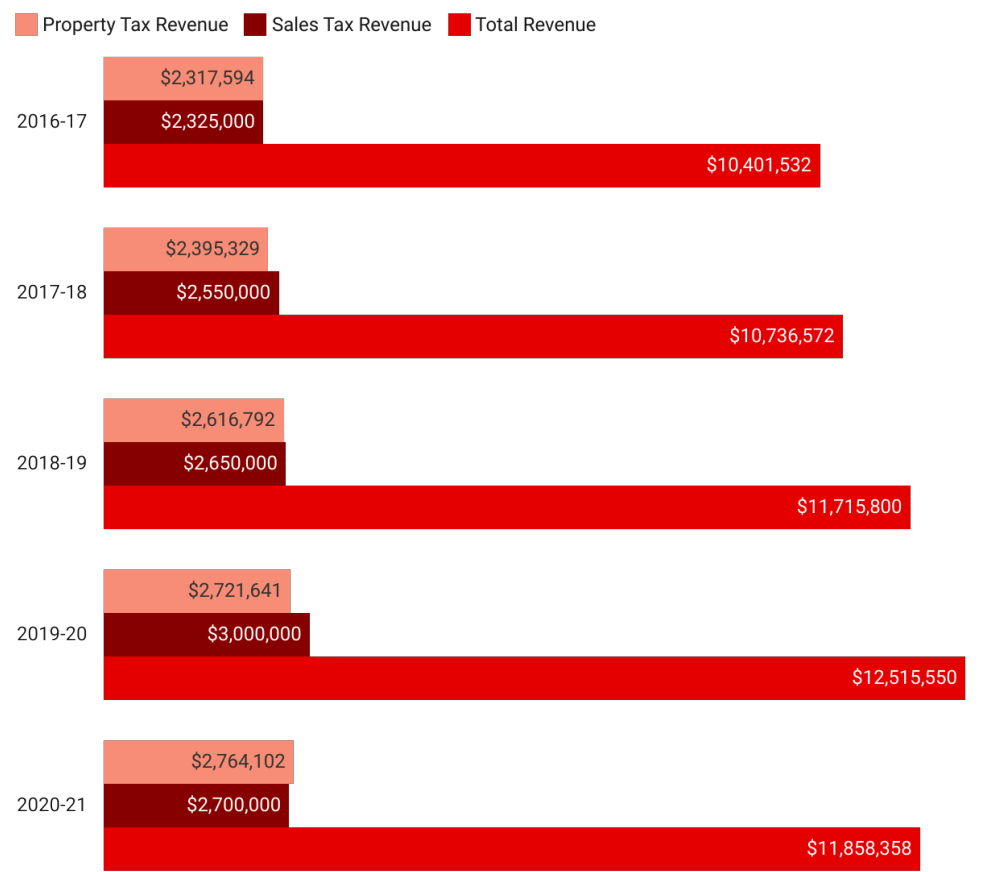
To address town services that the university utilizes, Elon donates money to the town annually which goes toward the downtown fund and fire and police departments. Between 2015 and 2020, the university donated \$643,087, according to records from the town. But by the town’s estimates, that amount pales in comparison to the costs associated with providing services to the university.

Based on the number of calls made to Elon University, the town has estimated that for the 2020-21 fiscal year alone, the university’s share of the \$2,403,350 fire budget is \$480,670, and its share of the \$2,149,842 police budget is \$537,460.

The university recently proposed a yearly contribution of \$14,000 to the police department and \$80,000 to the fire department, with those amounts increasing 2% each year over the next decade. The university has also pledged to give \$7,500 to the town’s general fund, which would also be subject to a 2% annual increase. All told, over the next decade, the university has pledged to give \$1,237,724 to the town.

Susan Kirkland, associate vice president for business and finance at the university, did not respond to Elon News Network’s multiple requests for an interview regarding the university’s financial relationship with the town. A university spokesman would only answer questions via email on Kirkland’s

PROPERTY AND SALES TAX REVENUE FOR TOWN OF ELON



MACKENZIE WILKES | EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
The property and sales tax for the Town of Elon.

behalf, stating, “It makes the most sense for the university to provide written responses,” given the information being asked about.

According to a spokesman, the base contribution, which increases each year, was decided through discussions with the town and reflects the growth of enrollment and facility spaces. The university also donates more money to the fire department than the police because the university doesn’t have its own fire services but does have its own campus safety and police.

The contributions to the town come out of the university’s operating budget, which consists of tuition and investment

returns from the endowment, according to a university spokesman. These payments to the town are a fixed cost for the university and were not affected by the 5% budget reduction implemented because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Elon University is not the only tax-exempt property in the town. Churches and the Twin Lakes Retirement Community are also exempt entities. Twin Lakes donates annually to the town’s fire department and has donated a total of \$238,358.75 over the past five years. There are a total of 126 tax-exempt properties, excluding those partially exempt, in the town’s jurisdiction.

But the university owns the largest acreage and highest valued property in the town, according to records from the county tax department.

Jeff Stein, vice president for strategic initiatives and planning, said the university recognizes the financial position the town is in with the presence of the university and other tax-exempt entities within the town.

“For the town, it can be challenging because they’ve got these very two very large entities — Twin Lakes and Elon University — that are both nonprofits, tax-exempt 501(c)3’s yet, we each use resources, right?” Stein said. “So that’s why the university is very proactive, let’s say, on making sure that we’re supporting the fire department, the police and other initiatives that the town needs support on.”

Town-gown financial relationship

With the university continuing to expand, the town services needed by the university will only grow. Alderman Monti Allison said he would like the university to recognize the funds needed for the town to provide services to the university.

“They depend on us to provide water and sewer and other services. So when we look at that, we realize, ‘So how do we cover that?’” Allison said. “If you look at property tax, the university basically represents about a quarter of the land mass of our town, and because of the tax-exempt status, that property is not taxable. And that’s something we understand. ... What concerns us, I guess, as the university continues to grow and acquire property that only further reduces our tax base.”

With the building of the university’s innovation quad on the old Elon Elementary lot, the town has assessed that a new water line will need to be put down to better serve the capacity of water that the university would require. According to Roedner, the town has not confirmed the need for a new water line with the university, but the type of water line is dependent upon what the layout of the buildings are — something the town doesn’t know yet.

“But, since we know the line is old, not sized for current standards (6” versus 8”), and assuming we will have to increase it to meet the University’s needs (up to 12”), we are planning ahead to replace/upgrade that line so that it is ready when the University is ready for construction,” Roedner wrote in an email to Elon News Network.

According to Roedner, an estimated cost for the upgrade would be \$3 million. This would eat away at a majority of the town’s revenue for one fiscal year and is equivalent to the amount of sales tax the town generated in 2019-20. The town is currently discussing with the university how they could share this cost, Roedner said, and the town is looking into grants for the water line project, according to multiple aldermen.

For Montgomery, it’s important for the town to communicate with the university on what it needs to provide services, like the water line, that are mainly used by the school.

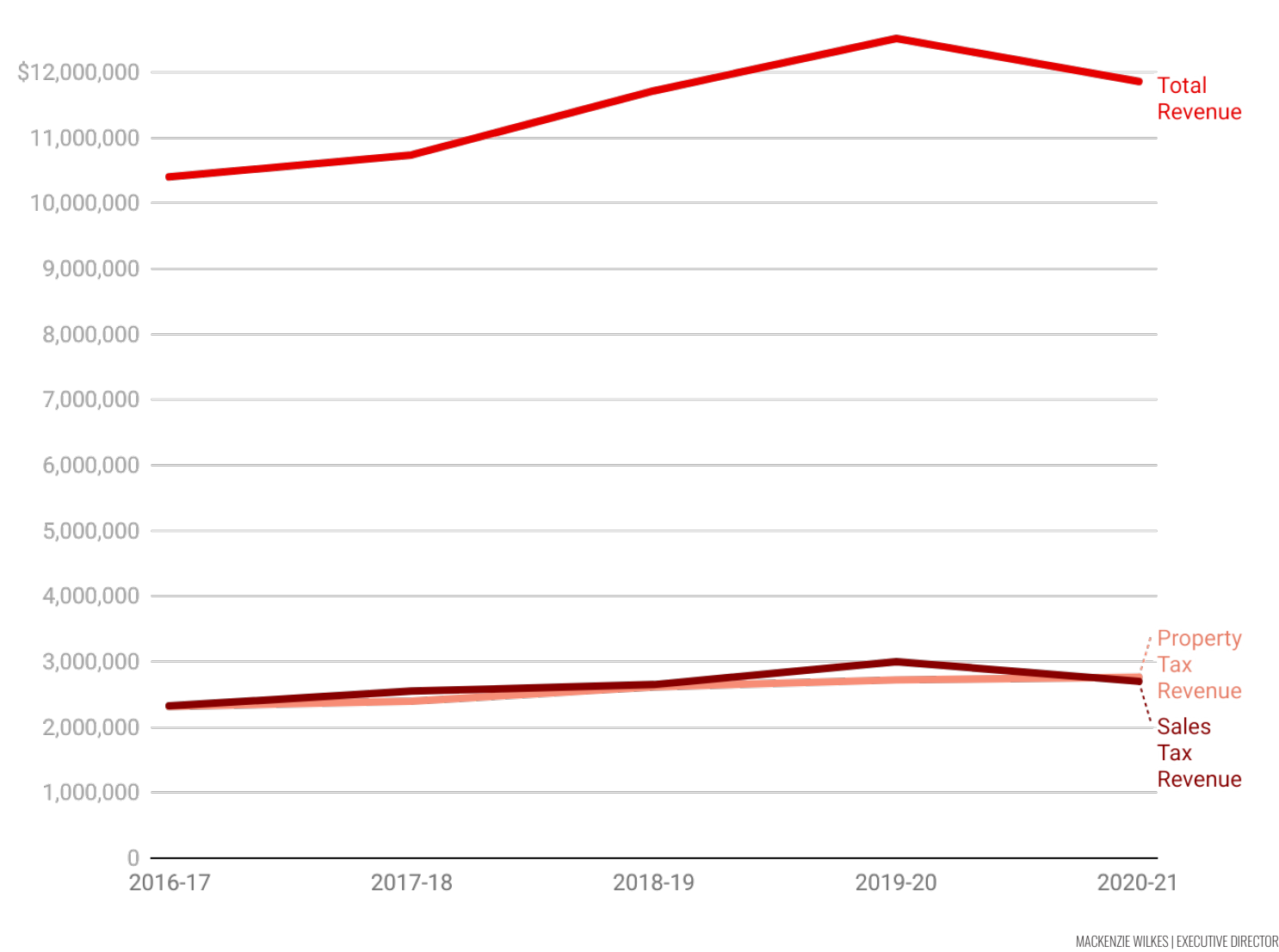
“It looks like the main beneficiary is going to be possibly university properties, but yet the town and the towns, people will be paying the taxes or the payments on that project,” Montgomery said. “So when that has happened in the past, we’ve talked with the university, we’ve sat down and, whether it’s a sidewalk or whether it’s a water line or whatever it is, it looks like the situation may be such that you’re benefiting from this as well, and would you be willing to participate?”

Stein said the university has discussions with town on how to support each other’s goals, including strategic initiatives and the master plans of both the town and university. While the current strategic plan, Boldy Elon, has no town officials on the committee and only mentions the town in terms of creating a “vibrant college town,” Stein said these discussions are ongoing.

“Although we talked with the town about Boldly Elon, we realized that we need the town to have a conversation with the university and the university have a conversation with the town board about each other’s strategic plans,” Stein said.

Stein said both the town and university recognized the need to strengthen communication this past fall and have restructured what that looks like. He said changes in leadership at the university,

ELON’S TOTAL REVENUE FROM PROPERTY AND SALES TAX



A line chart of Elon’s property and sales tax revenue from 2016 to 2021.

such as President Connie Book and a new chief financial officer, and in the town, like the recently elected aldermen, require new relationship building. On top of new leadership, he said the pandemic and the new strategic plan happening at the same time was cause for reestablishing the town-gown relationship.

““

EVERYONE REALLY STAYS SILOED. THE UNIVERSITY STAYS AT THE UNIVERSITY, TWIN LAKES STAYS AT TWIN LAKES, OUR RESIDENTS KIND OF STICK TO THEIR OWN AREAS BUT FINDING MORE WAYS TO BRING US ALL TOGETHER LIKE THAT DOWNTOWN GREEN SPACE, LIKE MORE SIDEWALKS, I JUST THINK THAT IT’S JUST GOING TO HELP US TO BUILD THAT SENSE OF COMMUNITY THAT I THINK A LOT OF PEOPLE ARE REALLY STILL LOOKING FOR.

EMILY SHARPE
ALDERWOMAN

“We’ve had a lot of transitions. So President Book is still somewhat new, we’ve got a new town manager, there are new members of the town board and then there were new senior staff members who were involved in working with the town,” Stein said. “And so we realized this fall that we needed to be talking with each other more and that we had to catch up because we were all new at this relationship.”

Allison said communication with members of the university’s senior staff has

helped the town know what services it needs to provide Elon and what the town needs from the university.

“We know the university has a plan, and up until the last couple of years, we never really were a part of that. So that if their 10-year plan was to grow the student body population by 2,000 students, that places some requirements back on us from an infrastructure standpoint,” Allison said. “So I think we’re starting to realize, and I’ve told people this, the university needs the town and likewise, the town needs the university.”

Although the university is not required to donate money, Sharpe said the town appreciates any amount of financial contributions it can get, and everyone could benefit from more funding.

“One of the things that we hear most often from our residents is the desire for more sidewalks, and everyone could benefit from that — the students, the staff, the full-time residents here in the town — but the town doesn’t have the money to do that,” Sharpe said. “So I think about all of these different areas that if the university were to provide a substantial amount of money to the town that could be budgeted and accounted for every single year, that it just helps the town to plan for those types of projects that really do benefit everyone.”

Sharpe said if the town were to receive more money from the university, or if it donated money to special projects, it would free up the budget to do more projects that would be beneficial to both the town and university residents. Sharpe said she would love to see the university either create a downtown park or greenspace with the property it owns downtown or give some of that land to the town to use.

“Everyone really stays siloed. The university stays at the university, Twin Lakes stays at Twin Lakes, our residents kind of stick to their own areas,” Sharpe said. “But finding more ways to bring us all together like that downtown green space, like more sidewalks, I just think that it’s just going to help us to build that sense of community that I think a lot of people are really still looking for.”

Downtown development is a part of the university’s 2016 Master Plan. A “near-term” project — to be completed in five to eight years — for the university is to use the land behind Park Place for a park that would feature “programs and amenities to serve students and residents alike.”

Stein points to the Inn at Elon as a project mutually beneficial to the university and town. All profits made from the Inn at

BY THE NUMBERS

97.164

acres for 338 S. Antioch Ave, which is the largest tax-exempt property in the town, according to records from the county tax department.

\$79M

is the value of 100 Campus Drive, the highest valued tax-exempt property in the town, which is owned by Elon University.

Elon, outside of operating costs, go toward scholarships at the university, but the hotel, which is not on tax-exempt land, pays property taxes that benefit the town and directs people to shop in downtown Elon.

The property owned by the university at 605 O’Kelly Avenue, where the Inn at Elon is located, has a tax value of \$26,335,849, according to documents from the county tax department. The hotel paid \$118,000 in property taxes in 2020, according to a university spokesman.

But as the university and the town look at future projects, Montgomery said it’s important for the town to have a dependable stream of revenue.

“If you look at the town, for us, having a dependable revenue stream is more important to us than having an occasional here today, gone tomorrow sort of situation,” Montgomery said. “So if the state code were to change and every nonprofit would have to pay at least some percentage of property taxes, then at least that’s a guaranteed revenue stream that we know is coming in year after year after year.”

Sharpe wants the town and university not only to work together financially but also build community. Sharpe said recognizing that the town is a communal space for residents and students to use is something she wants both parties to realize. She recently led a community clean up to collect litter around town with members of the Student Government Association after a town resident brought up litter in his neighborhood at a recent town meeting.

“I just want for people to understand that we are all in this Elon community together,” Sharpe said. “I think that a lot of times people only associate the name Elon with the university or the name Elon with the town, but we really are one community.”

Pardoning the pandemic, Elon Law learns and mentor in a virtual space

ELON LAW | from cover

Kuforiji said transitioning to online classes for the spring trimester was scary, especially as a first-year student. For her, the most difficult part was not being able to physically be in a classroom with her professors and peers.

“You really do get a different experience of law school when you’re in person versus online,” Kuforiji said. “I think a lot of the learning that happens is when you’re in the classroom, such as taking cold calls and having discussions with your professors and peers, and when you’re online, you don’t really get that connection with everyone.”

Elon Law implemented a hybrid format for classes throughout the 2020-21 academic year. Students can attend classes either in person or online, depending on their preference.

Luke Bierman, Elon Law’s dean and professor of law, said he is confident the school has taken the proper steps in its transition to a hybrid format to ensure students get the best possible experience while staying safe, which included adjusting the curriculum.

“We’re used to meeting challenges, and we’re used to having to change things,” Bierman said. “We weren’t worried about it because we have a great system.”

While Bierman said he is happy with the adjustments Elon Law has made, casual interactions have been difficult due to physical distancing protocols and virtual events, and this has taken away from the school’s interactive environment.

“The informal meetings that we usually have, the informal get-togethers, study groups, those things are much more difficult to organize, and I think that has certainly had an impact on how students and faculty feel,” said Bierman. “I think the community is not as rich for those reasons.”

Kuforiji said she prefers attending classes in person because it is easier to connect with her peers.

“In-person contact is really important for law school,” Kuforiji said. “It’s mentally draining. It gets stressful, and it’s always nice to talk to someone and say, ‘Hey, you’re experiencing that too.’”

Daniel Esposito, a second-year Elon Law student, said one of the biggest challenges this year is student mentoring. In a typical year, second and third-year law students hold informal office hours in the library for first-year students that need help or advice. However, due to physical distancing protocols, student mentors are no longer allowed to hold these impromptu sessions, and first-year students must instead sign up for a time to meet with them.

Esposito, also a student mentor, said this led to many first-year students shying away from seeking help from their peers early in the school year, as signing up for an appointment takes away the casual atmosphere office hours provided.

“The biggest hurdle they have had is seeking help because that’s something everybody struggles with at first,” Esposito said. “You don’t realize that being a lawyer is like being dumped on an island and everybody is speaking a foreign language, but I think it’s even a little harder for them because we’re not there.”

Esposito said that as this school year has progressed, first-year students have become more willing to seek help.

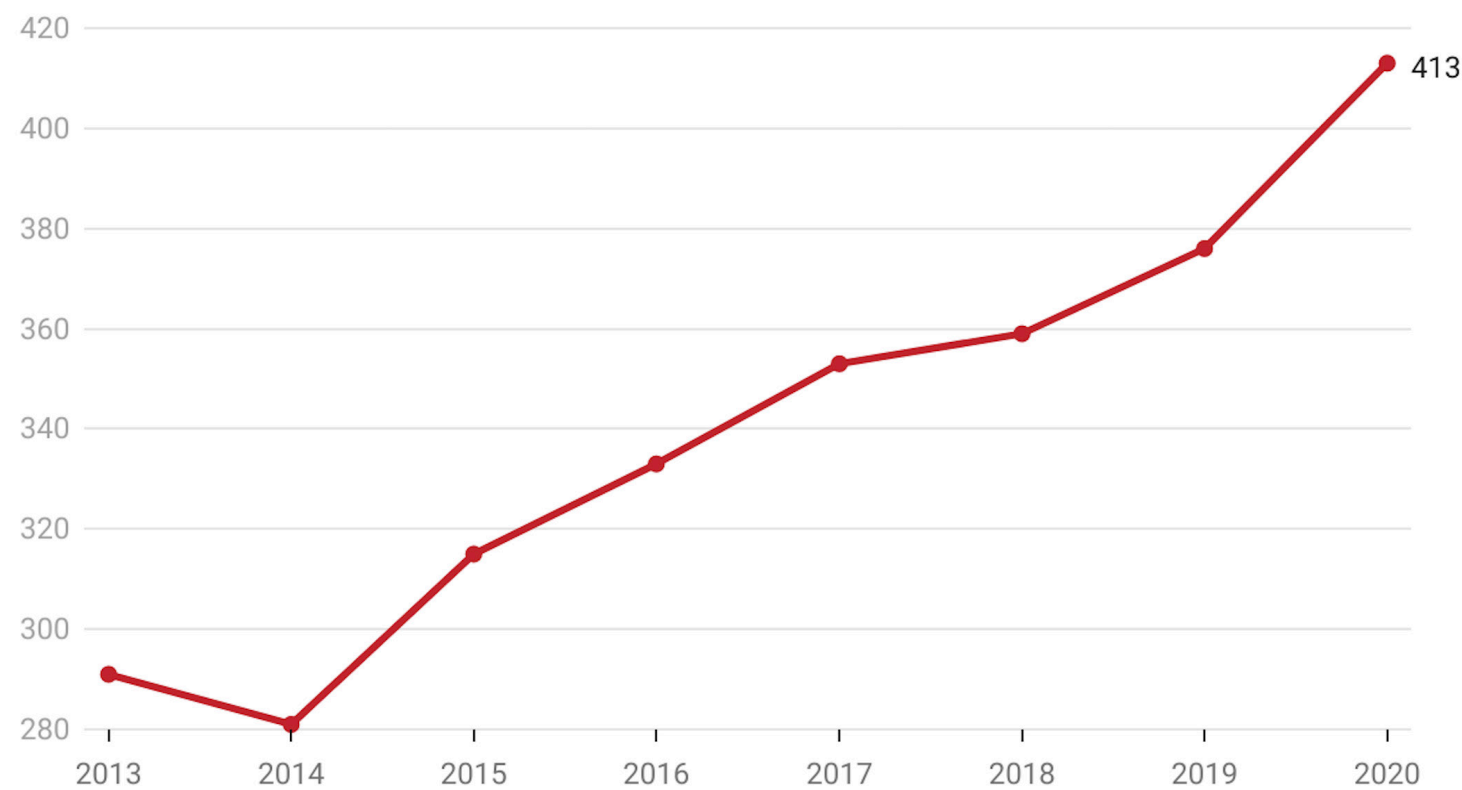
“Over the winter trimester is where it finally seemed like they started coming out of the woodwork, and I’m glad for that,” Esposito said.

One of the unique challenges for Elon Law this year was preparing students for the online bar exam, the test that determines whether a candidate is qualified to practice law in a given state. North Carolina offered the bar exam online for the first time in February, and Bierman said Elon Law worked hard to prepare students for the experience.

“There was a lot of anxiety on top of what is a very difficult and anxious period anyway,” Bierman said. “We’re hopeful that our graduates did well.”

Elon Law students have also had to

ELON LAW TOTAL ENROLLMENT FROM 2013-20



SOURCE: ERIC TOWNSEND

Elon Law’s enrollment has increased every year since 2014. Between 2019 and 2020, the school saw a near 10% increase in enrollment.

deal with hybrid and virtual environments in the professional world. Esposito is currently an intern for the North Carolina Supreme Court, which is conducting all of its hearings online. Getting feedback from his superiors is the biggest challenge of the virtual environment, Esposito said.

““

ELON LAW HAS DONE A GREAT JOB TRYING TO JUST EXTEND GRACE AND UNDERSTANDING THAT WE’RE ALL GOING THROUGH THE SAME SITUATION. AS LONG AS WE’RE GIVING EACH OTHER THAT GRACE, IT’S SOMETHING WE CAN GET THROUGH TOGETHER.

AYOWUNMI KUFORIJ
ELON LAW STUDENT

“If you want an on-the-spot evaluation of your work, it’s never going to be on the spot because you’ve got to email your bosses and have it sent back to you, and you’re going to get a more polished product,” Esposito said.

Esposito does not expect current law students will have trouble adapting when the legal field returns to being in-person because the skills are transferable, and he believes it will be a while before that transition is made.

Networking in an online environment is also challenging. While there are still online networking events on virtual platforms for students to interact with lawyers, students often don’t get a chance to speak directly to them.

“If you’re not talking, you’re not networking,” Esposito said.

Esposito believes virtual classes come with a number of positives, with the most obvious being that students can attend class from anywhere. He also believes online classes foster better communication between students and professors.

“I think people just feel more comfortable speaking up online,” Esposito



PHOTO COURTESY OF AYOWUNMI KUFORIJ

Ayowunmi Kuforiji is currently completing a residency with the North Carolina District Court in Guilford County.

said. “Something about being a face on a camera, as opposed to being physically present, helps people feel more comfortable asking questions, which has been great.”

Esposito credits the professors at Elon Law for making virtual classes both enjoyable and informative.

“They’re really good about allowing for questions and comments online,” Esposito said. “They have made sure, even if they are teaching in their homes, they do it in a way that’s still entertaining, charismatic and

engaging.”

With the transition to hybrid learning and all of the challenges faced during the 2020-21 school year, Kuforiji said she is thankful that everyone in the Elon Law community has been understanding

“Elon Law has done a great job trying to just extend grace and understanding that we’re all going through the same situation,” Kuforiji said. “As long as we’re giving each other that grace, it’s something that we can get through together.”

Faculty and staff volunteers reflect on their experience administering COVID-19 tests throughout the pandemic



Kimberly Franklin, senior internal auditor, helps a student with weekly testing. She has volunteered since PCR testing began in fall 2020.

KYRA O'CONNOR | ENTERPRISE STORY COORDINATOR

Over 100 faculty and staff members have volunteered to staff testing at Alumni Gym

Kyra O'Connor
Enterprise Story Coordinator | @ko_reports

Kimberly Franklin works in internal auditing, a building across from Arts West tucked next to the university print shop. In her job as senior internal auditor, she doesn't interact with students and the university community very often. When Elon University needed volunteers to staff COVID-19 testing in the fall, Franklin said she volunteered not just to serve the Elon community, but to connect with students throughout the pandemic.

Every Monday morning throughout the spring semester, Franklin sits at one of the 12 testing tables in Alumni Gym. She said she and other volunteers try to bring levity to students' weekly testing, whether by telling jokes about the "shortage" of cotton swabs or simply asking about a student's day.

"We're here for hours of time, and especially early on, when students weren't used to being tested frequently, it was kind of like Monday morning 'why are we here,'" Franklin said. "So we just kind of make conversation or crack jokes about it."

Franklin is one of 150 volunteers who have staffed the COVID-19 testing site in Alumni Gym throughout the 2020-21 academic year. Faculty and staff were able to sign up in January for a four-hour slot each week to administer tests or check students in.

Jeff Stein, chair of the Ready & Resilient committee, said that in addition to the volunteers at the site in Alumni Gym, there are also volunteers who test students at Elon Law in Greensboro and the School of Health Sciences, as well as faculty and staff who work the "back end" of testing, such as the Information Technology department, university communications and the print shop.

"This speaks directly to what people are like here, that they were willing to give their time and their energy to something they

BY THE NUMBERS

150

volunteers have staffed the COVID-19 testing site in Alumni Gym throughout the 2020-21 school year.

“

THIS SPEAKS DIRECTLY TO WHAT PEOPLE ARE LIKE HERE, THAT THEY WERE WILLING TO GIVE THEIR TIME AND THEIR ENERGY TO SOMETHING THEY DIDN'T FULLY UNDERSTAND WHAT IT WOULD BE LIKE, AND JUST COME IN EVERY WEEK, AND VOLUNTEER IN THE TEST SITE.

JEFF STEIN
CHAIR OF THE READY & RESILIENT COMMITTEE



T.J. Bowie starts the week at COVID-19 testing in Alumni Gym. He volunteers every Monday morning.

KYRA O'CONNOR | ENTERPRISE STORY COORDINATOR

didn't fully understand what it would be like, and just come in every week and volunteer in the test site," Stein said.

T.J. Bowie, associate director of auxiliary services, said when he realized testing would be part of what kept the Elon community on campus, he knew he wanted to be part of that effort. Bowie teaches personal finance on campus, and he and the students who come in for testing enjoy seeing a familiar face.

"When students come in and they recognize me, oftentimes, they'll come to my table, and it's a good opportunity to have that interaction, as well as getting the test completed," Bowie said.

With restrictions on in-person social interaction, Stein said the university realized early on that weekly testing could be one of the few times students interact with staff and faculty in person, and shared that information with volunteers.

"Most students tell me they go to the same person, every single week, which tells me that there is some sort of comfort in a friendly

face and reliability of what that connection or relationship is, even though it's just a few moments," Stein said.

As vaccination rates increase and more students become exempt from testing, the number of volunteers needed to staff the testing sites has decreased. Stein said there will be testing over the summer and there will most likely be an arrival test for students, similar to the fall and spring semesters. Stein said the university is looking into the durability of the vaccine, as well.

"We do expect that this at least 90-day exception will be extended, because it appears that the vaccine is strong enough to last at least six months if not longer," Stein said.

Even as the number of volunteers needed for testing decreases, Bowie said he is glad students have been so receptive to testing and continue to chat with volunteers each week.

"They're always very appreciative that we're doing the work," Bowie said. "Those words mean a lot to us."

Q&A WITH AN ELON ARBORIST

Arborist Wendy Williams discusses her passion behind caring for trees on campus, Elon’s oldest tree and her typical day as an arborist

Graysen Shirley | Elon News Network | @graysenshirley

WENDY WILLIAMS GREW UP with a tenacious curiosity about caring for plants and trees. During high school, Williams took a class on horticulture, where she quickly realized she wanted to work with trees and plant life.

After high school, Williams went to work for a landscaper, who introduced her to

greenhouse nurseries where she got to practice growing shrubs. Williams then came to Elon in 1993 as a gardener, but she eventually switched to being an arborist after realizing working with trees was where her true passions were. Williams was later joined by Cameron Holmes in 2017, who is another arborist at Elon.

Arborists like Williams and

Holmes are helping to protect and preserve plant and tree life on campus, especially after former president Leo Lambert designated Elon as a botanical garden in 2004. Williams and Holmes both hope their knowledge and upkeep of Elon’s plant life will help for oak trees and other plants to continue to provide a canopy of greenery on campus for many years to come.

Q: What does a typical day look like for you as an arborist?

A typical day, we do trash pickups early in the mornings. Because of COVID, we’re having weird hours right now. They are trying to space our department out, so Cameron and I come in at six in the morning and we’ll

do trash pickup until 7:30 a.m. and sometimes we take care of other odds and ends during that time period too. Then, we will have break and then we will start our day, so whatever project we have decided is the priority for

that day, that’s what we will do. So, we will do tree pruning projects or tree removal projects or just whatever the landscaping department needs. We’re pretty versatile, we’ll do whatever they ask us to do if we can do it.

Q: What is your favorite part about being an arborist, and what makes you so passionate about the work you do?

Well, I love trees. It was challenging to figure out how to properly prune them when they were young and training them to grow because when they grow in the woods, they’ll grow normally because they’re just looking for the sun. But, when

they are planted out in the full sun, they’ll bush out really, and so you’re trying to train it to behave as if it’s in the woods when it’s really not in the woods. So I found that really challenging at first, but now I know how to do it. I enjoy doing

that. And I just love nature and being outside, and I love trees, I mean they’re just awesome, and all kinds of plants really. I think I would have been a science major had I went to college, so it’s sort of like science, but not really.

Q: What input do the arborists have regarding construction projects on campus, such as the new Innovation Quad?

Sometimes when they design new areas, we don’t get a whole lot of input, but actually on the Innovation Quad he has asked for our suggestions. We’re actually growing plants for the trees for the innovation

quad on our pot nursery which is out on Loy Farm, and so, he’s trying to find trees that he feels are innovative or have an innovative story. So I’ll make suggestions, and he finds trees he’s interested in growing, so it’s

kind of a collaboration on that one. But normally, things are designed. We have an in-house designer who’s designed some stuff, and we also contracted out to another company for design work.



As Elon’s arborists, Cameron Holmes (left) and Wendy Williams (right) are in charge of cultivating, managing and studying the diverse variety of trees on Elon’s campus.

Holmes and Williams lead students and faculty on a tree tour around the Historic Neighborhood.



Junior Lilly Santiago admires Elon's plant life on a tree tour around the Historic Neighborhood led by arborists Wendy Williams and Cameron Holmes.

GRAYSEN SHIRLEY | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Q: What is the oldest tree on campus?

Well, we really don't know for sure until we cut them down. That one behind Smith and HBB, that one with the really big branch, that's an old tree. And there's an old white oak near the Alamance Building. If you are looking out the door of Alamance that looks out toward the railroad tracks and then look over towards Mooney, there's a large white oak tree right there. And that tree has a cool

story because it was damaged, somehow or another either lightning or something happened, but there became a decay section in it, and they used to fill decay sections in trees with cement. So when I first came over here, you could still see a little bit of the cement, but the wound is closed now, so you can't see the cement in the hole. But they used to make grooves in the cement to make it look like

a stack block or something in there, so that was pretty cool. Another one I think is really the oldest is behind Powell House, which is behind the tennis courts, but that is the most beautiful tree we have on campus. Unfortunately, it is not on main-main campus but if you're working over at the community garden near the Hillel house, it is right there.

Q: Why is it important to perserve plant and tree life on campus?

It just adds a sense of serenity, I think, more than anything. Classes are pretty stressful and work is stressful for the office people, and they step

out and under the cool shade of a tree and the wind and the flowers, it's just very soothing. Of course, there's all the services to nature and the pollinators

and the ecosystem, trying to add diversity to help our native ecosystem try to hang in there too. I'm just trying to be a good land steward.



Holmes and Williams pause their tour under a large oak tree near Alamance Building.

GRAYSEN SHIRLEY | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

A capella groups safely sing their way into spring

Two Elon a cappella groups take to O’Kelly field for COVID-safe live performances

Andrew Zagari
Elon News Network

Elon’s a cappella groups are returning to live, in-person performances as vaccination rates and outdoor gathering limits continue to increase.

Vital Signs, one of Elon’s co-ed a cappella groups, is preparing for its first live show since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. The group will perform at O’Kelly Field this Friday, April 30 at 6 p.m., though attendance is limited.

Elon sophomore and member of Vital Signs Jack Mullin said he is happy that the senior class has one last in-person performance before they graduate from Elon.

“I think two weeks ago we really finalized like, oh, okay, we can do this, we’re doing this,” said Mullin. “I’m super excited because I have not performed with the group live since probably a year.”

Despite the yearlong hiatus of live, in-person performances, Mullin has high hopes for the upcoming concert.

“We’re doing five songs. I hope it goes really well,” he said. “Everyone’s working really hard, and I’m really excited about it.”

Co-ed a cappella group Twisted Measure already held its first in-person concert on O’Kelly field earlier this month with a full set of eleven songs. Performers were only allowed to bring a limited number of guests to adhere to physical distancing protocols, but the performance will be streamed on YouTube on May 11, 7:30 p.m.

Elon sophomore and president of



CLARE GRANT | PHOTO EDITOR

Vital Signs performing at the Make a Wish Concert in February 2020.

Twisted Measure Molly Herson said it was a rewarding experience, and the performance sounded almost as good outdoors as it would inside of Whitley Auditorium, where a cappella groups performed pre-pandemic.

“If we’re going to do it, we’re going to do it well,” said Herson. “The whole group

was on board, they were super excited that we were gonna be able to have this opportunity.”

Herson said her time with Twisted Measure has been unlike anything else she’s experienced at Elon and hopes the seniors in the group feel the same way.

“The family is just unreal. I was welcomed with open arms day one, and from there, they’ve just been my absolute best friends,” Herson said. “Twisted Measure is my Elon experience, and I really just can’t imagine not being in a cappella, so really, the community is everything.”

Elon’s Jason Husser named chair of Academic Council

The professor of political science and policy studies will lead the council for the 2021-22 academic year

Kyra O’Connor
Enterprise Story Coordinator | @ko_reports

Jason Husser, professor of political science and policy studies, will be the chair of the Academic Council for the 2021-22 academic year. Husser, who is also the director of Elon Poll, was voted in unanimously and will be taking over from Paula Patch, who stepped away from the position to focus on her role as assistant director of the Elon core curriculum.

“We’ve got an exciting year ahead as we hopefully get to move beyond some of the things that were holding us all back related to COVID,” Husser said.

Academic Council is the governing body for Elon University faculty members and is part of the university’s shared governance forum. The council is made up of 19 voting members and three non-voting members: Crista Arangala, the interim chair of the university curriculum committee, President Connie Book and Provost Aswani Voley. Council members serve on three-year terms and the council chair is voted on by members.

In addition to being on Academic Council this year, Husser also served as Academic Council representative on the Ready & Resilient committee, the university’s response committee to the pandemic. Patch said that his active role within the committee made him a natural fit for Academic Council chair.

“He’s super smart, he’s very organized, he cares a lot about Elon and he’s very diplomatic,” Patch said. “He seems to do a really great job of having, sometimes, the tough conversations when faculty and administrators don’t see eye to eye, he’s really good at listening and speaking up and asking questions.”

Heading into the 2021-22 academic year, Husser said he does not have any personal goals but hopes to work with administration to implement what faculty would like to



KYRA O’CONNOR | ENTERPRISE STORY COORDINATOR

Jason Husser, professor of political science and policy studies, was named chair of Academic Council.

see happen across campus, and work to implement the strategic plan.

In working with the Academic Council, Voley said he hopes the administration and the council can work together on initiatives in the strategic plan such as the nursing program, as well as collaborating on the faculty handbook.

“Before every meeting, the academic council chair, chair-elect, the president and I get together, and then we talk about what are some of the things that are coming up, and how do we fix them, and how do we work toward things,” Voley said.

Academic Council this year was made up of entirely white faculty members, something both Husser and Patch would like to see change in the future.

“Academic Council this year was frankly

too white. We did not have enough people at the table to represent the diversity that we have,” Husser said. “I’m really looking forward over the next year to making council a place that more minority faculty members would like to join and hopefully encouraging more minority faculty members to add their voice to Academic Council.”

Husser said to make the Academic Council a place minority faculty members feel welcome, he wants to reach out to minority faculty members personally.

“Saying, ‘I want you to be a part of this, we need you,’” Husser said. “I want them to be leaders of the institution going forward, and this is a good place, in that leadership role.”

Looking ahead to the fall semester, Husser said he and the Academic Council will be conscious of the members of the Elon

community coming back to campus, some for the first time since the start of the pandemic.

“Hopefully we’ll be able to work with the administration and figuring out how we can improve our work life balance, how we can make sure campus is a safe place to be,” Husser said. “That people feel safe when they enter the classroom, that they feel as if they can do as good of a job as they can possibly do without worrying about COVID-19.”

“

ACADEMIC COUNCIL THIS YEAR WAS FRANKLY TOO WHITE. WE DID NOT HAVE ENOUGH PEOPLE AT THE TABLE TO REPRESENT THE DIVERSITY THAT WE HAVE,” HUSSER SAID. “I’M REALLY LOOKING FORWARD OVER THE NEXT YEAR TO MAKING COUNCIL A PLACE THAT MORE MINORITY FACULTY MEMBERS WOULD LIKE TO JOIN AND HOPEFULLY ENCOURAGING MORE MINORITY FACULTY MEMBERS TO ADD THEIR VOICE TO ACADEMIC COUNCIL.

JASON HUSSER
PROFESSOR OF POLITICAL SCIENCE
AND POLICY STUDIES

LIFESTYLE



Tracey Milton is a third-generation hairstylist and is the owner of A New Look Hair Salon in downtown Burlington.

MACKENZIE WILKES | EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Salon owners have had the challenge of maintaining a personal connection with their clients during the pandemic

Mackenzie Wilkes
Executive Director | @macwilkes

Tracey Milton has been styling her clients hair throughout the course of their lives. She's been there to style hair for clients' school pictures, weddings, their children and even for funerals. Her clients are like family. Now, masks, plastic dividers and plexiglass separate her from her figurative family. Milton is the owner and a stylist at A New Look Hair Salon, which has been serving Burlington and the surrounding area for over 20 years. "It's like a family," Milton said. "We hang out together, pre-COVID, when we were able to, attend each other's weddings or birthday parties or housewarmings. We just are a family." Milton's own family is the reason she went into styling in the first place. She's a third-generation hair stylist.

"I love taking care of people, and I feel like I just like being helpful and just caring for people." Being an esthetician allows Karen Lowe to do something that she has always loved — connecting with people — and she hasn't let the pandemic stop that. "There's just a connection that you feel to someone," Lowe said. "You're touching them and there's this energy, it's just such a sweet, sweet scene." The Burlington native left her job in banking and finance and went to esthetician school. She opened Alamance Esthetics in 2019, which offers different skin therapies and hydrafacials. She now specializes in oncology esthetics for those with breast cancer. Salons and other personal care businesses are allowed to open with 100% capacity under North Carolina's current

COVID-19 guidelines, but other safety guidelines like physically-distanced seating and mask wearing must still be upheld. The state also recommends salons use plexiglass barriers and limit the use of shared areas like shampoo bowls. During the pandemic, Lowe has still tried to maintain the connection she has with her clients and provide, what she said, is a needed stress relief during unpredictable times. "Last year was a challenge for everybody," Lowe said. "But what we did, we brought in body treatments because I felt like people needed that physical touch, but they could also keep their mask on if they wanted to." Milton said A New Look Hair Salon only allows 10 clients in the salon at a time, despite 100% occupancy being allowed now. "I just felt like it was imperative that we really stress the safety in here. So it was more about just keeping everyone safe as opposed to packing a bunch of clients in the salon at one time," Milton said. "I think that, for the most part, we've gotten so much positive feedback because they've had experiences in other places, even grocery stores ... where they're really not, you know, they're a little more lenient on the COVID guidelines."

In the onset of the pandemic, Milton had to pivot her services quickly. Businesses across the state got a notice from the governor that they would need to close down in three days. Milton flipped her services to provide retail packages and began pushing products. "I literally was hustling hair products is how I felt," Milton said. "I had a stand set up in front of my front porch and clients could pay online for their hair products. I also offered virtual consultation so that they could reach me virtually and I could show them what to do with their hair." Milton applied for a personal paycheck protection loan from the small business association, which helped her pay for unexpected expenses of the pandemic like glass partitions and hand sanitizer. "I was blessed that I think we had kind of prepared a little bit because as a stylist you



MACKENZIE WILKES | EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Tracey Milton wipes down her workstation. Salons are allowed to be at full capacity under North Carolina's COVID-19 guidelines, but as an extra precaution only 10 people are allowed in the shop at a time.

“THERE'S JUST A CONNECTION THAT YOU FEEL TO SOMEONE. YOU'RE TOUCHING THEM AND THERE'S THIS ENERGY, IT'S JUST SUCH A SWEET, SWEET SCENE.”

KAREN LOWE
ESTHETICIAN

have to prepare for the rainy days. I mean, [if] anything that happens to us, literally we don't have sick days, we don't have vacation time," Milton said. "So if I break my finger, or I trip and fall, then that's time out of work with no pay. So, over the years you kind of learn to budget your business expenses more wisely." During the pandemic, Lowe said her clientele has remained steady, apart from losing business from a few of her elderly clients. She said her relationships with her existing clients and the small amount of people Alamance Esthetics treats at a time has kept the business afloat. "It's so personalized," Lowe said. "It's not a heavy traffic situation there. It feels different too, just knowing that it's super clean and there's not a lot of people in and out of it. If anything, it was kind of just between us."

ELON MARRIAGE PACT

SURVEY PLAYS MATCHMAKER FOR STUDENTS ON CAMPUS

The Marriage Pact, a week-long questionnaire service, matches students with similar interests and values through an algorithm

Nyah Phengsitthy
Design Chief | @nyahphengsitthy

50 questions. 10 minutes. One match. The Marriage Pact, a questionnaire that matches college students based on their similar interests, has made its way to Elon University's campus and will release its results to participants on April 28.

Founded at Stanford University in 2017 by alumni Liam McGregor and Sophia Sterling-Angus, the temporarily launched survey goes beyond general questions of favorite colors or weekend hobbies and asks about personal values and the characteristics students are looking for in a partner.

For senior Brynn Portlock, the 50 question lineup cut straight to the chase when it came to finding a sense of companionship on campus.

"You skip over the small talk because the questionnaire does it for you," Portlock said. "Dating apps are overdone, and I feel like they're becoming boring now."

Portlock, along with senior Kyra Letsinger, requested the launch of the Marriage Pact at Elon through the Marriage Pact service as a way to create more connections on campus during the COVID-19 pandemic.

“

YOU SKIP OVER THE SMALL TALK BECAUSE THE QUESTIONNAIRE DOES IT FOR YOU DATING APPS ARE OVERDONE, AND I FEEL LIKE THEY'RE BECOMING BORING NOW.

BRYNN PORTLOCK
SENIOR

In its five years of operation, the Marriage Pact has been implemented at other universities across the country such as Duke University, the University of Virginia and Vanderbilt University. Questions in the Marriage Pact probe surveyors on contentious issues like political and religious affiliations, the sexual orientation of their future children and social activism.

Unlike other dating apps such as Tinder, Bumble or Grindr, the Marriage Pact does not allow participants to choose a person or search a name. Rather, a set algorithm analyzes answers to the complex questions and then matches students based off of those results. According to the Marriage Pact's Data Principles and Practices for Elon, the information from the survey is not seen by the Marriage Pact launch team or shared with anyone. The matching is purely executed through an algorithm. Therefore, no one has access to participants' individual answers.

"Tinder is boring," Letsinger said. "[The

Marriage Pact is] a cool way to make connections, especially in the pandemic."

Sophomore Kathryn Broussard said she appreciates that there is no option to choose a particular match, and she hopes the algorithm will match her with someone outside of her social circle.

"I'm the kind of person who's thinking they're not going to match me with anyone. I really just filled this out for fun and nothing serious," Broussard said. "Tinder hasn't been working, so I was like, 'Hey, I might try this.'"

Participants can engage in the Marriage Pact to land a platonic or romantic relationship, or even just for fun. One of the

major questions asked is if the surveyee is single, which will determine if the person is looking for something romantic or not.

"I'm in a long-term relationship, so I'm not looking for a romantic thing," Letsinger said. "I'm just looking for a friendship. It would be really cool to make a friend at the end of my senior year and find something that way, and someone who thinks a lot like me."

Answering 50 questions is just part of the matching process. At the end of the week, applicants will receive a separate email with their match, leaving them in charge of communicating with them. Junior Weston LeCrone hopes the Marriage Pact will be successful in finding someone he is compatible with on campus.

"I'm mainly doing this for fun, but there's that part of me that hopes that I could potentially be compatible with the person I match with," LeCrone said.

Since the launch of Elon's Marriage Pact on April 19, there have been over 1,000 applications submitted. Students will receive

their matches on April 28, possibly opening doors to new friendships and relationships on campus.

"Part of me definitely wonders what's out there just because I haven't really explored the Elon dating scene to its fullest," LeCrone said. "You never know who is out there or who you share similar interests with."

BY THE NUMBERS

1,000

plus applications were received for the Elon Marriage Pact as of April 26, 2021. The Elon Marriage Pact was launched April 19 and students will be matched April 28.

SOME UNIVERSITIES WITH THE MARRIAGE PACT

- Amherst College
- Baylor University
- Columbia University
- Dartmouth College
- Duke University
- Elon University
- Stanford University
- University of Alabama
- University of Virginia
- Yale University



NEW MURAL DRIVES BUSINESS TO DOWNTOWN BURLINGTON



The “Dance it Out” mural located in Downtown Burlington shares a wall with Walkerdance Ballet Theatre and depicts figures dancing in various different styles.

ELLIS CHANDLER | SOCIAL MEDIA COORDINATOR

Local leaders hope the piece will help jumpstart a Burlington arts district

Gabriela Rivas-De Leon
Elon News Network | @grivasdeleon

An explosion of colors, shapes and patterns facing Spring Street, Gina Franco’s mural “Dance it Out” is the latest effort by the Burlington Downtown Corporation to cultivate a more creative community and economic growth in Downtown Burlington. The nonprofit organization contracted by the city of Burlington put out a call for mural artists.

It was Franco’s first sketch that stood out against the other 18 artists vying for the commission, said Sarah Beth Hardy, Burlington’s downtown manager. Even without details, she said the design radiated joy.

“When we saw the concept, we were just immediately in a better mood,” Hardy said. “It makes you smile, and it makes you want to dance and to interact with it.”

Franco said her vision for the mural was to create something that felt full of movement and was inspired by the different dance styles available at the Walkerdance Ballet Theatre, with which it shares a wall. Franco pushed herself to paint the emotion that comes from dancing while only depicting the dancers’ legs.

“I challenged myself to see if I could create a feeling without showing emotion in that person’s or character’s face,” Franco said.

Franco sought out much of her inspiration from her own life, creating characters and personalities through the colors, shapes and patterns in the clothes and accessories she sees everyday.

Her best friend wears red cowboy boots

like the ones that make an appearance. The dancer in the yellow pants is modeled after @FabEllis, a thrift account Franco follows on Instagram.

As an artist who works predominantly in public spaces, Franco loves to see people interact with the mural. Everyone who comes by leaves with a favorite person, Franco said, and that connection validates what she sought out to do.

“I want to be able to gauge my impact,” she said. “I don’t feel like my art is activated unless somebody comes and interacts with it.”

“

WHEN WE SAW THE CONCEPT, WE WERE JUST IMMEDIATELY IN A BETTER MOOD. IT MAKES YOU SMILE, AND IT MAKES YOU WANT TO DANCE AND TO INTERACT WITH IT.

SARAH BETH HARDY
BURLINGTON’S DOWNTOWN
MANAGER

Public art like “Dance it Out” is directly related to a rise in economic development, said Hardy. Burlington’s first commissioned mural, painted by Chicago-based artist Mauricio Ramirez on Church Street, brought so many visitors that



ELLIS CHANDLER | SOCIAL MEDIA COORDINATOR

“Dance it Out” mural was created by Gina Franco.

“Dance it Out” is the fruit of fundraising efforts for another mural downtown.

Hardy’s and the Burlington Downtown Corporation’s goal is to create an arts and entertainment district in downtown where artists can showcase their work and residents can feel prideful of their hometown and continue to interact with the art and other local businesses.

A creative art scene motivates increased downtown activity, Hardy said. When visitors come to see the mural, they might linger to grab a coffee at The Blend & Co. or have a meal at Burlington Beer Works. With the completion of “Dance

it Out,” throngs of young ballerinas from Walkerdance Ballet Theatre regularly take photos underneath the ballet slippers on the wall.

The success of the two murals has brought more momentum to create more public art spaces in downtown Burlington. Hardy hopes that Burlington will continue to be artistically energized and, with the help of creative people, become a thriving arts and culture community.

“I’ve anecdotally heard from a lot of our business owners and property owners,” he said. “They’re excited to pay artists to come and put murals on their buildings too.”

Garden Valley Farmers Market makes spring debut

The local, outdoor market has reopened to offer seasonal produce and grow its customer base

Cate McCahill
Elon News Network | @CMcCahill21

Nestled among the various fast food chains and strip malls that line South Church Street is an outdoor farmers market filled with vibrant spring flowers and a colorful rainbow of pots.

Co-owner of Garden Valley Farmers Market Paul Laparra and his employees roam the venue in maroon t-shirts reading “Plant Better. Eat Better. Live Better.” They water flowers, unpack truck loads of plants and produce, restock items and talk with customers, drowning out the highway’s ambience of bustling diesel trucks and honking horns.

“Nothing is ever set because you never know if it’s gonna be raining, if it’s gonna be windy, if it’s gonna be sunny,” Laparra said. “Whatever the good Lord gives us that day, we’ll work around it.”

However, the local farmers market has recently added a less outdoors-related task to their daily to-do list: social media outreach.

The market’s growing social media presence is aimed at attracting a younger generation of customers, according to Amber Laparra, Paul Laparra’s wife and Garden Valley Farmers Market employee.

“We have a lot of loyal, older generations that have been shopping with us for years that keep coming back, but we’re really trying to get the younger generation to shop local and skip out on the Lowe’s and the Home Depot,” Amber said.

Garden Valley Farmers Market started a social media marketing team last year to connect with the online generation and potential younger customers. The market has an Instagram and Facebook both run by Amber, as well as a YouTube channel, blog and weekly email list.

Paul said the market hopes to acquire a more youthful customer base because “the future is younger people.”

“We want to adapt to what they’re wanting,” Paul said. “For instance, three years ago, we didn’t carry house plants. Then we realized, hey, it’s a different generation, a different vibe ... we’re just trying to key into what the future is as well so that we can obviously be a company that’s here for many years.”

Garden Valley reopened for its spring season the first week of April. The farmers market operates on a seasonal basis selling produce, flowers, plants and other local goods like jams and honey. The products currently sold align with what grows best in warmer spring climates.

“Right now, the watermelon, strawberries, cantaloupes, a lot of those



CATE MCCAHILL | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Paul Laparra organizes and tends to garden flowers on Friday, April 23.

things are in season around here,” Amber Laparra said. “In the fall we do pumpkins, apples and pansies. Then we transitioned into the Christmas trees for the winter, and then we closed up for January through March.”



WE’RE REALLY TRYING TO GET THE YOUNGER GENERATION TO SHOP LOCAL AND SKIP OUT ON THE LOWE’S AND THE HOME DEPOT.

AMBER LAPARRA
GARDEN VALLEY FARMERS MARKET EMPLOYEE

Amber said almost all products come from local farmers and greenhouses, but because buying local can come with a higher price tag, she expects the market may struggle to reach younger customers due to cost.

“It’s hard because since we’re local, we’re not always the cheapest,” Amber said. “But

we try to have the best quality to make up for the price difference. You just get what you pay for and it supports local.”

Elon senior Rachel Cifarelli stayed on campus when the coronavirus pandemic began in March 2020 and said she did the majority of her grocery shopping at Garden Valley Farmers Market due to its outdoor venue. Cifarelli continues to shop at Garden Valley, as she prefers to buy local produce for the environmental benefits.

“When you’re shopping at a big grocery store and if you look at a lot of the products, most of them are shipped from out of state, across the country or out of this nation, and so that’s a lot of air pollution,” Cifarelli said. “Whereas at a place like Garden Valley, it’s much more from local farms in the N.C. area. It’s just all those carbon emissions you’re saving by shopping locally because the food is grown all around here, and it just takes an hour or two hour drive to get here.”

Garden Valley Farmers Market provides all Grade A produce rather than organic, according to Amber. She said educating younger generations about vegetable grades and quality is an important factor in building a younger and Elon customer base that shops locally rather than at the grocery store.

“I think a lot of it is lack of knowledge. All of our produce that we carry is Grade A which means it’s the highest grade of produce — it’s better quality, more flavor

and vine ripe,” Amber said. “I know a lot of younger people and Elon students are looking for the more organic route.”

Cifarelli said she acknowledges the slight increase in price for locally-grown produce, but for her, the benefits outweigh the extra costs.

“I think it can be tough because being eco-conscious and sustainable products tend to be more expensive, but I’m willing to pay more if the products are more sustainable,” Cifarelli said. “I think that’s something worth paying for.”

Aside from local produce and plants, Cifarelli said she also enjoys the ambience of the outdoor market.

“Just being able to be outside while you’re grocery shopping, just that connection between the fresh air, the sunshine and seeing all this fresh produce out in front of you, honestly it’s just a great feeling,” Cifarelli said.

Paul said he works to keep the market up and running everyday because he views it not only as a business but also as a “ministry” that provides people with a “getaway” and “relaxation.”

“There’s not a day that doesn’t go by where someone doesn’t come in here and say, ‘Wow, this is just beautiful, it spoke to my soul and my heart,’” Paul said. “It’s something that people can get away from life, and they can just come out here and be in their own little zone.”



CATE MCCAHILL | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Aisles at the local market display an array of vibrant spring flowers for purchase.



CATE MCCAHILL | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Amber Laparra arranges various plants on Tuesday, April 20.

Order of Omega recognizes greek life leadership

The rechartered honor society hopes to connect Elon’s greek community despite the pandemic

Lindsay Gelman
Elon News Network | @lindsayyyyyy

Leaders within various greek organizations are coming together in Elon’s recently rechartered honor society, Order Of Omega, to strengthen leadership skills and better the Elon community.

Order of Omega is a greek life honor society comprised of individuals from the National Pan-Hellenic Council, Panhellenic Association and Interfraternity Council who are considered heavily involved in their greek organizations on Elon’s campus and within the Elon community. Initiates are nominated by their chapter president to participate.

“Everyone in our org is a strong leader,” Chapter President of Order of Omega Caroline Seelman said. “They lead in their own, different way.”

“
MANY PEOPLE
FROM DIFFERENT
ORGANIZATIONS HAVE
ALL STRUGGLED IN
CONNECTING WITH
THOSE IN THEIR
GREEK COMMUNITY
DUE TO COVID-19
RESTRICTIONS.

JULIA EDWARDS
ELON JUNIOR

The organization was originally started in 1959 at the University of Miami and first came to Elon in 1993. It was recently rechartered this past semester by Maria Jose Larrazabal, graduate apprentice for fraternity and sorority engagement, after many years of the organization’s inactivity due to low engagement.

Seelman said that Larrazabal, a graduate of Florida International University, was in Order of Omega as an undergraduate and



Members of Order of Omega held a virtual retreat in February and will be holding another virtual retreat for newly initiated members on May 1.

ELLIS CHANDLER | SOCIAL MEDIA COORDINATOR

enjoyed it, so she decided to bring the organization back on campus as her last major semester project.

“We are really thankful that she has because it has been a great way to connect to the greek community overall, especially during this tiring past year,” Seelman said.

Despite its short time on campus, the honor society has amassed 24 members from 16 greek communities on campus. Seelman said that the organization hopes to add more greek organizations in their upcoming recruitment season.

Secretary Cassidy Ball said her decision to apply stemmed from her sister’s positive experience in the organization at her university, as well as a chance to get to know other members of the greek community.

“I thought it was cool because I know a lot of people in the greek community get trapped or stuck in their own organization, and it is hard to break out of it,” Ball said. “So I thought it would be a good idea to get to know other people.”

Over the past year, Elon’s greek community has grappled with COVID-19 restrictions, including last February, when organizations had to revise recruitment plans after the university ordered all fraternity and sorority activity to move completely virtual. Seelman said that socialization within greek communities is currently difficult.

“We’ve all faced similar issues this past year due to COVID-19, and these connections you make sitting next to someone in meetings aren’t as organic as they used to be,” Seelman said.

Junior Julia Edwards said Order of Omega has provided a sense of community for those in greek life after socialization regulations changed due to the pandemic.

“Many people from different organizations have all struggled in connecting with those in their greek community due to COVID-19 restrictions,” Edwards said. “It has been great to connect with other community members who have experienced similar situations and work together to better the Elon community.”

Since its rechartering at Elon, Order of Omega has participated in community service using month-long observances as a guide. April is National Service Month, and one of the Order’s latest projects was to make goodie bags with candy and a thank-you note as a token of appreciation for all 270 workers at the Physical Plant. Members were required to do three hours of community service for the month.

“It is very attainable and a great way to keep people involved in the community and throughout campus,” Edwards said. “As well as show our commitment as an organization to the development of Burlington and Elon.”

Though it is just the beginning of Order of Omega’s new start at Elon, members are already developing plans for the future of the organization.

“My goal for the organization is to utilize it to help the community as a whole,” Ball said. “Whether that be through community service or taking on different projects.”

GREEK ORGANIZATIONS AFFILIATED WITH THE ORDER OF OMEGA

• Alpha Chi Omega	• Sigma Pi
• Alpha Omicron Pi	• Zeta Beta Tau
• Beta Theta Pi	• Alpha Xi Delta
• Delta Upsilon	• Delta Delta
• Kappa Delta	• Delta
• Sigma Kappa	• Sigma Sigma
• Alpha Epsilon Pi	• Sigma
• Beta Theta Pi	• Delta Sigma
• Sigma Phi Epsilon	• Theta Inc.

Some Elon students consider receiving COVID-19 vaccine

Elon aims for 80% of students to be vaccinated by the end of April, but some are hesitant

Sara Merullo
Elon News Network

Sophomore tour guide Shayna Salomon said prospective Elon students ask her at least once on every tour if the COVID-19 vaccine will be required before the fall semester begins.

Many of the prospective students and their families are already vaccinated, but some are still hesitant to receive the vaccine, a sentiment Salomon understands. She waited until April 19 to receive her first dose due to prior health conditions and fear of taking vaccines from more vulnerable populations, so she said she answers her tours’ questions tentatively.

“I don’t know how to answer these questions,” Salomon said. “Even though I have been vaccinated, I have not received any information on this topic. I usually tell students to do what they are comfortable with.”

A growing number of universities have mandated the COVID-19 vaccine for students and faculty, but Elon has not yet announced if the vaccine will be required. As of April 19, those who are 16 and older are eligible to get

the vaccine.

Jeff Stein, chair of Ready & Resilient Committee, wrote in an email update that, as of April 15, 70% of undergraduate students at Elon have received at least one dose of the vaccine, and Elon students are highly encouraged to receive it.

“If you have NOT been vaccinated, don’t put it off any longer,” Stein wrote. “You want to protect yourself and your loved ones when you leave campus in May and be prepared for fall semester. There is no better time: the shots are free and readily available in our area.”

Stein wrote that Elon has a goal for 80% of students to receive their vaccine by the end of this month, and while that goal is in sight, some students are hesitant to receive the vaccine due to uncertainty of the long term effects.

Elon junior Emily Rogers said she has not been vaccinated but plans to be in the near future. Rogers stays patient with hopes that high-risk people can receive it first.

“I originally thought that people who are at higher risk should have first priority,” Rogers said.

Freshman Gavin Connors said he also wanted to wait to receive his vaccine to ensure that people who needed it most were first in line.

“I wanted to give other people who needed it more of a chance,” Connors said. “I’m a healthy,

young teenager. I don’t really need it as much as others, but sometimes it’s harder to get vaccines with certain health care plans.”

“
I’M A HEALTHY, YOUNG
TEENAGER. I DON’T
REALLY NEED IT AS
MUCH AS OTHERS,
BUT SOMETIMES
IT’S HARDER TO GET
VACCINES WITH
CERTAIN HEALTH CARE
PLANS.

GAVIN CONNORS
ELON FRESHMAN

The COVID-19 vaccine is offered to those who do not have proper health insurance at no cost, according to the Elon Ready & Resilient page. Elon students, faculty and staff who have

been fully vaccinated are exempt from weekly testing 15 days after the final vaccine dose, for 90 days. In addition, those who have been fully vaccinated will not be put into quarantine as a close contact for at least 90 days or depending on CDC guidelines.

While less people on campus are getting tested, the Elon Ready & Resilient Committee still encourages the university to follow COVID-19 safety guidelines, such as wearing a mask and physically distancing.

Salomon said her grandmother becoming fully vaccinated encouraged her to finally seek out the vaccine, as it is becoming more accessible, and she knew she was not taking a vaccine away from someone else.

Salomon was recently offered an internship position with a company in Israel, where she was recommended to become fully vaccinated before traveling there. To ensure her full safety, Salomon decided to sign up for a vaccine time before traveling out of the country, and she said her tours around Elon have felt more safe after receiving her first dose.

“I’m happy knowing I will be safe during my internship in Israel this summer,” said Salomon. “I give tours daily, so knowing that I was protecting myself since families are coming from all over the country, it makes me feel safer to give those tours to prospective and admitted students.”

ELON WOMEN’S SOCCER HEADS TO NCAA TOURNAMENT

Elon faces off against the Milwaukee Panthers on April 28 in Cary, N.C.

Annemarie Bonner
Sports Director | @annemarie_bon

Elon women’s soccer is preparing for its first appearance in the NCAA tournament since 1999 against a team the Phoenix have never played before, — University of Wisconsin – Milwaukee.

The game will start at 3 p.m. on Wednesday, April 28 at WakeMed Field in Cary, N.C., though no general admission tickets are being sold. Only families for both teams are allowed to watch in person, but the game will be streamed for free on NCAA.com. Students can watch the match up in Moseley Student Center with Phoenix Phanatics.

The Milwaukee women’s soccer

team ended its season with a 8-1-1 record. Key players to watch out for on Milwaukee’s offense are midfielder Jelena Sever, forward Natalie Auble and midfielder Rachel Phillpotts. Sever scored 13 points this season, Auble had 11 and Phillpotts had eight.

Defensively, Milwaukee goalkeeper Elaina LaMacchia played a total of 880 minutes and had 26 saves overall this season. Elon freshman goalie McKenna Dalfonso played 820 minutes and had 23 total saves.

Neil Payne, Elon’s head coach, said the team is ready for its first NCAA appearance.

“Our confidence will come from our preparation,” Payne said. “The more we prepare now, the less nervous we’ll be on game day.”

Milwaukee will be representing the Horizon League and Elon will represent the Colonial Athletic Association. The Panthers will be making their 14th appearance in the NCAA tournament, the most recent being in 2019.



COURTESY OF ELON ATHLETICS

Elon’s women soccer will participate in the NCAA Tournament against the Milwaukee Panthers on April 28.

Pandemic adds complications for transfer athletes

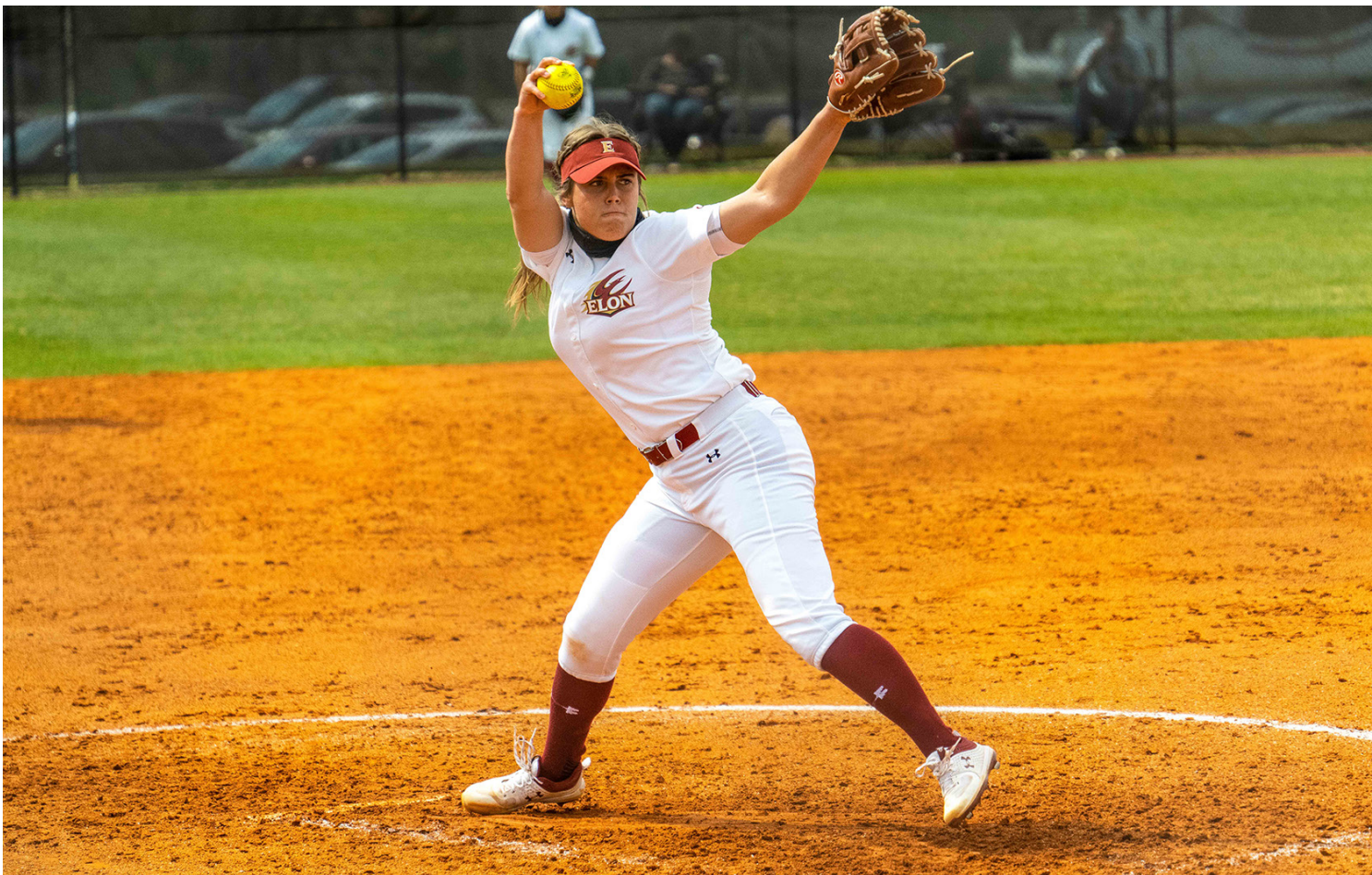


PHOTO COURTESY OF EMMA GELLMAN

Redshirt junior McKenzie Weber winds up for a pitch. Weber transferred to Elon from Wichita State University last fall.

Transfer athletes face a more competitive pool and difficulties adapting socially during the COVID-19 pandemic

Jacob Kisamore
Elon News Network | @jacob_kisamore

Redshirt junior softball player McKenzie Weber committed to Elon University and its softball team before stepping foot on Elon’s campus. She came as a transfer without ever seeing the school, touring or feeling out the campus environment, and her first in-person tour of the school came during orientation in August 2020.

“If quarantine wasn’t going on and I had been able to tour the school before, orientation probably would have annoyed me a bit,” Weber said. “But since I had not been to the campus at all, I loved learning about the history of the campus and community.”

Weber, a pitcher, spent her first three years of athletic eligibility at Wichita State University but decided to transfer last spring to find a more positive atmosphere.

Transfer athletes have faced challenges

in their transitions to new schools since the COVID-19 pandemic began, including adjusting to a new home, classes, people and a physically distanced, masked environment.

The pandemic even impacted the transfer process itself. The NCAA granted athletes in all sports an extra season of athletic eligibility, which many decided to use. Weber said this made the transfer portal very competitive, as most teams had overstocked rosters with few openings for new players.

“It was difficult going through the portal knowing that I may not find some place that I really wanted,” Weber said.

Additionally, while trying to make a decision on where to transfer, Weber was unable to meet any coaches in person and instead had to talk with them over the phone.

“Without COVID, I would have been able to visit campuses, meet the coaches face-to-face, and genuinely get to know them,” Weber said. “It was hard to get to know them personally when you can’t see them face-to-face.”

Weber had never heard of Elon when she entered the transfer portal, but she reached out to the school upon seeing it had an opening for a pitcher. She said she fell in love with the

campus after taking a virtual tour, committed in mid-May and is happy with her choice.

“Everyone here is so welcoming, and it really had the community and family atmosphere I was looking for,” Weber said. “I know I made the right decision coming here.”

For Weber, socializing was a challenge when she first arrived at Elon, as she said physical distancing protocols and masks made it tough for her to make connections.

“It’s very difficult to meet people and get to know them because we have masks,” Weber said. “I can’t see anyone’s facial expressions, and you’re not supposed to be with anyone for more than 10 minutes in a room, which has made it tough for me to get to know my peers.”

Weber said finding a balance between academics and softball has been more difficult than in any of her previous years of college, as online classes have been cumbersome and draining.

“I have a lot of online work, and it’s really tedious and takes up a lot of time, which is something I don’t really have,” Weber said.

Jordan Bonner, a redshirt sophomore wide receiver on Elon’s football team, transferred from Purdue University to Elon before Winter Term 2020, two months before the university

sent students home because of the pandemic. Bonner also did not tour campus before transferring to the school and said finding his classes was a serious challenge at first.

“It was just chaotic to be in a different atmosphere,” Bonner said.

Bonner said coming from Purdue, a school with over 41,000 students, to Elon was an eye-opening experience, but the school’s smaller size is something he has come to appreciate.

“The smaller campus makes me feel more comfortable,” Bonner said. “I’m in my element here.”

While the pandemic made adapting to the university difficult, Bonner said having two months on campus before the shutdown in March helped acclimate him to the school. When he returned to campus in the fall, he had a group of friends and a better sense of where things were.

“After a couple of months in the fall, I was like, ‘I’m good,’” Bonner said. “I knew where I was supposed to be, and I was in a good place.”

Bonner said being on the football team allowed him to make connections easier, as did having his god brother, junior running back Jaylan Thomas, on the team with him.

“

IT WAS DIFFICULT
GOING THROUGH THE
PORTAL KNOWING
THAT I MAY NOT FIND
SOME PLACE THAT I
REALLY WANTED

MCKENZIE WEBER
REDSHIRT JUNIOR PITCHER

“Having him introduce me to people made it a lot easier because then those people would introduce me to their friends, and it became like a domino effect,” Bonner said.

Bonner believes that transferring as an athlete, especially during a pandemic, requires having a strong mentality, as he said it can be very difficult to adjust without focus and flexibility.

“When you transfer, you have to come to your new school with a stronger mindset because it’s not the same,” Bonner said. “You have to focus because the new school operates differently, and you have to get comfortable with it, especially with COVID.”