



JOSEPH NAVIN | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Crystal Cavalier-Keck, an Alamance County native and a member of the Occaneechi Band of the Saponi Nation, spoke at Elon University at the beginning of 2023, discussing her experiences with the intersection of land rights and faith among Indigenous communities. Alongside Cavalier-Keck is freshman Sakura Kawakami and sophomore Aubee Billie, who also shared their experiences as an Indigenous people in Alamance County.

RECOGNIZING INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES

President of Native American Student Association shares
experiences of culture shock, future goals

Avery Sloan | Politics Editor | @AveryISloan

FRESHMAN SAKURA KAWAKAMI'S FIRST experience in the U.S. was move-in day at Elon University. After settling, she faced culture shock, especially from new student convocation. Kawakami said she was expecting a welcome from the Indigenous tribe whose land the university is located on, but she found that part of the ceremony missing.

"There was none of that during convocation day. There was no acknowledgment of the Indigenous tribes," Kawakami said. "My father and I — we were shocked."

Kawakami attended opening school ceremonies like this before, after living around the world throughout her whole life, but she said those ceremonies always included a land acknowledgment. Since joining Elon, she made it her mission to educate others on the issues Indigenous people face, such as recognizing land.

"We are not from here," Kawakami said. "This is not our land, and we're only visitors to their land, so it's important that we educate ourselves on who the Occaneechi people are, why they're here, how long they've been here,

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SAKURA KAWAKAMI
FRESHMAN

for a little bit about their history, their present, their future."

Kawakami is a member of the Māori Te Arawa and Ngati Porou iwi, an Indigenous tribe of New Zealand. She currently serves as the president of Elon's Native American Student Association which is where she plans to bring awareness to a major issue — recognize the Occaneechi Tribe and Indigenous communities on campus.

See **INDIGENOUS** | pg. 5

Patsy Simpson rescinds resignation from ABSS Board of Education

Simpson said she will not step down until she is told selection criteria for her replacement

Michael Leung
Elon News Network

Patsy Simpson, currently the longest running member of the Alamance Burlington School System Board of Education, rescinded her resignation after announcing she will step down at the end of the school year. Having served since 2009, Simpson said she will remain on the board until the school system reveals to her the criteria in the selection of her replacement.

The decision to rescind came after an ABSS board meeting in early April when she learned the board would not reveal to her any

information regarding how her replacement will be selected. She said she initially planned to retire because she wanted to put her own life ahead of her duties on the board. However, she feels she cannot do that if the board's selected replacement cannot support the community as she has.

"Right now people are saying, 'Oh, she's trying to select her replacement when she's gone,'" Simpson said. "I'm not trying to establish the criteria. I just want to know what the criteria will be."

Simpson said she believes the county deserves to know what the board is looking for. Simpson's announcement to step down was March 14, but since then, she's been advocating for the school board to acknowledge whether or not there would even be a process.

"At the last meeting, ... the

remaining board refused to even acknowledge that they would establish a criteria," Simpson said.

As the only person of color on the school board, Simpson said her replacement should be able to represent people of color as the district has a minority enrollment of over 60%, according to the ABSS website. Simpson said it's important to her that her replacement is able to bring awareness to issues students of color face. She also said she would like her replacement to be a person of high integrity and have run for the position before.

Board of Education Chair Sandy Ellington-Graves said the board would not share information regarding the criteria of Simpson's replacement.



COURTESY OF PATSY SIMPSON

Patsy Simpson said she will not step down from the ABSS Board of Education until she is told the criteria for the selection of her replacement.

See **ABSS** | pg. 4

THE PENDULUM

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

Contact

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CORRECTIONS

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

EARTH WEEK
CALENDAR OF EVENTS

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 19

Planting seeds for mental health | Medallion Plaza | 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Join Counseling Services and the Office of Sustainability for tips on taking care of yourself during this stressful time. Decorate a pot and plant a flower seed to brighten the rest of your semester.

Queering Sustainability | GLC (Moseley 209) | 5 to 6 p.m.

Join the Office of Sustainability and the Gender & LGBTQIA Center to talk about the intersections of queerness and the environment.

S'mores with Outdoors | Beck Pool Patio | 9 to 10 p.m.

Join Elon Outdoors for a special Earth Week S'mores with Outdoors.

THURSDAY, APRIL 20

Party for the planet | Medallion Plaza | 5 to 7 p.m.

Celebrate sustainability with free food, fun activities and live entertainment. This event will also feature a thrift shop where students can trade their gently used clothes for gently used clothes.

FRIDAY, APRIL 21

Earth Week Danieleley Coffee | Daniel Commons sidewalk | 10:30 to 11:30 a.m.

Danieley Coffee will have a special Earth Week theme which will include locally sourced products and the chance to win some sustainable prizes.

Garden club work hours | Elon Community Garden | 1 to 4 p.m.

Come join the Community Garden Club to help with garden maintenance. The garden is located behind Elon's Hillel House and Powell House, near East Neighborhood. It is recommended to wear old clothing and close-toed shoes.

Potluck for the planet* | Elon Community Garden | 2:30 to 4:30 p.m.

This is an event for sustainability-minded people to gather together and share a meal. Bring your favorite plant-based meal to share. Located in the Community Garden, behind Elon's Hillel House and Powell House/near East Neighborhood.

Bike to Burlington* | Meet in front of Koury Athletic Center | 3:30 p.m.

Join Elon Outdoors and the Office of Sustainability for a bike ride to Burlington, where we'll enjoy some ice cream while learning about local businesses and why they're an important part of sustainability. Bikes will be provided, or you can bring your own.

Finding Mindfulness in nature | Center for the Arts Patio | 4 p.m.

Join the Student Art Guild and Eco Reps for an afternoon of painting. We will be discussing mindfulness and intentionality in nature through some interesting prompts and activities. We will be meeting on the Center for the Arts back patio.

Loy Farm volunteer shift* | Loy Farm | 4 to 6 p.m.

Each shift is unique based on the seasons. All food grown and harvested at the farm is served in the dining halls or is provided to community partners to feed those in need.

SATURDAY, APRIL 22

SUSTAINABLE DAY OF SERVICE EVENTS

Lake Mackintosh kayak clean-up* | Meet in front of Center for the Arts | 8:30 to 11 a.m.

Take care of local Lake Mackintosh while enjoying the beauty of nature. Kayaks, gloves and trash bags provided. Please wear clothing you don't mind getting dirty and bring a reusable water bottle and sunscreen.

Peacehaven Community Farm garden workday* | 8:30 to 11 a.m.

Join us at Peacehaven Community Farm for a garden clean up.

Carolina Tiger Rescue* | Pittsboro, N.C. | 11:15 a.m. to 6 p.m.

Join Elon sustainability as they travel to the Carolina Tiger Rescue in Pittsboro and help with a workgroup project. Projects include cleaning vines and brush from enclosures, building or dismantling fences, digging trenches for drainage, or other light construction tasks.

Hammock and hang out | Lake Mary Nell | Noon to 2 p.m.

Join Sierra Club at Lake Mary Nell to celebrate Earth Day by hammocking, hanging out and making pinecone bird houses.

SUNDAY, APRIL 23

Carolina Farm Stewardship Association farm tour* | Meet in front of the Center for Arts | 11 a.m.

Visit three local farms to learn about food production in Alamance County and try some local foods at each location.

Campus Kitchen Cooking Shift* | Loy Farm | 11 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Help us harvest produce from Loy Farm to be used in our cooking shifts on Tuesday evenings. CK collects unused and unserved food from community partners, including Elon Dining Services, while engaging students, faculty and staff as volunteers who prepare and deliver the meals to those in need in the Burlington community.



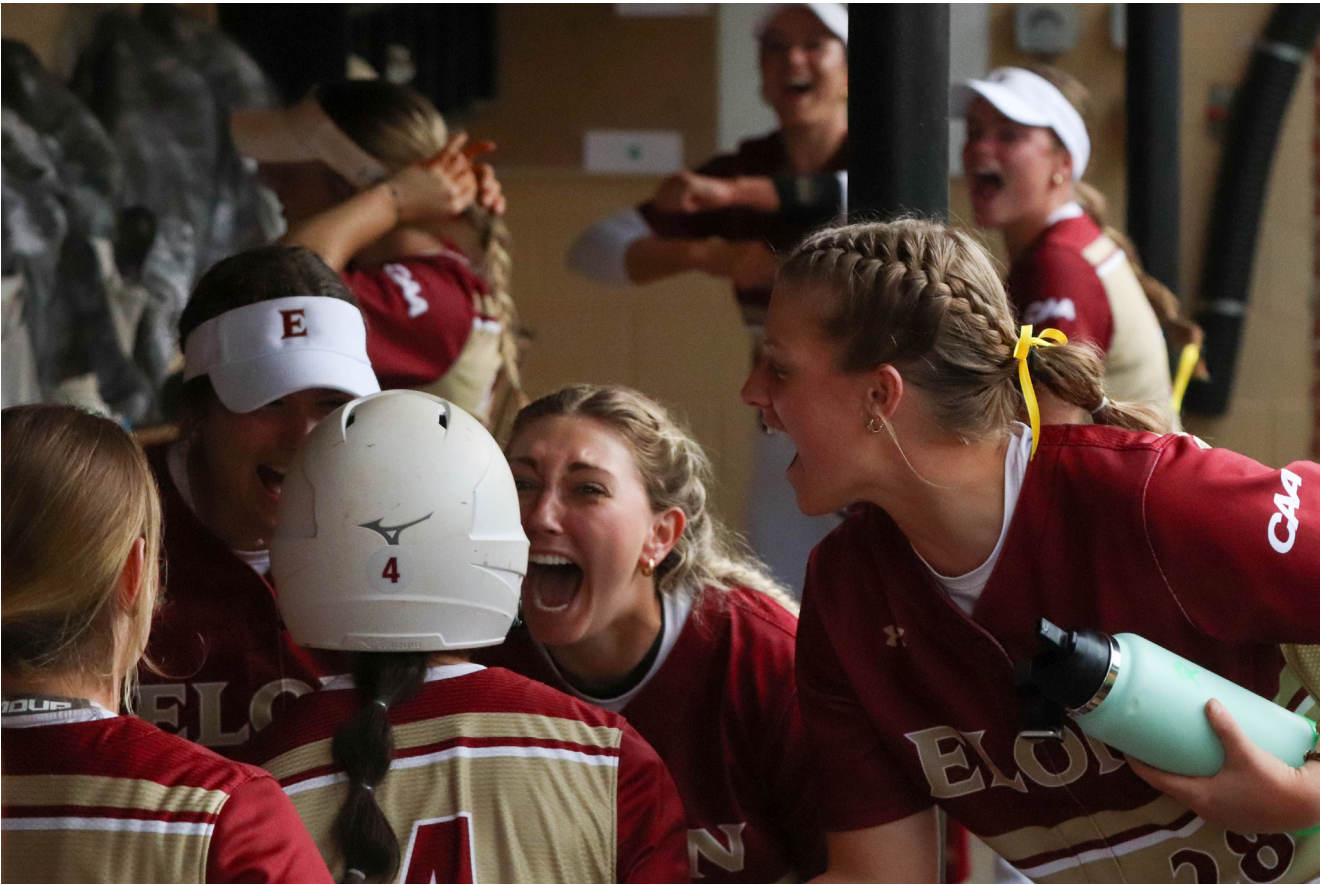
* DENOTES REQUIRED
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EARTH WEEK EVENTS





Elon sophomore Georgia Bontempo performs her solo during Elon Muses performance of “Wildest Dreams” by Taylor Swift during their first spring concert April 15 in Yeager Recital Hall.

CLARE GRANT | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER



Members of the Elon softball team celebrate in the dugout after a game tying double to center field in the bottom of the fifth inning of game three against University of North Carolina, Wilmington on April 16. The Phoenix won 7-5.

MAX WALLACE | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER



Elon juniors Sydni Brown and Jillian Shor help with the Bloom With Spirit & Pride DIY bouquet making held April 17 at Medallion Plaza.

ERIN HRONCICH | PHOTO EDITOR



Elon junior Noah Dyson sits at his desk in the podcasting room in McEwen School of Communications. Dyson started a podcast called “The Love Catalyst Zone” about mental health.

NAOMI WASHINGTON | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER



Elon freshman Jack Kalil admires his pet bird, Benny. Kalil got his pet at Dubey’s Pet World in Graham over Fall Break. Kalil and Benny can be found spending time together outside Global Neighborhood and Lakeside.

ERIN MARTIN | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Jason ‘J’ McMerty leaves mid-semester after nearly 23 years

Director of Elon in Los Angeles program stepped away under private circumstances, leaving students confused, frustrated

Ryan Kupperman
News Editor | @Ryandkupp

Jason “J” McMerty announced out of the blue last week that his Elon in Los Angeles branding content class would take place at the Museum of Motion Pictures in Los Angeles — not in its usual classroom setting. Junior Caleb Martin, who is enrolled in the spring 2023 Elon in LA program, said although the museum was a cool place to hold class — McMerty had been acting strangely all day.

“We go to a museum and he’s acting off — really sentimental — and takes us to this exhibit,” Martin said. “He was basically just like, ‘Today’s the last day I’ll be your professor and the director of the Elon program.’ ... He started tearing up and he said, ‘I’m really happy that you guys are my last Elon in LA class.’”

Though Martin, a cinema and television arts major, said McMerty made it clear that he was choosing to step down, Martin also said he and the other Elon in LA students had heard differently around the circumstances in which McMerty left.

“I’m worried about the future of the Elon LA program. J was the one who started the program. He’s been here for 22 years. ... He’s helped thousands of students get their start in LA. I appreciate the program because I’m getting literal, real world applications,” Martin said. “I know how to do things in LA now and I’m not going to go there blind and be screwed over. I’m learning things because of this program.”

McMerty worked at Elon for nearly 23 years after graduating from Elon in 2000 and immediately beginning his career at the university. McMerty started the Elon in LA program in 2008 and has been director ever since.

Elon News Network obtained a message from a member of a private Facebook group, written by McMerty and sent to alumni. Though McMerty did not provide the message, he referenced it as the most accurate depiction of his thoughts and feelings regarding the situation.

“I want to let you all know that I will be stepping away from Elon in the near future. No controversy or drama, just a fundamental difference about the direction of the staffing and structure for the future of the program,” McMerty wrote. “I don’t want to be associated with any negativity. To honor me and our time together, help these summer students (and all that follow) find internships, support each other in your creative, business and personal journeys. Be nice to the new director when that time comes, they will have good intentions and deserve our support, as fellow alumni.”

McMerty ended his message with “LONG LIVE THE ELON ENTERTAINMENT EMPIRE.”

When asked if he was still working for Elon, McMerty said he still was working through things with the university and declined to comment further.

McMerty’s latest Facebook page update said he “left job at Elon University.”

Junior and cinema and television arts major Savannah Howard is currently enrolled in the Elon in LA program. Like Martin, Howard expressed confusion and frustration — particularly around the circumstances in which McMerty left.

“He gathered us all together to make the announcement, and honestly a lot of



ERIN MARTIN | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Photo illustration of a Elon Study USA program postcard highlighting three programs — including the Elon in Los Angeles program.

us thought it was like a weird joke at first or something because we’re like, ‘There’s no way,’” Howard said. “He built this program. He’s been working here for like two decades. There’s no way ... he’s going to be gone by the end of the day.”

Three days after McMerty told his students it would be his last day, Assistant Dean of Elon’s Global Education Center Mark Kurt sent an email to all spring 2023 Elon in LA students.

In the email, Kurt said Director of Global Experiential Learning and on-campus Elon in LA Program Manager Monica Scovell would be in LA until April 22 and would be the primary point of contact for students who had any questions regarding the program. Kurt also wrote that professor of cinema and television arts and film director Amin Matalqa will be taking over the branded content course for the remainder of the semester and students should continue with assignments as outlined in the course syllabus.



Jason McMerty

Though Howard said she was able to speak with Scovell to get more closure regarding McMerty, Howard still said she is upset over the lack of communication on the university’s behalf.

“I primarily feel confused and frustrated, just because there was no communication about it,” Howard said. “I think it’d be easier to have an opinion — to have feelings about it — if I knew at all what was going on. I’m pretty sad about it because he was a great teacher. I enjoyed having him.”

Both Kurt and Dean of the GEC Nick Gozik were unavailable for interview, but Gozik provided comment over email on the future of the Elon in LA program and wrote that all programming, courses, internships and projects are to continue as scheduled this spring and summer. He also wrote that summer 2023 students are completing program registration and continuing their internship preparation, and fall 2023 students have begun registering for courses and had their first orientations.

In response to McMerty stepping down, as well as Elon’s search for a new program director, Gozik wrote that he “cannot make any statements regarding personnel matters.”

Looking toward the future of the program, Howard said she was concerned that Elon won’t be able to replicate the standard in which she felt McMerty set for the program.

“He’s like the nexus point for this program. He’s got years of alumni that he’s trained — that have gotten jobs because of him and his connections,” Howard said. “He’s an extension of the campus. But out here, he’s done everything basically. So I don’t know how they’re going to replicate that, even if they get somebody incredibly experienced in film or whatever to teach classes and stuff. They’re not going to be able to replicate his connections, they’re not going to be able to replicate J.”

Martin also said he was worried about a new director taking over because McMerty had personally established connections with most of the program’s resources and contacts in LA.

“Will the alumni still be willing or as willing to give internships out to students, when they have a really, really, really fresh relationship with the new director? How’s that going to work out?” Martin said. “What scares me is the uncertainty of other Elon students who are literally going to come next semester, and for all the other future students, what is that going to look like?”

McMerty said he was glad to hear that his former students miss him and continues to wish them the best in their collegiate and professional careers.

“It’s very touching. This is a wonderful group of students I had there,” McMerty said. “Life happens and people leave jobs. I care for them very much. I really wish and root them on in success in their careers. Finish out the program strong and I’ll be looking forward to seeing what they do.”

McMerty also emphasized his desire to remain in good standing with the university and its alumni network.

“I don’t want to be surrounded by or involved with any sort of negativity. ... As I move on, I want to wish the students and faculty and staff and the institution well. It’s a great place and I was part of it for a long time, and I love it,” McMerty said. “I don’t have anything bad to say about my faculty and staff and students and alumni, and now I’m a proud alumni, and I hope everybody roots for me like I’ve been rooting for them all these years.”

McMerty said he supports whoever the new director becomes and wishes the best for the future of the program.

“It’s emotional. I’ve been at the university for 27 years,” McMerty said. “There’s no controversy, there’s no drama, and I want to make sure my alumni also don’t think that. It’s just I’m stepping away from the university, I’m moving on to some other things. ... I wish them the best and they’ll have my 100% support.”

Simpson fights to learn selection criteria for her replacement

ABSS | from cover

Simpson’s major accomplishments on the board include supporting the bond referendum and outlining the needs of the school system to ensure the money was equitably spent and help the school system grow.

She also changed the way the board handled business to be more transparent to the public and restored McCray schoolhouse, a one-room schoolhouse that taught African American children in Alamance County until it was shut down in 1951. McCray School is one of the few remaining one-room schoolhouses in the state and was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1986.

Simpson comes from a family of educators — her sister and daughter are both teachers and she has school principals in her family. However, she said her inspiration to run for the county-wide position was opening her home to foster children for 20 years. Simpson realized that the children in her care had mental health struggles that required special care but had no representation on the school board. Simpson said she ran for board of education to have an impact on the entire county as well the children she housed.

“There’s so much to do. ... There’s one issue after another that has surfaced that continued to give me that push to continue to push on and try to make things better in the school system,” Simpson said.

Simpson said being a member of the board of education has had its fair share of challenges. ABSS’ most recent rezoning plan involves assigning students to the new Southeast Alamance High School from surrounding high schools. It is meant to relieve the other schools in Alamance County of overcrowding, and Simpson is the only board member who is in opposition of it. This is important as she wants to learn the criteria for the selection of her replacement so that they can support the community during what she believes will be a difficult time after she steps down.

An aspect of rezoning Simpson feels should not be ignored is that more than half of the high schools in the Alamance-Burlington school district have high minority enrollments, like Graham High School with 80.8%, Williams High School with 65.9% and Cummings High School with 93.3%. Simpson said assigning students — especially students of color — to a new school where they might look different than everyone else will make it hard for them to build connections all over again.

Simpson said this plan will force students to establish new relationships and adapt to an environment that they did not agree to be brought to. According to Simpson, students would have to go through a culture change where either the incoming students have to conform to the norms of their new school, or the current residents of the school conform to the culture of arriving students.

“Are they going to adapt to what we do, or are we going to have to conform? If you’re going to try and conform you’re going to have some issues,” Simpson said.

She acknowledges that Southeast Alamance High School will have more clubs, sports and courses that other schools may not have, but Simpson believes that students will have a more difficult time adapting to their new environment in a place where they may not feel comfortable.

“You can’t just take children from one school zone and put them in another without preparing the students as well as that school to accept them,” Simpson said.

Ellington-Graves said the board is taking into account all aspects of the rezoning plan. The board considered transportation and demographics, and said the majority of students who are being transferred to Southeast Alamance High School are being selected from the Eastern Alamance High School with 53.9% minority enrollment, Southern Alamance High School with 30.7% minority enrollment and Graham High School with 80.8% minority enrollment and they are working hard to balance demographics across the district.

“We want to make sure that all of our students feel comfortable and feel welcomed and safe in their environments,” Ellington-Graves said.

Ellington-Graves said it may be hard for students to adapt to a new environment, but the board is making sure that students have the resources and support to make the transition comfortable and welcoming.

“I’m hoping that those that are moving into the southeast district will look back and realize it’s a good thing,” Ellington-Graves said.

However, Simpson believes that the school system will face issues with the rezoning plan.

Simpson said she prefers to retire with her husband, but she feels she can’t until the board selects a replacement that will support the community in her absence.

“That’s going to be very traumatic for a lot of our families,” Simpson said. “For that reason I want to stay, and for that reason I want to go.”

Indigenous communities strive for land acknowledgments

INDIGENOUS | from cover

According to Paula Patch, NASA’s adviser and professor of English, the organization has about 13 people on its roster, but only four to five members are active. Patch said she feels the organization is an important space to have on campus, even with low attendance.

NASA mainly functions as an internal group to talk about problems people have noticed and then to advocate for the change they want to see. Part of this is to increase land acknowledgments on campus events.

Patch said Kawakami felt so strongly about her Indigenous heritage that as soon as Kawakami came to campus, her dad reached out to Patch after seeing her role with the organization. It was important for Kawakami to get involved in NASA.

“One of her goals, and she’s done this really well, is to find and meet every Native American identified student on this campus,” Patch said.

From the Occaneechi Tribe

Vickie Jeffries, a member of the Occaneechi Tribe and an Alamance County native, serves as the tribal administrator for the Occaneechi Tribe. As the tribal administrator, each day looks different for Jeffries. Some of the work she does for the tribe includes scheduling monthly tribal council meetings, writing grants and planning workshops for the tribe. Jeffries described her role like running a household and keeping everything running smoothly for the tribe.

Jeffries said Elon students have regularly interacted with her as the tribal administrator, either on campus or on the tribal grounds. Students have done community service at the tribal grounds and Jeffries said she’s been asked multiple times to give a welcome on behalf of the tribe for events at Elon, but not new student convocation.

Jeffries said she’s led classes on basket weaving and beading classes at Elon and hopes in the future for the university to continue to support Indigenous students even more. One thing Jeffries said she’d like to see in the future is a room in the Moseley Student Center dedicated to Indigenous students, like the Black Community Room, Asian and Pacific Islander Community Room, Gender and LGBTQIA Center and the Center for Race, Ethnicity and Diversity Education all located in upstairs Moseley.

“Elon has been a great supporter of Occaneechi and we’re going to continue that collaboration working with everybody,” Jeffries said. “Hope to continue that



Paula Patch, adviser of Elon’s Native American Student Association and professor of English, sits next to reflective art she keeps in her office done by student Anna Derr for a project in Patch’s Native American literature class in Fall 2022.

relationship on a bigger scale.”

Crystal Cavalier-Keck, an Alamance County native and Indigenous activist, is also part of the Occaneechi Tribe. Since living here, though, she said she’s faced racial discrimination and was recently shocked over a different form of Indigenous hate she witnessed. Cavalier-Keck was outraged by an auction at the Mebane Antique Auction Gallery in March that was selling an Indigenous person’s skull.

“We caused a scene,” Cavalier-Keck said. “You don’t buy bones of people or their spiritual items or their regalia because that belonged to the person who had a right that’s their spirit.”

Cavalier-Keck gathered a group of other Indigenous activists to protest its sale, where they were able to stop the bidding close to \$2,000.

Cavalier-Keck has always been an activist. When she was 16, she sued Alamance-Burlington Board of Education because she wasn’t accepted into the National Junior Honor Society, despite having a high enough GPA. Even when she advocated for her own representation, the media reporting on her lawsuit misrepresented her race and identified her as Black.

“Most of our community had to hide who they were and so when I sued the school system, it would have been historic if I could have stood proudly and showed my heritage of Native American and African American,” Cavalier-Keck said.

Randy Williams, vice president and associate provost for inclusive excellence,

has been working with both the local indigenous community and Indigenous students on campus. Williams focus is on a large language revitalization project which began in January, when Indigenous author Tommy Orange visited Elon. At this event, Elon invited leaders in the local Indigenous community, including Jeffries, to give a welcome in their native language. Williams said hearing the native language was powerful because of the history and culture it represents.

“It was really rare for us to hear someone to speak with authority on this particular language,” Williams said. “It’s a rare language and it’s struggling to maintain its circulation in our contemporary society and so to hear our rare language spoken with such authority was a treat for anyone’s ears.”

Williams said another part of this project to help make Elon’s campus more welcoming for indigenous students is to create signage around campus highlighting the Occaneechi language and history. He has also been working on sharing more resources with the Elon community and is working on developing a website that will include land acknowledgment to say and guidelines on the acknowledgment.

“We are stewards of this land,” Williams said. “The whole concept of owners of the land is something that is foreign to the Indigenous community is more of us being good stewards of the land so we share and live in harmony with one another. ... It’s been really helpful to sort of shift your thinking and expand your thinking about

people’s lived experiences.”

He said in the future, a room in the CREDE dedicated to Indigenous students is possible, and he is first working on helping grow the Indigenous student population. He is starting this effort by working to make Elon a place more Indigenous students would want to attend. For Williams, the most important aspect of this project is maintaining the relationship with the Indigenous community and taking the time to understand the history and language of the Occaneechi Tribe.

The next steps

Since coming to campus, Kawakami said she has only met four or five Indigenous people, including sophomore Aubee Billie. Billie, a member of the Seminole Tribe in Florida, said part of why she came to Elon was because of the Indigenous communities in the surrounding area, however, she was surprised by the lack of Indigenous and students of color who attended the university.

Billie said while land acknowledgments don’t erase the pain that Indigenous communities have been through, she also feels they are a good place to start. Part of what makes them so important is because the land is significant, particularly to Indigenous communities.

“Land acknowledgments can only do so much,” Billie said. “Having that as a foundation, and understanding that there were people before us on this land, and now a lot of the sacred land is taken away because of colonization.”

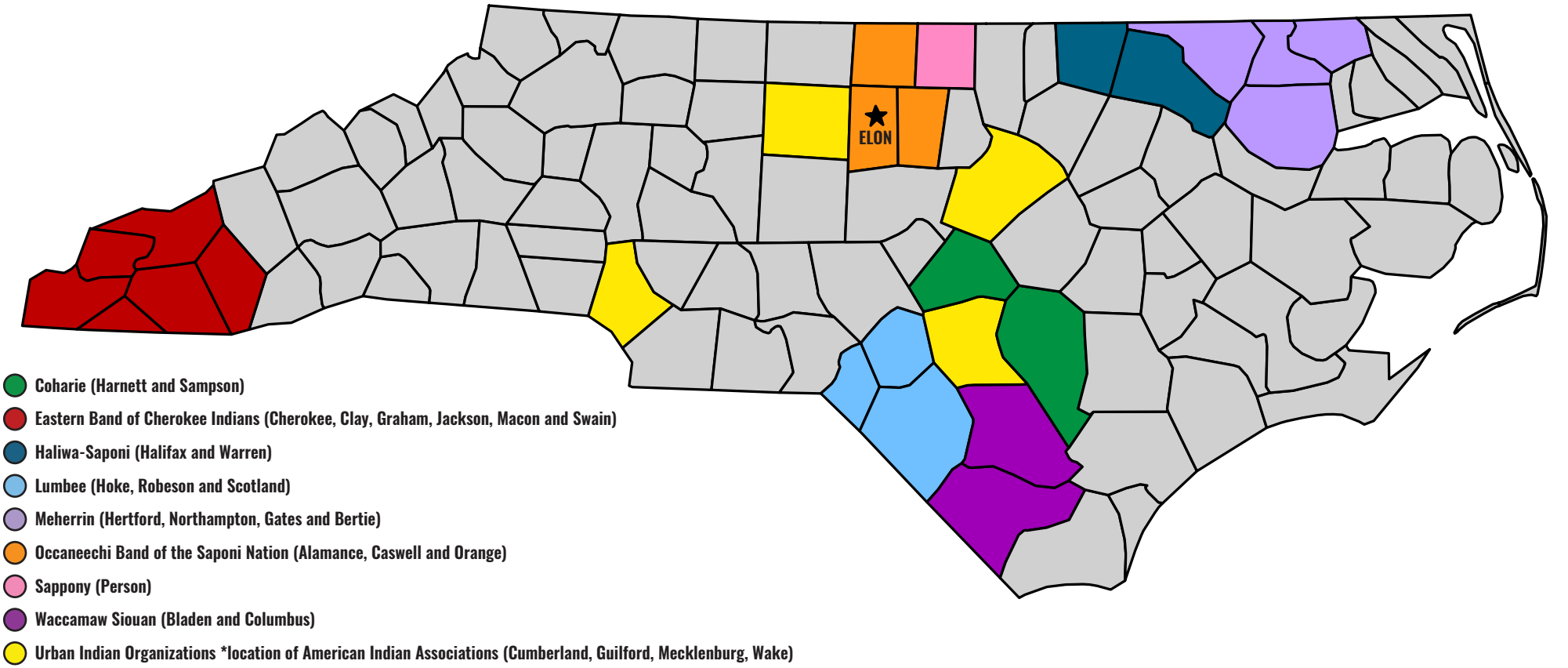
Cavalier-Keck said she has been a guest speaker at Elon three times and hopes to share her message with students. She hopes students are aware of the land they reside on and educate themselves beyond a piece of paper of a land acknowledgment.

“What are you actively doing about the land?” Cavalier-Keck said. “Are you going to talk about it? Are you going to help address the issues of invisibility of Native Americans in the U.S.?”

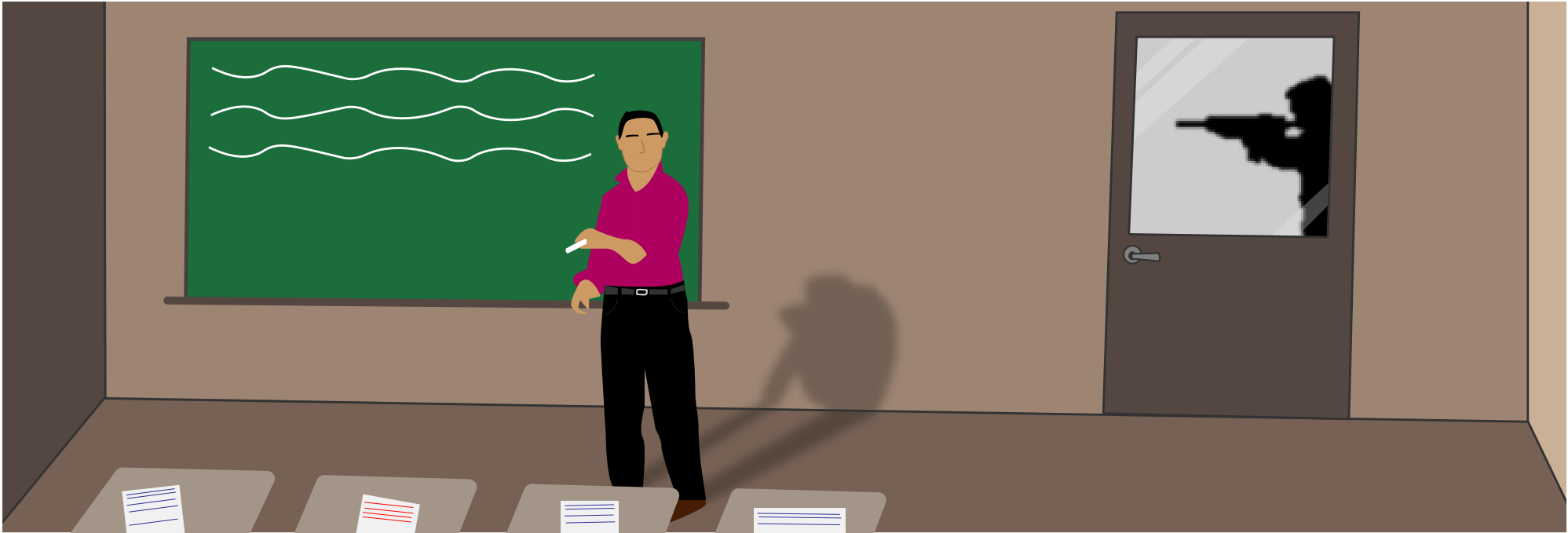
Kawakami is currently working on planning an event to recognize May 5, which is the National Day of Awareness for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women. NASA will partner with the GLC for this event which will be a stepping stone to more events on campus. Kawakami said she’s optimistic about the work she’s been doing with NASA to help educate the rest of the student body on Indigenous culture.

“It’s really important that we establish that organization a little bit more,” Kawakami said. “We’re trying to find these long term relationships and what can we do with the tribes so that there’s more presence.”

NC TRIBAL AND URBAN COMMUNITIES MAP



OPINIONS



ERIN MARTIN | DESIGNER

Future educators have a disproportionate burden to bear

The modern teacher grapples with unchecked shootings without support



Alex Nettles
Elon News Network

Editor’s Note: This article includes discussion of gun violence in schools.

A first grader with a history of strangling his teachers and whipping classmates entered his classroom at Richneck Elementary with his mother’s 9mm Taurus Armas pistol. In the middle of class, he took the loaded gun out from his backpack, aimed it at his teacher and pulled the trigger.

At Michigan State a 43-year-old man entered his local university campus with two legally acquired 9mm handguns. He killed three and wounded five. He had no ties to the university. It was solely a target for frustration.

Recently, a former student from Covenant Elementary in Nashville, Tennessee, entered the school with an AR-15, killing three students and three of the faculty and staff. The shooter harbored a deep “resentment” for the school.

The national climate has rendered mass shootings an inescapable reality. These situations illustrate the horror of gun violence that educators face today. Teachers are shouldering some of the biggest problems in the country — from the COVID-19 pandemic creating an educational rift to gun violence increasing in classrooms.

The landscape for education majors is being swept in a troubling direction. Educators are expected to fix the worst of society’s problems in the classroom without much help from lawmakers. Those currently in the field, or entering it, are finding a disproportionate weight.

A mass shooting — as defined by the Gun Violence Archive, a nonprofit formed to track gun violence incidents across the US — involves a minimum of four victims shot. This does not include any shooter who may have also been killed or injured in the incident. School shootings in America are often defined as such and have increased exponentially since 2020, according to the K-12 School Shooting Database.

This year has seen more mass shootings than days according to the Gun Violence Archive. The minute a headline is seen, like “4 dead and 5 wounded,” it reduces the implications, motives and feelings to

a statistic. When it comes to a headline, violence is a ruthless simplifier and some education majors may struggle with the spotlight the media shines on these situations. Violence too often simplifies a complex problem.

School violence disorients the direction and quality of an education. Teachers are expected to learn a mastery of their field, such as encouraging individual development and controlling class discussions. These fragile social skills are disrupted by the onset of a global pandemic or a generational outburst of violence. But most importantly, the fragile era of development and socialization that teachers so carefully watch over in their students — it all operates below a shadowing weight. Teachers have so much on their plate already. They don’t need more.

From education majors

Becoming a teacher has always been a dream for sophomore Lucy Horn. The Elon education major said the entire reason she wants to teach is to have an impact on kids, but after seeing gun violence enter classrooms, she’s realized that dream also comes with concerns.

“You can’t say as a teacher you’re supposed to step in front and take a bullet,” Horn said.

Horn said she’s had the dream to become an educator since elementary school, but there are many factors to consider as she plans to head into this profession.

“There’s been such an increase in gun violence that this is a whole other part of my future career that I have to consider,” Horn said.

For sophomore Lindsey Hefty, going into the education profession can be scary, especially when anyone can be a victim in a classroom.

“I’m going into a profession that puts my life in danger every day and it doesn’t seem like people care,” Hefty said. “I think it’s important to remember that students aren’t the only victims. Teachers are also victims.”

The distress shared in the profession is not only marked by the fear and experience of shootings, but also the insensitive way that violence is introduced in the classroom. Violence is now introduced in schools in ways that are structurally insensitive and heavy handed. For example, schools are now hiring training groups to simulate shootings that prepare the school for shootings, such as firing at students and teachers with pellet guns or firing blanks during shooting drills. Much of teaching is a pursuit of creating a space of growth and development. Violence has crept into that space. Now educators have an environment of both growth and possible violence. Educators find it difficult walking through the dissonance and balancing the two sides of that coin.

Scott Morrison, professor of education at Elon, found violence prevention training on younger kids to be both disturbing and

insightful.

“It’s quite an education when you sit with 5 year olds and tell them they have to be quiet to practice if someone comes on campus to harm them,” Morrison said. “I don’t know what would cause politicians to change their vote, but I would recommend sitting with 5 year olds during active shooter training.”

According to the National Association of School Psychologists, online schooling during the COVID-19 pandemic caused learning delays for all ages. Educators are now making up for severe learning gaps for students coming from different backgrounds. They’re struggling to make up lost ground while also navigating a potentially dangerous environment. Additionally, children who are disabled and children who are neurodivergent are almost completely ignored during online learning and active shooting situations.

Morrison also said he was concerned about the safety of disabled children during active shooter situations.

“During school shootings, students with disabilities might not be as safe as others because of physical limitations or intellectual differences,” Morrison said.

Education majors spend the majority of their training learning how to best handle sensitive ideas like race, religion, sexuality and the language we share — but they’re also expected to handle other issues like the flu going around classrooms, parent-teacher meetings, and now the possibility of violence.

It’s not the teacher’s burden, it’s the voter’s

Handling gun violence should not be a teacher’s burden. It is the burden of voters — especially the lawmakers. Violence has been normalized in America and its signs are neglected. According to Everytown For Gun Safety, in 56% of school shootings, the shooter exhibited dangerous warning signs before the shooting. These acts are often noticeable outbursts. As a country, we let them linger in our mind and often act only after the violence has occurred.

Currently there are a number of lawmaking decisions that greatly increase the risk factor for school shootings in North Carolina — registered stalkers are allowed to purchase firearms, there is no law regulating assault weapons and no laws that require the registration of firearms that are purchased. The most concerning of the laws, in regards to mass shootings, is that there is no limit to magazine capacity and caliber restriction on weapons,

meaning that a person can have as many bullets as needed and as large as required. And just recently, the North Carolina State House voted to override a veto of a bill that minimizes standards for pistol purchasing.

High capacity magazines were used in the most deadly mass shooting in American history and were developed for anti-personnel purposes. The high capacity magazine is something that pro-gun lawmakers are starting to reconsider, yet it is still a structural catalyst in our law.

The strongest step in stopping gun violence is voting out the figureheads prescribing pro-gun solutions. Legislators that are indifferent to the struggles of their constituents will never make a good law.

Pro gun organizations like the NRA donate large sums to politicians so they can push catalyst laws to keep the gun industry prominent. Out of the five senators that have benefited the most from NRA spending throughout their political careers, two were from North Carolina — Sen. Richard Burr with \$6,987,380 and Sen. Thom Tillis with \$4,429,333.

Before another shooting happens there is a period of shared time when it can be stopped. That moment is every moment we have as voters and citizens before a shooting. Many people are now numb and have lost hope to act. Through the acceptance of violence in our culture, we give it power. There is nothing close to an easy way to end violence and society’s flaws in classroom’s, but voting in local elections could ensure responsible leaders are in power.

Men who are paid to not change will never change. Why do we insist on our government being like this? We are citizens, we elect. It is our job to root out those who you believe don’t protect our interests. Keeping the next generation of teachers safe is the role of the community, not the individual.

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THE RISE OF GUN VIOLENCE

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LIFESTYLE

Elon sophomore starts Pancakes for Parkinson’s campus chapter

A love for actor Michael J. Fox turned into an organization to recognize Parkinson’s disease

Annemarie Bonner
Elon News Network | @ABonnerNews

A love for ’80s movies and a passion for a cause turned into a new endeavor for sophomore Ari Turobiner. One of his favorite movies is “Back to the Future,” and Turobiner had an idea based on one of the actors in the movie: Michael J. Fox.

“I don’t care about fraternities, sororities. I respect it and I get it, but at the same time, it’s not for every student on campus,” Turobiner said. “This is something — an event that literally as you’re walking by from class — you could just go to and participate in.”

Turobiner started a chapter on campus of Pancakes for Parkinson’s, an event that benefits the Michael J. Fox Foundation for Parkinson’s Disease Research. Turobiner lost his great aunt to the disease and wears a bracelet each day in her honor.

“It brings in a community

aspect with Team Fox and Parkinson’s, and is very personal since I’ve been raising money for Parkinson’s since was 13,” Turobiner said. “That’s seven years of raising money for Parkinson’s. It just feels very — I can’t explain it — just natural. I feel like it’s the right thing for me to do at Elon.”

Parkinson’s is a brain disorder that causes uncontrollable movements, shaking and difficulty with balance. On May 12, a documentary about Fox is set to be released on Apple TV+ called “STILL.” At 29 years old, he was diagnosed with Parkinson’s disease. One way the disease affects Fox is through his ability to walk.

“People around me are going, ‘Be careful, be careful,’” Fox said in the documentary. “And I’m like, ‘This has nothing to do with being careful. This happens.’”

At a “Back to the Future” premiere, Fox began experiencing a jittery finger, but Fox did not make his diagnosis known to the public until 1998. In 2000, the Michael J. Fox Foundation started with one goal: find a cure for Parkinson’s. According to the National Institute of Health,

500,000 live with the disease, but as many as 1 million could have it, including those who go undiagnosed.

“

IT’S BEEN HAPPENING FOR A LONG TIME. IT’S AN ACTUAL ISSUE. IT’S SAD. I’M HOPING THAT WE CAN FIND A CURE AND I’M HOPING THAT PEOPLE JUST SPREAD THE WORD ON CAMPUS.

ARI TUROBINER
SOPHOMORE

When Turobiner had this idea, he looked at other universities that had successful chapters, such as the University of Virginia, which started the organization 20 years ago. For Turobiner, he



Sophomore Ari Turobiner wears this bracelet to honor his great aunt who died of Parkinson’s disease.

ANNEMARIE BONNER | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

wants starting this chapter to be his legacy.

Turobiner has been working on this project for a year. He hopes to have a pancake event to educate the community on Parkinson’s and become a bigger presence on campus.

“It’s been happening for a long time. It’s an actual issue. It’s sad,” Turobiner said. “I’m hoping that we can find a cure and I’m hoping that people just spread the word on campus.”

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SPORTS

‘BE THE ONE:’ OLIVIA ARCHER INKS HER NAME IN THE ELON WOMEN’S TENNIS RECORD BOOKS

Graduate student Olivia Archer prepares to hit the ball in her singles match April 12 against NC Central. Archer won 6-2, 6-3.

CLARE GRANT | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

After dedicating five years to program, team captain breaks all-time singles win record

Joanna Dwyer
Elon News Network

In her record breaking day, Olivia Archer set foot on court No. 6 of the Jimmy Powell Tennis Center to start her match against her Radford University opponent.

Archer had been keeping a close eye on the all-time career singles wins record of 68 set by Frida Jansanker '14 almost a decade ago. Jansanker was a part of the Elon University women's tennis team from 2011-14 after joining the team from Sweden.

Leading up to the historic day, Archer realized just how close she was to breaking the record. Although tennis is a balancing act of both team and individual play, Archer is no different from any other athlete. She sets her own personal goals for herself and she was ready to check the box off for one that she had her sights set on for a long time.

"Nerves just come in and all of these ideas of, 'I'm not sure if I can do it, I'm just tight,' and that sort of thing," Archer said. "Then I ended up pulling it out. There were fire trucks going by, it was about to rain, but I just told myself, I was going to do it and it was going to be this day."

Archer won her match that day on March 31 with scores of 6-0 and a close finish of 7-5. This accomplishment comes near the end of an astonishing five year career as a member of the Elon University women's tennis team. Her 69th win cemented Archer's name in the program's history as the all-time singles win record holder. After three more regular season matches, Archer gained two more victories and now sits comfortably atop the Elon record books at 71 all-time singles wins.

Where it all began

Archer's journey at Elon began with her visiting the campus during high school. After watching a few matches and expressing interest in the program, head coach Elizabeth Anderson had the opportunity to watch her play. Anderson said she immediately saw Archer's leadership, work ethic and drive.

"We saw somebody that was just very hungry to continue to get better," Anderson said.

Archer was named to the All-Colonial Athletic Association second team for singles, won the team heart and hustle award and was named to the CAA commissioner's academic

honor roll all in her first year in the program.

After a successful freshman showing, Archer was one of the many athletes affected by the COVID-19 pandemic in her second year. Archer looked at the bright side of the abrupt stop: She gained an extra year of eligibility to play tennis. This gave her options to consider such as attending graduate school, playing for another year and staying at Elon. She ended up choosing the Phoenix and is now taking classes in the iMedia graduate program as a fifth-year student.

"It didn't really feel like a choice to me," Archer said. "It just seemed like Elon was the place that I was supposed to be at."

Senior Shauna Galvin has been teammates with Archer for four years of her career. The two will now complete their careers and graduate from Elon together.

"I was really excited for another year with her and obviously with her on the team," Galvin said. "She has something that you can't replace, and I think that that's evident in Elon's tennis success in the past five years that she's been a part of."

Galvin said she remembers when Archer hosted her when she first visited Elon and has since followed her captain's footsteps.

"Our slogan is 'be the one,'" Galvin said. "Be the one to make a difference on the team. Be the one to put your point on the board. Be the one to stay out there all day. Be the one to help the team."



OUR SLOGAN IS 'BE THE
ONE' ... BE THE ONE TO MAKE
A DIFFERENCE ON THE TEAM.

SHAUNA GALVIN
ELON SENIOR

Archer has grown to become a leader both on and off the court by learning from her past teammates' examples along with setting high standards for herself

"Coach and the other girls really helped me develop my own voice and I tried to act as a leader not necessarily vocally, but always through example," Archer said.

Anderson said she appreciates the poise that Archer has shown over her career and is proud of her accomplishments.

"To see the character that she showed and displayed in those tougher moments, and was



JACOB KISAMORE | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Senior Shauna Galvin shares a hug with graduate student Olivia Archer after Archer won the 69th singles match of her career against Radford University on March 31 at the Jimmy Powell Tennis Center to become the Elon University women's tennis team's all-time leader in career singles victories.

just all about the team and all about wanting to get back and to be able to compete and all those things — it's been a great five years having her," Anderson said. "There's things that she's had to battle through, but to see how much she's accomplished, in spite of all of this adversity, I think has been very admirable."

Remembering the day

On her monumental day, Archer shouted out the point for Elon and was immediately greeted by her teammates. The first person to hug her was none other than Galvin.

"I'll always remember just running over to her after she won and just being so excited," Galvin said. "It was one of my favorite days at Elon with her breaking the record. I think that is a testament to our friendship and what she means to me personally because there's no one more deserving than Liv."

Archer's preparation starts the night before the match. Emphasis is placed on the importance of hydration, eating healthy and getting enough sleep. As she prepares to take the court on match day with her dedicated song "Tie Me Down" by Gryffin and Elley Duhé playing, she calms her nerves and lets the excitement take over.

"We try to hype each other up, really get locked in for the game day," Archer said. "If it's a home match, we all put on our little tattoos, and then we warm up and we just try to pull energy from anywhere and everywhere possible."

Anderson notes Archer's dedication to the sport and preparation as a large part of her

success.

"It's more about the process, it's more about competing and continuing to get better," Anderson said. "When you're doing those things then it enables you to get awards or reach records or to do those things but keeping the focus on gameplay will get better there."

Anderson and the team had the opportunity to celebrate Archer after the match by presenting her with a poster and giving a speech to recognize the milestone.

"I think it says a lot about the team that with individual successes or you see them get as excited about that for their teammates as if it was themselves," Anderson said. "I think that says a lot about the team in general and how much they care about each other."

Archer said she works hard to be supportive of the women around her and be a team player, no matter the role.

"I just want to be the best version of myself that I can be and just be the best hitting partner or be somebody that the girls feel like they can come to with their issues," Archer said. "I just need to be a very well rounded person."

Archer said she works hard to be supportive of the women around her and be a team player, no matter the role. She said she balances on the line between the individual and team aspect of sports.

"As much as tennis is a win loss oriented sport, just like all sports are, I think there should be an honorable mention to people being the best versions of themselves and competing and just trying to be the fiercest and having a strong mindset," Archer said. "I think that's one of the most important things about sports."