

SEE ELON NEWS NETWORK'S PRIMARY ELECTIONS VOTER GUIDE ON PAGE 4

Elon University enrollment drops below 6,000 for first time since 2018

Some majors see enrollment soar despite overall decrease

Abby Gravely & Miles Hayford
Elon News Network

Elon University's undergraduate enrollment has dipped below 6,000 students for the first time since spring 2018, according to the Spring Registrar's Report released Feb. 23.

This decrease comes after an 11.6% drop in enrollment for the class of 2029. Part of this pattern can be attributed to the "demographic cliff," the decreasing supply of college students from a falling national birth rate that began in 2007.

The total undergraduate enrollment of 5,974 is a decrease from the 6,226 students the university reported in the spring of 2025. It's also roughly 200 fewer students than the 6,191 reported in fall 2025. Though overall student numbers dropped, there was also an increase of 523 seniors, compared to the fall report.

According to Alexander Taylor, a data analyst at the Registrar's office, the increase in seniors is mostly due to juniors now being classified as seniors after reaching the necessary number of credit hours.

Taylor also said the decrease in total undergraduate students from the fall to the spring is partially due to students withdrawing or transferring, but also because 143 students graduated in December and January.

In an email to Elon News Network, Elon's Vice President for Enrollment Greg Zaiser wrote that spring enrollment is typically smaller than fall.

Zaiser said that he was not surprised by the smaller number overall due to Elon's small first-year class. He said that admissions intentionally admitted fewer students to maintain the "academic caliber" of the student body.

"We are working to reduce the admit rate incrementally each year, so we held to our value proposition and focused on enrolling

a class that would be successful at Elon," Zaiser wrote.

Elon's Office of the Provost was not available for Elon News Network's request for comment.

Despite the decrease in enrollment, 30 out of Elon's 84 majors saw growth between 2024 and 2026. Two majors, nursing and data analytics, increased significantly in student enrollment. Nursing saw a 57.1% increase and the Data Analytics major grew by 60.7%.

Coordinator for the data analytics program Nicholas Bussberg said the major has seen steady growth since its introduction in 2021. He said it's a popular major due to its flexibility and because of the rise in the importance of data in today's society.

"Students and everybody else are seeing how important it is to have those data skills, whether you're being an analyst or a statistician directly, or whether you're doing it in more of a quantitative field," Bussberg said. "It's still important to have a lot of those techniques and those skills that we teach throughout our courses in there."

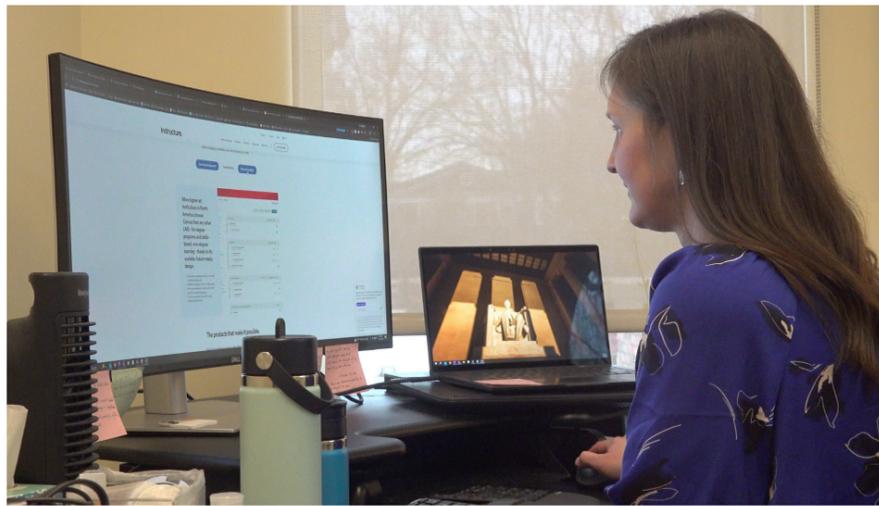
Bussberg said they have been marketing the major in introductory statistics courses as a way to add extra skills.

"That's our selling point, is to get them to kind of see in that first class what they can add and then go from there and hopefully continue building on their skills through adding some more courses," Bussberg said.

Bussberg said that he is hoping for consistent growth in the next few years.

Program Director of the Nursing Program Cathy Quay said that the growth of the Nursing Major has been gradual over the past three years.

"This growth has been intentional and measured to ensure we maintain excellence in teaching and preserve the quality of experiential learning opportunities," Quay wrote in an email statement to Elon News Network. "Rising interest in nursing, ongoing workforce shortages, and the profession's strong job security have all contributed to the surge in applications."



ANJOLINA FANTARONI | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Kelly Reimer, senior director of Teaching and Learning Technologies, scrolls through the Canvas by Instructure website.

Elon to adopt Canvas following review of Moodle platform

Faculty training to begin first; no courses affected this spring

Anjolina Fantaroni
Elon News Network

Students logging into their courses next academic year may notice a shift in how assignments, grades and course materials are organized as Elon transitions from Moodle, its old learning management system, to Canvas by Instructure, its new one.

The decision followed a campuswide evaluation of Moodle that included surveys and open forums, according to Senior Director of Teaching and Learning Technologies Kelly Reimer.

"Folks responded to surveys, they came to open forums and we really learned through that process that although Moodle was meeting needs in particular areas, it was missing the mark in other areas," Reimer said.

As part of the evaluation process, the top five LMS needs that emerged from both instructors and students were gradebook and grading, course analytics, mobile interface, upgrade without interruptions and course communication tools. Reimer said those findings informed the recommendation to move to Canvas, which emerged as the leading option as the university mapped both platforms.

As Elon made the transition announcement earlier this month, nothing will change during the spring semester, and no courses will be impacted. Reimer said the university is figuring out when to make the transition next year to reduce disruption.

"We think about that timeline," Reimer said. "We're thinking about students and their experience in the system, and what do they need to know before we make the full transition? What do our faculty need?"

In 2015, the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction brought Canvas to all NC K-12 public and charter schools. According to the Instructure website, 24 four-year and five two-year institutions in North Carolina use Canvas. Among those institutions is Queens University of Charlotte. Reimer said that while that information informed Elon's work, the biggest factor was understanding the current and emerging needs of the community.

As part of the research, the university found that more than 50% of students, faculty and staff already have experience

using or teaching with Canvas. Training will be offered to faculty first to ensure they are supported during the transition.

"Our primary sort of focus right now, as we think about training, is going to be with the faculty, because they've got to be in the system, have comfort and confidence in using the system, and then that way, they're building their courses, they're getting ready for this process," Reimer said.

Some Elon students are already using Canvas, including those studying abroad. Sophomore Autumn Kelly is currently taking courses in France through Georgia Tech, which uses Canvas.

Kelly said she is not a huge fan of the platform, but she said the transition has been fine because they're similar platforms.

"There's definitely been a bit of a learning curve, especially way back in the beginning, when I had to figure out visa stuff, all of that was on Canvas through Georgia Tech," Kelly said.

Kelly said the biggest difference for her is the structure of Canvas.

"Moodle is, you kind of go into your classes, and you just have really the one page for classes, and then maybe the other page for grades," Kelly said. "Canvas has like a bajillion different pages you can go to and different channels compared to Moodle."

Overall, Kelly said she likes Moodle more.

"I think that Canvas is good for Georgia Tech, because they're used to having really big lectures, but for smaller class sizes, it's just kind of not needed," Kelly said.

Despite the complaints Kelly has about Canvas, she noted that it is just a website that she will get used to.

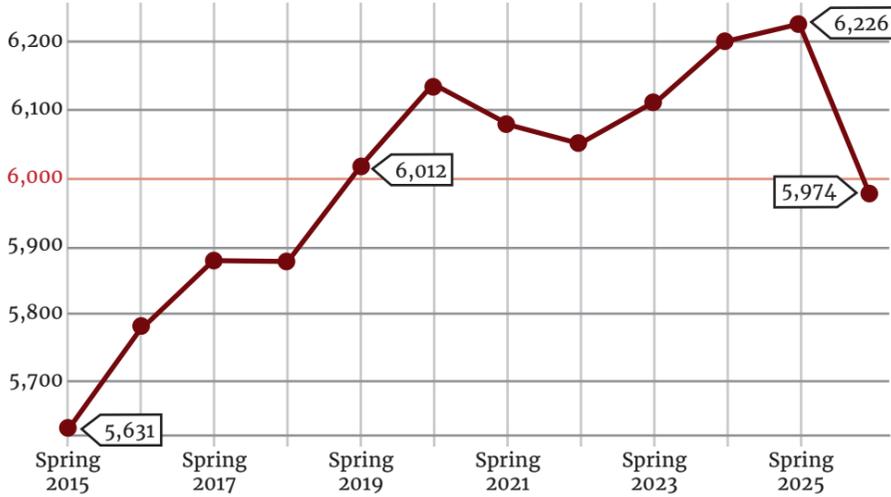
"I know the other people studying abroad with me from Elon also aren't huge fans of Canvas, and so I think it's probably at least some part due to just that we're not used to it," Kelly said.

Reimer said she recognizes that change is hard for people, which will be a challenge during the transition period. A feedback form is available for students, faculty and staff to fill out to help build the university's plan for transition.

"We want to build people's confidence in using the new system, because everybody uses the system," Reimer said.

Undergraduate enrollment at Elon from 2015-26

Number of undergraduate students



DATA VISUALIZATION BY ABBY GRAVELY

Total number of undergraduate students enrolled at Elon University based on reports from the Registrar's office.



Elon, Queens merge as colleges nationwide close

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Dance performance explores current events

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Elon hockey flourishes under new coach

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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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The center did not hold

Elon students' views on Israel/Palestine shift over 1 year

Survey shows pro-Palestinian sympathy increase across campus



Tom Arcaro
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Something fundamental has shifted in how our student body understood one of the most contentious issues of our time. And if you care about where this generation is headed — or about how we talk to each other across deep divides — you should pay attention.

A little over a year ago, I surveyed Elon University students about their views on the ongoing conflict in Israel/Palestine, which began a violent new chapter with the Oct. 7, 2023, attack on Israel by Hamas. This past October, I ran the exact same survey again. The results were dramatic.

The numbers told a story

In 2024, Elon students were divided. About 26% said their sympathies lay more with Palestinians, 10% with Israelis, and the largest group — 36% — said they sympathized with both sides. Nuance ruled the day.

In 2025, that middle ground collapsed. Sympathy for both sides plummeted by nearly 17 points. Meanwhile, sympathy for Palestinians surged to nearly 41%, becoming the new plurality view. The center, it seemed, could not hold.

This wasn't just about sympathies. Students also reported a dramatic shift in where they got their information.

In 2024, over 62% said their primary source was social media. In 2025, that number dropped by nearly 17 points, replaced by a surge in students turning to academic articles and traditional news sources.

Something was happening here. The question was: what, and why?

What students said

The open-ended responses were where the real story emerged. Across every demographic group, students began using a new vocabulary to describe the conflict. Words including "genocide" and "apartheid" — once confined to activist circles — became commonplace.

A Christian student, who was

ambivalent in 2024, wrote in 2025: "I'm anti-death, and right now a genocide is occurring."

A Jewish student, part of a community where pro-Israel sentiment remained strong, wrote: "Jewish people are also an oppressed people, but I think genocide is not condonable under any circumstances."

A non-religious student put it simply: "I consider this a very cut and dry genocide."

These students were not parroting talking points. They were reaching for a moral language that made sense of what they saw as an overwhelming human tragedy. And they were finding that language not on TikTok or Instagram, but increasingly in the academic and news sources they had come to trust more than they used to.

Who drove this shift?

This was not a story about one group of students imposing their views on others. The shift cut across campus, but it was not uniform.

Liberal students led the way, with the proportion who became more pro-Palestinian jumping by nearly 17 points. Conservative students' views remained largely stable. Among Christian students, pro-Palestinian sympathy rose by nearly 10 points. Among non-religious students, it rose by 20 points.

And within the Jewish student community — a group often assumed to be monolithic on this issue — something remarkable happened. While the majority remained pro-Israel, the proportion expressing primary sympathy for Palestinians almost doubled, from 13% to over 21%. A visible, if still minority, Jewish voice emerged on this campus, framing its critique of Israeli policy in the language of human rights.

What this means for us

These findings present our campus with a challenge and an opportunity.

The challenge is obvious. If the center cannot hold, if we become more polarized, then the kind of respectful, nuanced dialogue that a university should foster becomes harder. The percentage of students who agreed there were "safe places" on campus to share views on this conflict dropped by nearly 13 points. That was — and remains — a warning sign.

But there is also an opportunity. Our students are not disengaged. They are searching, reading, and forming deeply

held moral convictions. Many moved away from the algorithm-driven echo chambers of social media and toward sources they perceived as more credible. That is exactly what we, as educators, hope to see.

The question now is whether we can create spaces — in classrooms, in the Chaplain's office, in Hillel and Muslim Student Association, in formal dialogues and informal conversations — where students can bring those convictions into genuine engagement with one another. Not to change minds, necessarily, but to understand them.

A final thought

I shared these findings privately with several colleagues before writing this. Some felt validated. Some felt anxious. Some worried about how the data would be used, or how it could be misused.

Those reactions were real, and they mattered. But hiding from the data was never the answer. The only way through this is together, with honesty and empathy and a willingness to listen across the very real divides that this research documented.

The center may not have held. But perhaps something else can: our commitment to each other as members of this community, even when we see the world in fundamentally different ways.

Editor's note: Tom Arcaro is a professor of sociology at Elon University and the principal investigator for "Shifting Tides: A Longitudinal Analysis of Elon University Student Opinion on the Israel/Palestine Conflict (2024-2025)." His full report, including methodology and detailed analysis, is available online at TomArcaro.com.

VIEW FULL SURVEY REPORT



Survey questions from Tom Arcaro's longitudinal study

How would you describe your level of knowledge about the conflict in Israel/Palestine?

Where do you primarily get your information regarding the conflict in Israel/Palestine?

Regarding your opinion about the conflict in Israel/Palestine, which statement below best describes any change in your opinion in the two years since October 7, 2023?

How do you feel about organized campus events such as a walk in solidarity with Palestinians?

How do you feel about organized campus events such as a walk in solidarity with those in Israel?

Currently, are your sympathies more with the Israelis or more with the Palestinians?

To what degree does this statement describe you? "I do not talk about the conflict in Israel/Palestine because I do not want to offend any of my friends/classmates."

Have you felt marginalized because of your position on the conflict in Israel/Palestine?

CORRECTIONS

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



ANJOLINA FANTARONI | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Attendees lift their candles at the Wyatt Outlaw Vigil on Feb. 22 during “This Little Light of Mine” led by musician and Elon Law alum Ernest Lewis Jr. at the Alamance County Courthouse. Outlaw was lynched by a mob of White Brotherhood members outside the courthouse on Feb. 26, 1870. Outlaw was the town commissioner of Graham. Lashauba Austria, a co-curator of the Alamance County Remembrance Coalition, said it's important to promote Outlaw's story. “Sometimes these stories go unnoticed, and I think it's just important that we elevate the stories and see each other so we can chart a different history going forward,” Austria said.



ABBY GRAVELY | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

New Orleans-based Jazz band Tuba Skinny performs Feb. 20 in McCrory Theatre as part of Elon University's 2026 Jazz Festival. Music professor Alex Heitinger coordinated this year's festival and said he feels that events like the concert are essential for all Elon students, not just those studying music. “Live music is just such an important part of life,” Heitinger said. “Especially for young people today, where so much of it is technology-based.”



JOJO LIEBREICH | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Graduate student Ja'Juan Carr charges up to the basket to get early points against North Carolina A&T in the first quarter Feb. 21 in Schar Center. Carr scored 7 points throughout the game, the Phoenix lost 102-82 — it's the first time Elon has let up 100 points this season. “We took this opportunity for granted tonight,” head coach Billy Taylor said. “We didn't compete at a high level, and it bit us.”



VENUS SOTO CASTANEDA | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Students line up outside McEwen Dining Hall on Feb. 17 in anticipation for Elon Dining's annual Mardi Gras dinner celebration. The event took place from 5:30 p.m. to 9 p.m. and included a DJ, photobooth, mocktails, king cake, gumbo, oysters and a crawfish boil.



VENUS SOTO CASTANEDA | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Attendees, including Elon University President Connie Book, watch the Mardi Gras king cake competition Feb. 17 during special Mardi Gras-themed College Coffee in McKinnon Hall.



VENUS SOTO CASTANEDA | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Elon students eat king cake without using their hands for the Mardi Gras King Cake competition Feb. 17 during college coffee in McKinnon Hall.

Alamance County sheriff candidates contend for position



COURTESY OF TERRY JOHNSON

TERRY JOHNSON (R)

TERRY JOHNSON IS RUNNING for reelection for the position of Alamance County sheriff. Johnson has been the sheriff since 2002.

While in office, Johnson created many special units to target different crimes, such as the Special Victims Unit that investigates rapes, sexual assaults and child exploitations. Johnson also works with the Invictus Task Force and several other nearby sheriff departments to arrest child predators.

He said he has focused on going after cartel members in Alamance County and preventing the flow of drugs into the county. Johnson developed the Alamance County Sheriff's Office Vice Division to focus on street-level drug dealers and help prevent drug trafficking. Johnson said if he were elected, he wants to continue improving the sheriff's office's use of technology.

"Because you look at the cartel and your organized crimes, they have a whole lot more money than the Alamance County Sheriff's Office, so they can do probably better things than we can when it comes to technology and and I'm looking forward to trying to increase our ability with technology to go after these individuals," Johnson said.

Johnson said he also wants to focus on developing more programs to help children know the difference between right and wrong because he doesn't want to lose the youth to gangs.

"Right now, our parents, in my opinion, are not raising their kids," Johnson said. "The kids are doing whatever they want to, as far as going on the computers, going on the cell phones, getting in trouble with these predators. And certainly my job, I think as sheriff, is to protect the citizens — all citizens — of Alamance County."

Johnson said he decided to run again because he loves the people of Alamance County and that he wants to continue at least one more time. He said he would tell voters that he wants to continue working for Alamance County.

"I would ask and hope that they would be pleased with our performance and law enforcement in Alamance County, and what I would hope is that they would cast their vote for me," Johnson said. "But even if they don't, I'm still going to work any way I can within Alamance County to see that law enforcement is enforced here in the county."



COURTESY OF BILLY CLAYTON

BILLY CLAYTON (R)

BILLY CLAYTON IS RUNNING for Alamance County sheriff. Clayton, who graduated from Elon College in 1989, is a retired State Highway Patrol deputy commander. He is a graduate of the Federal Bureau of Investigation National Academy, and has been in Alamance County for 40 years.

Clayton first decided to prepare to run in 2022 when he thought Sheriff Terry Johnson was going to retire. When Clayton realized he wasn't, he still decided to move forward because he said he thought it was time to bring new ideas to the office.

"When it comes to public safety, there's a whole lot of dynamics that are changing across the nation, and trying to get some people in place that can bring the trust back within our communities and build some bridges for us," Clayton said.

One of his big priorities if elected would be improving the sheriff's office use of technology, Clayton said. The Alamance County Sheriff's office's is currently testing the use of body cameras, but Clayton said they should have been using them for 10 years.

"We got behind the eight ball on technology right now," Clayton said. "There's also some other camera technology, through different systems and platforms that we need to be using within our communities, out in the county, at major intersections, that will help us track criminals in any kind of movement, and that would tie us into a big criminal database."

Clayton also said he will focus on recruiting and retention of officers. Clayton said that he expects to uphold Johnson's recent decision to no longer accept Immigration and Customs Enforcement detainees. He said he is open to working with ICE because they are a public safety entity but said he doesn't think they will get back in a contract to house detainees for ICE.

Johnson has been the sheriff for over 20 years, and Clayton said, if elected he would bring a new data-driven focus to the job to help set the community up for the next 10 to 15 years.

"You're going to see a more data driven, intelligence driven approach to attacking problems that way, we will never be behind the eight ball again, of not having the necessary equipment and resources we need," Clayton said. "You're going to also see a very robust partnership with the federal and state and local partners to continue to attack in a proactive manner the problems of all crime, drugs, human trafficking."



COURTESY OF DANA BYRD PASOUR

DANA BYRD PASOUR (R)

DANA BYRD PASOUR IS RUNNING for Alamance County sheriff, but said she is endorsing Billy Clayton. Pasour, who has no law enforcement experience having been a pharmaceutical sales representative, said she doesn't expect to be elected but is instead using her candidacy as a platform.

"I'm just calling Sheriff Johnson out for being a fraud," Pasour said. "I voted for him three times, and I think this time, the people of this county realize that he's not everything that he says he is, and I hope my Republican brothers and sisters will discover or will start to investigate him and who he is, instead of voting for him, because he protects the statue."

Pasour said she has been dealing with Sheriff Terry Johnson for about 10 years since a man started stalking her several years ago. Pasour said she went to the sheriff's office more than 20 times trying to get the stalker investigated, but said she was never given a case number.

"If I were to be elected, definitely every crime that's reported to my office, as long as I've got the manpower or the womanpower and the money to do it, will be investigated," Pasour said.

Alongside increased transparency, she said that if elected, taking care of women, children and the elderly would be at the top of her priorities.

She said she is endorsing Clayton's campaign.

"I believe in Republican ideals, but there comes a point in time where you have to realize that not everybody with an R by their name is a good person," Pasour said. "But at the end of the day, I really don't want to be the sheriff, and I am endorsing Billy Clayton for sheriff."

Miles Hayford contributed to the reporting of these candidate profiles.

Scan the QR code to read Elon News Network's complete primaries voter guide, including U.S. Senate, Board of County Commissioners and other races.



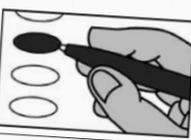
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Sample Ballot - Democratic Party Primary
Alamance County, North Carolina
March 3, 2026

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BALLOT MARKING INSTRUCTIONS
A. With the marking device provided or a black ball point pen, completely fill in the oval to the left of each candidate or selection of your choice as shown.
B. If you tear, deface or wrongly mark this ballot, return it to request a replacement.



PARTISAN NOMINATIONS

US Senate
(You may vote for ONE)

- Daryl Farrow
- Justin E. Dues
- Roy Cooper
- Robert Colon
- Marcus W. Williams
- Orrick Quick

US House of Representatives District 9
(You may vote for ONE)

- Lent C. Carr II
- Nigel W. Bristow
- Loren Bibler
- Richard N. Ojeda II

NC Court of Appeals Judge Seat 3
(You may vote for ONE)

- James Weldon Whalen
- Christine Marie Walczyk

Alamance County Board of Commissioners
(You may vote for TWO)

- Sean C. Ewing
- Ramona Allen
- Warren L. Parks, Jr.

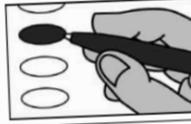
End of Ballot

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Sample Ballot - Republican Party Primary
Alamance County, North Carolina
March 3, 2026

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BALLOT MARKING INSTRUCTIONS
A. With the marking device provided or a black ball point pen, completely fill in the oval to the left of each candidate or selection of your choice as shown.
B. If you tear, deface or wrongly mark this ballot, return it to request a replacement.



PARTISAN NOMINATIONS

US Senate
(You may vote for ONE)

- Margot Dupre
- Richard Dansie
- Donald M. (Don) Brown
- Michael Whatley
- Elizabeth A. Temple
- Michele Morrow
- Thomas Johnson

Alamance County Sheriff
(You may vote for ONE)

- Billy Clayton
- Dana Byrd Pasour
- Terry S. Johnson

End of Ballot

NC Court of Appeals Judge Seat 1
(You may vote for ONE)

- Michael C. Byrne
- Matt Smith

Alamance County Board of Commissioners
(You may vote for TWO)

- Steve Carter
- Peter Boykin
- Kelly Allen
- Henry Vines
- Jeff Throneburg

Alamance County Clerk of Superior Court
(You may vote for ONE)

- Kristie Miller Culler
- Steve McGilvray

End of Ballot

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POLLING LOCATIONS BY PRECINCT

Patterson	Mt. Zion Baptist Church
Coble	Alamance Civitan Clubhouse
Central Boone	Trinity Worship Center
Boone 5	Elon Elementary School
North Boone	First Baptist Church of Elon
North Boone 2	Twin Lakes Center Gathering Room
South Boone E	Marvin B. Smith Elementary School
West Boone	Beth Schmidt Park Community Center
South Boone M	St. Mark's Community Church
Morton	St. Luke's Community Church
Faucette	Lakeview Community Church
Graham 3	R. Homer Andrews Elementary School
Graham 4	Fellowship Baptist Church
North Graham	Graham Recreation Center
South Graham	Bethany Presbyterian Church
East Graham	Graham Civic Center
West Graham	Harvey Newlin Elementary School
Albright	Mt. Hermon Community Center
North Newlin	Eli Whitney Recreation Center
South Newlin	Chatham Friends Meeting Church
North Thompson	Sweepsonville Fire Station 1
South Thompson	Salem Community Church
North Melville	E.M. Yoder Elementary School
South Melville	Mebane Arts & Community Center
Melville 3	Hawfields Middle School
Melville 4	Old Mebane Recreation Center
Pleasant Grove	Pleasant Grove Elementary School
North Burlington	Mayco Bigelow Center
South Burlington	New Birth Baptist Church
East Burlington	Fairchild Community Center
West Burlington	First Presbyterian Church
Burlington 4	Hillcrest Elementary School
Burlington 5	Grove Park Baptist Church
Burlington 6	Turrentine Middle School
Burlington 7	Elmira Community Center
Burlington 8	Kernodle Senior Center
Burlington 9	Baptist Temple
Burlington 10	St. Paul's Community Church
Haw River	Haw River Civic Center

Margot Dupre was disqualified for North Carolina's open US Senate seat by North Carolina Board of Elections on Feb. 4. The board determined Dupre did not meet the residency requirements needed to be a qualified primary candidate in North Carolina.

Elon, Queens University merger solidifies universities' future amid nationwide closures

Integration team works to guide next steps of merger

Miles Hayford
Elon News Network

Amid a turbulent era full of increasing college closures and pressure from the Trump Administration, the Elon University-Queens University of Charlotte merger may be a survival tactic in an unforgiving higher education climate.

Matt Hartman, a higher education reporter for The Assembly, described the merger as a "survival move" for Queens.

"They've sort of been in a financially precarious position for a while, and they really needed some help, and Elon was a great partner for them in that way, because Elon has been thriving for the past 10 or 15 years," Hartman said.

Hartman said that despite this, he also thinks the merger is a way for administrators to secure Elon's future, because he said their finances have been solid, but that they have weakened a little bit over the last few years.

The merger, which was announced in September 2025, is in its next steps currently as an integration team works to guide the next phase of the merger after a definitive agreement between the two universities was finalized in December.

But the merger comes at an uncertain time for higher education. According to data compiled by the Hechinger Report, 28 institutions closed in the first nine months of 2024, an increase from 15 during 2023. From 2008 to 2011, only seven colleges and universities shut down each year but by 2018, it had reached an average of 32 closures. Bloomberg reported in 2025 that a decreasing number of prospective students will lead to as many as 370 private colleges to close or merge with another institution in the next decade, according to Huron Consulting Group.

Part of the rise in closures can be attributed to the incoming "demographic cliff," the decreasing supply of college students from a falling national birth rate

Elon University, Queens University of Charlotte merger timeline



DATA VISUALIZATION BY MILES HAYFORD

that began in 2007. Hartman said the impending arrival of the demographic cliff is on the mind of a lot of people who are involved in the finances of colleges, and that it is shaping how much risk they are willing to take with colleges that have financial difficulties.

Laura De Veau, a consultant at Higher Ed Consolidation Solutions with an expertise in closures, said deferred maintenance is also a factor in colleges closing. Deferred maintenance is the process of delaying certain infrastructure repair projects due to budgetary constraints, and De Veau said it is hard to find a way to pay for these and that they start to stack up as tens of millions of dollars of deferred maintenance.

"Those are all very unsexy things to fix," De Veau said. "You're not going to be able to find a donor who's like, 'Yeah I'll pay to fix the roof.' They want to put their name on a fancy building, right?"

Discount rates — or the tuition revenue given back to students as scholarships — are also factoring into the financial difficulties schools are facing. De Veau said that because enrollment is down, schools are forced to highly discount and offer higher scholarships and grants to get students to come to their school, depleting their revenue.

Hartman said that this trend of closures could be a cause for the Elon-Queens merger. Queens' enrollment dropped by 13% between fall 2024 and fall 2025. In the 2023 fiscal year, Queens lost \$20 million. The university has been drawing from its endowment to make up for losses since the pandemic. Elon, who saw enrollment

decrease by more than 11% in 2025, is using the merger to find new sources of revenue, according to Hartman.

Hartman said the merger allows Elon to gain its foothold in Charlotte, an underserved market.

"We're in this place where competition for students is going to increase in the future and financial constraints get tighter, colleges are looking to sort of invest in different kinds of ways and capture different kinds of markets," Hartman said.

Elon has been strengthening its influence in Charlotte since 2023 with the opening of its regional center in South Center that houses the university's Law Flex program and Sport and Community Experience academic program. The physician assistant program will now be placed in Charlotte with its first class starting in January 2027. In early 2026, Elon announced plans to establish a full-time law program in Charlotte.

Hartman said this expansion also has its drawbacks.

"There's a bit of a tension, right? Especially for someplace like Elon, which has this reputation as a really great teaching school, really hands-on," Hartman said. "You get connections with professors and mentors and that sort of thing. Once you start opening up lots of campuses or expanding too rapidly, it's really hard to sort of maintain that, or at least it's a challenge."

De Veau said she believes that schools under 3,500 students are at serious risk, but said this removes that small-school environment that lots of students enjoy.

"By those institutions being wiped out,

there's a population of students who don't really feel like they fit. So that's a concern for me," De Veau said.

As more and more schools begin to close or merge in this unfragile environment for higher education, De Veau said university leadership needs to stay true to the college's values.

"My advice to anybody who is in that suite of leadership is that you lean into your mission and you know your mission is unique to your institution," De Veau said. "We have to be unapologetically in line with our mission, and if we need to find a partner to support our mission, be open to that partnership."

NONPROFIT COLLEGE MERGERS ANNOUNCED IN 2025

Inside Higher Ed reported seven college mergers in 2025 among nonprofit institutions in the United States — this number is down from 12 mergers in 2024.

Kean University, New Jersey City University
Announced March 5

Rosemont College, Villanova University
Announced March 31

East Georgia State College, Georgia Southern University
Announced in April

Russell Sage College, Albany College of Pharmacy and Health Sciences
Announced April 22

Morningside University, St. Luke's College
Announced July 15

Elon University, Queens University of Charlotte
Announced Sept. 16

Pacific University, Willamette University
Announced Dec. 11

NONPROFIT COLLEGE CLOSURES ANNOUNCED IN 2025

Inside Higher Ed reported 16 college closure announcements in 2025 among nonprofit institutions in the United States — this number is the same as 2024 and up from 2023, when 14 colleges announced their closures.

Northland College
Announced Feb. 19

St. Andrews University
Announced April 25

Limestone University
Announced April 29

Bacone College
Announced in May

Penn State-Dubois
Announced May 22

Penn State-Fayette
Announced May 22

Penn State-Mont Alto
Announced May 22

Penn State-New Kensington
Announced May 22

Penn State-Shenango
Announced May 22

Penn State-Wilkes-Barre
Announced May 22

Penn State-York
Announced May 22

Siena Heights University
Announced June 30

The King's College
Announced July 14

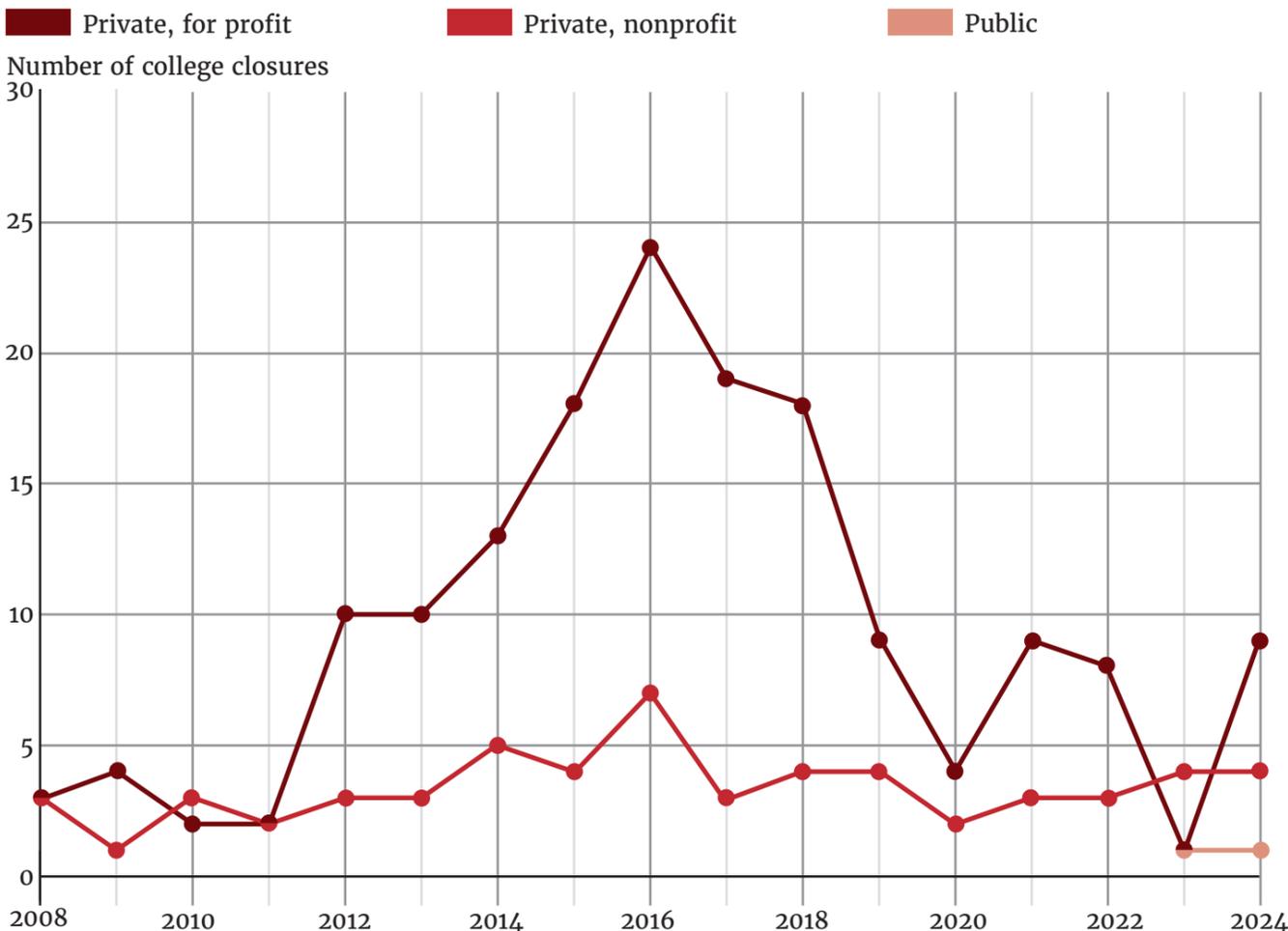
Trinity Christian College
Announced Nov. 4

Sterling College
Announced Nov. 12

Martin University
Announced Dec. 9

Undergraduate college closures in the United States between 2008-24

Since 2008, 223 colleges in the United States offering associate or bachelor's degrees have closed.



DATA VISUALIZATION BY SARAH T. MOORE

Spring dance concert explores different cultures, experiences in ‘Roots and Horizons’



MEGAN WALSH | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Dancers rehearse for “Quiet Gravity,” choreographed by professor Jiwon Ha for the Spring Dance Concert on Feb. 18 in the Center for the Arts.

Show will run March 6-8 in McCrary Theatre

Karsyn Vann
Elon News Network

Hope, despair, community and resilience are just some of the themes explored in Elon University’s spring dance concert titled “Roots and Horizons.”

Directed by assistant professor of dance Keshia Gee, the concert will feature works from six choreographers, including Elon faculty and guest artists.

Junior dance major Noah Macam will dance in two pieces for the concert. Macam described the first piece as a big celebration of culture. The piece was choreographed by assistant professor Angelica Kankam.

“There’s this idea of coming back to get your people, coming back to get your tribe and just coming back to get your community,” Macam said. “It’s super grounding and honestly feels like a dance circle.”

Macam started learning the nearly 15-minute-long piece over Winter Term, where he said the process was intense but extremely collaborative. According to Macam, the piece kept growing and growing as Kankam and the other dancers found more to say through their movements and phrasing.

Macam said this concert is special because it blends dance styles from different cultures, and it allows people’s experiences to shine through the choreography.

“It’s an amalgamation of everything coming together,” Macam said.

Macam is also dancing in a piece called “Quiet Gravity,” choreographed by professor Jiwon Ha.

Ha said her piece is a reflection of the despair she feels at the current state of the world, but also the hope that it will get better with each generation.

“I try to not to be political with art, but at the same time, art has always been political,” Ha said. “I’m trying to walk that

line and find that balance.”

Ha said her Korean culture informed the choreography of the piece. She said she tried to blend her Korean style with more Western dance styles, such as ballet, to highlight the strengths of her dancers. Ha said the Korean style represents the roots and the gravity of the piece, and the ballet represents the horizon and the hope she has for the future.

Macam said Ha’s piece features a lot of build and release, and intricate choreography.

“It’s really intense emotional moments with really detailed and intense movements, which is a challenge,” Macam said. “But all these details make her pieces look great.”

Although her choreography is intentional and specific, Ha said she doesn’t want the audience to overanalyze the movements. Instead, she said she wants them to focus on their emotions and how they feel when watching her work.

“The biggest beauty of a dance performance is that we cannot replay or go back and see the piece again,” Ha said. “The life happens onstage, so I really want audiences to just enjoy the moment of seeing all dancers moving together.”

Choreographer and assistant professor Lisa Hines is also focused on emotions and the state of the world in her piece titled “Bodies that Refuse to Freeze.”

She said this piece was a way to express her feelings regarding the detention of immigrants in the current political climate.

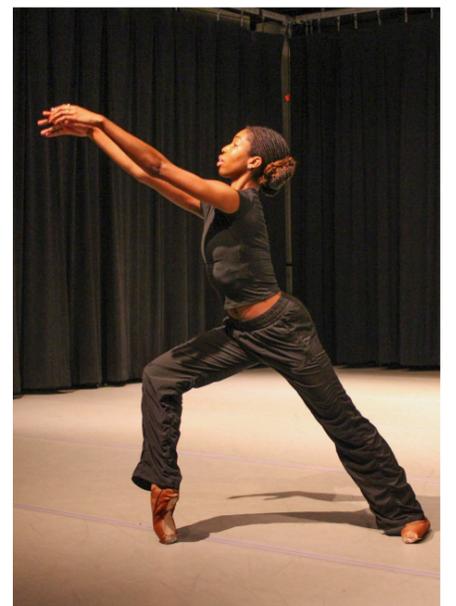
“I wanted to ask the question, as a community and as a culture, how do we stand in our right to be human and our right to coexist equally,” Hines said. “It’s not so much a piece about defeat as it is resiliency.”

Hines said “Roots and Horizons” is the perfect way to represent this topic because she interprets the horizon as the persistence of culture. She said she is incorporating choreography from dance styles with a deep cultural history, such as merengue. Hines said the style, initially



MEGAN WALSH | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Students rehearse a moment from professor Jiwon Ha’s spring dance work “Quiet Gravity” on Feb. 18 in the Center for the Arts.



MEGAN WALSH | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Senior Anaya Agard rehearses the opening moments to professor Jiwon Ha’s work for the spring dance concert in rehearsal Feb. 18 in the Center for the Arts.

designed to suppress, later became a dance of strength celebrated in Latin American culture.

“All of the travesties in our history have given us roots so we can rise,” Hines said. “It’s hard to verbalize it, but we can show you through our bodies.”

Hines said everyone’s pieces in the concert hold some form of cultural representation. She said she hopes audiences see the performances as a current reflection of what is happening in the world and not to detach from it.

“I’m being emotionally provoked and out comes this art,” Hines said. “In two, three, or five years, I don’t want to forget how this current climate made me feel. I don’t want to forget how I felt in this moment, because then I fear I’ll lose my activism and my own voice.”

“Roots and Horizons” will run in McCrary Theatre with evening shows at 7:30 p.m. March 6 and 7, as well as matinee shows at 2 p.m. March 7 and 8. Tickets are available on the Elon Performing Arts website.



KARSYN VANN | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Junior Noah Macam lifts senior Hannah Furey during rehearsal for “Quiet Gravity” choreographed by professor Jiwon Ha for the Spring Dance Concert.

Elon hockey embraces new era of camaraderie, consistency

Head coach relies on tough love, development-driven coaching

Kathan Gandhi
Elon News Network

Elon University men's club hockey head coach Travis Harris didn't promise the team championships. He promised them accountability.

"I laid it all out," Harris said. "I told them what my expectations were, what the plans were for the program. Some kids ended up not coming back. The ones who did helped me build this into what it is today."

What it is today looks dramatically different from what he inherited at his first team meeting in May.

The Phoenix won two out of 10 games in the 2024-2025 season — the year before Harris arrived. Players were missing practices and games. The program had burned through its budget a month and a half before the season ended, according to Harris, who said that Elon essentially handed the team a final opportunity to prove it could survive. He took on the job, receiving pay from funds raised by the team. Elon University does not pay Harris directly.

"I honestly thought it would be a full rebuild," Harris said. "Just get the kids to buy in, build this year and see where we were at the end."

Instead, Elon delivered the most successful season in the program's 15-year history, earning the No. 3 seed in the Atlantic Coast Conference M2 Elite playoffs and securing the program's first-ever trip to Division II hockey nationals.



For Harris, the turnaround didn't start with systems or strategy. It started with culture.

"Hockey's all about accountability," Harris said. "If you're missing practices, missing games, you're going to get benched. I'm not here to be your friend. I'm here to get you

where I think you should be."

That mindset is rooted in his own story.

Born in Southern California, about 30 minutes outside Anaheim, Harris started playing hockey at 7 years old. A year later, he moved to Houghton, Michigan, the birthplace of professional hockey.

Money was tight in a single-parent household, so Harris would work during the school year to afford tournament hockey in the spring and summer.

After high school, he enlisted in the U.S. Navy. He served five-and-a-half years as a gas turbine systems electrician before being medically retired in 2014 as a second-class petty officer. He said his military experiences shaped his approach to coaching.

"The values they drill into you, you don't quit," Harris said. "You keep pushing for the end goal. As long as you're dedicated and you put in the time, you'll see that your time wasn't wasted."



AS LONG AS YOU'RE DEDICATED AND YOU PUT IN THE TIME, YOU'LL SEE THAT YOUR TIME WASN'T WASTED.

TRAVIS HARRIS
MEN'S CLUB HOCKEY HEAD COACH

After back surgery in 2013 and several years away from the game, a coworker convinced him to lace up again in an adult league. That return reignited something bigger.

Harris began coaching youth travel hockey in North Carolina, focusing heavily on player development. His philosophy is

simple: strengthen the individual, and the team will follow.

"You're only as strong as your weakest link," he said. "Every drill has a purpose. If you're not doing it the way it's designed, you're wasting your time."

In 2019, Harris founded the Carolina Hurricanes Warriors, a USA Hockey-affiliated program for disabled veterans. He took on the opportunity while also working a full-time job, adding 40 to 50 hours a week to an already busy schedule.

As a veteran himself, Harris said it was important for him to give his community the chance to play. John Rodgers, a player on the Warriors, said he sees overlap between the military and hockey.

"In hockey, games are won and lost because of teamwork," Rodgers said. "Stack the two together and you have something more intimate and fraternal."

Backed by donors, a Warriors program that began with 11 players has grown to more than 150 across the state.

"I just like to see the enjoyment people get out of playing," Harris said. "Seeing the players' faces after every win, after every practice, that's what keeps me going."

That same energy now defines Elon hockey.

Elon's best season in program history has sparked interest across campus, according to senior co-captain Sam Chairman. Players who once viewed the program casually started showing up consistently, boosted by Harris' significant efforts in recruiting.

Elon only practices once a week, but Harris said he created a group chat to talk to players outside of practice, where hockey chatter is nonstop.

Senior co-captain Wells Masterson, who has played on the team for four years, said it's the closest and most energetic team he's

been part of at Elon.

"This is by far the tightest locker room we've ever had," Masterson said. "Everyone is super close, and you can see that on the ice."

Harris credits his assistant coaches, other adult hockey enthusiasts, for helping stabilize the program. He also points to a deeper mission beyond wins and losses, referencing a quote by Richard Branson: "Train people well enough that they can leave, but treat them well enough they don't want to."

Harris said that for college players, it means preparing them for life after graduation. An Ohio State survey found "lessons children learn in sports can have a positive impact on their lives long after they grow up."

"Team sports are a huge confidence builder," Harris said. "The kids who play sports usually have a more successful life. We want to keep providing that for these players, and help them grow off the ice."

He said his long-term vision for Elon is ambitious: consistent national contention, expanded recruiting and establishing a women's team.

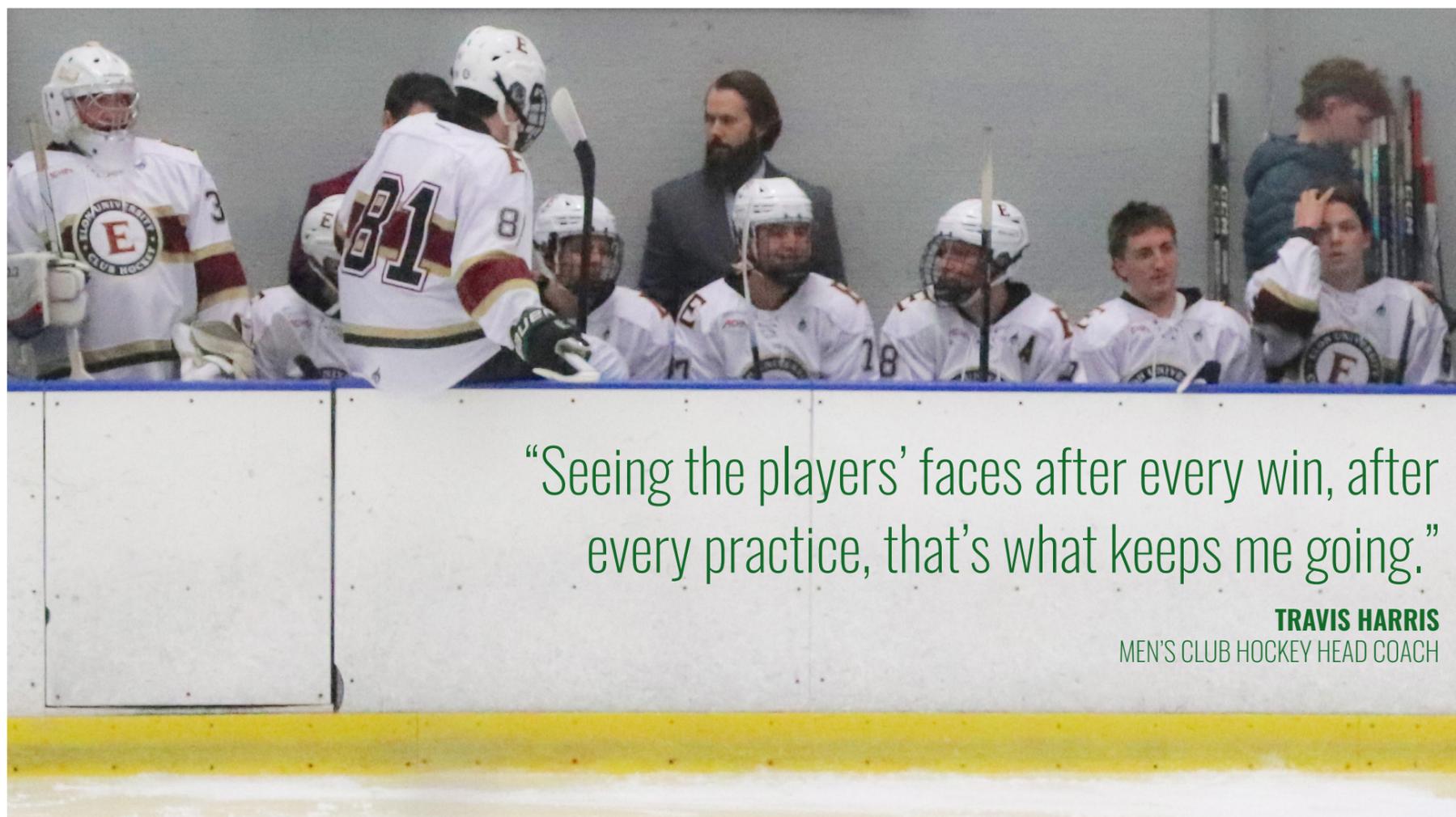
Five-year plan?

"Ice rink on campus," he said with a laugh.

For now, Harris said the focus is on steady growth. He took over a program on the brink and turned it into a contender in a single season. Elon will compete in its first AAU college hockey national championship on March 6 in Jacksonville, Florida.

But to Harris, it isn't the records that matter most. It's the sound of a locker room that — for the first time in years — expects to win.

ILLUSTRATION BY
HANNAH NICHOLLS



"Seeing the players' faces after every win, after every practice, that's what keeps me going."

TRAVIS HARRIS
MEN'S CLUB HOCKEY HEAD COACH

KATHAN GANDHI | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER