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THE PENDULUM

2021 *fall sports* PREVIEW

THE NEED FOR SPEED

Elon University's cross country teams looking forward to potential record breaking seasons

Jacob Kisamore
Sports Director | @jacob_kisamore

ELON UNIVERSITY CROSS COUNTRY is quickly becoming one of the most formidable programs in the Colonial Athletic Association. With the women's team looking to achieve a historic milestone and the men's team loaded with young talent, both will look to contend for conference championships this fall.

Kevin Jermyn is in his fifth season as head coach for both teams and is looking forward to what is in store for his runners.

"We want to make the most of whatever opportunities we have," Jermyn said. "We can't control everything that happens. We can only control our effort and our attitude, and that's what we'll try to focus our best on."

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the teams pushed their 2020 fall seasons back to the spring of 2021. There were just three meets last season, about half of what constitutes a typical cross country schedule. This year, however, the teams currently have five meets on the calendar.

Chasing history

This season, the women's cross country team will attempt to accomplish something that no Elon team has done since joining the CAA in 2014 — win three consecutive conference championships.

The last Elon team to win three conference championships was the men's soccer team, which earned three consecutive Southern Conference tournament titles from 2011-2013. Only the women's track and field team has won back-to-back conference titles since Elon joined the CAA, doing so in 2015 and 2016.

Additionally, no women's cross country team in the CAA has won three straight team titles

since William & Mary claimed five in a row from 2012-2016.

Jermyn believes the Phoenix has a strong chance of making history this season but also wants to convey to his team that the season is not "just about some trophy."

"We want to keep on pushing to try to keep evolving and growing," Jermyn said. "We're wanting to get better and do things we've never done before, but we also want to enjoy it and have fun doing what we do and make that a reward because while a championship happens on one day, your experience is ultimately a summation of all the days."

Junior Maria Ahm is coming off a stellar individual season, having defended her CAA individual title in the 6K race with a time of 19:37 at the CAA Championship meet, a record for the event. Ahm believes her individual success is a result of her dedication to the sport.

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DELANEY DANIELS | PHOTO EDITOR
Junior Maria Ahm is going into this year's season defending her CAA individual title in the 6K race at the CAA Championship meet.



FOOTBALL • PAGE 3

Football team returns to Rhodes stadium



VOLLEYBALL • PAGE 5

Volleyball team hopes to redeem with veteran members



SOCCER • PAGE 6

Women's soccer focuses on having another winning season

2021 FALL SPORTS SCHEDULE

FIRST THREE HOME GAMES

FOOTBALL



SEPTEMBER 4

ELON VS
WOFFORD
2:00 PM

SEPTEMBER 25

ELON VS
WILLIAM & MARY
2:00 PM

OCTOBER 23

ELON VS
NEW HAMPSHIRE
2:00 PM

MEN'S SOCCER



AUGUST 30

ELON VS
LIBERTY
7:00 PM

SEPTEMBER 11

ELON VS
DELAWARE
7:00 PM

SEPTEMBER 25

ELON VS
JAMES MADISON
7:00 PM

WOMEN'S SOCCER



SEPTEMBER 9

ELON VS
GARDNER-WEBB
7:00 PM

SEPTEMBER 17

ELON VS
FURMAN
7:00 PM

OCTOBER 3

ELON VS
DELAWARE
1:00 PM

VOLLEYBALL



SEPTEMBER 8

ELON VS
CHARLOTTE
6:00 PM

SEPTEMBER 10

ELON VS
UNC ASHEVILLE
6:00 PM

SEPTEMBER 11

ELON VS
MERCER
6:00 PM

CROSS COUNTRY



SEPTEMBER 3

ELON
OPENER
8:00 PM

SEPTEMBER 17

FIRETOWER
PROJECT
TBD

OCTOBER 1

PAUL SHORT
RUN
TBD

ELON FOOTBALL RETURNS TO RHODES STADIUM

Elon football looks to reload this fall after a disappointing spring season

Kole Noble
Elon News Network | @SlawSportsShow

Fall football is back at Elon University for its 20th season at Rhodes Stadium. The university continues to prepare to welcome back fans at 100% capacity inside Rhodes Stadium this fall, and a full 11 game season is on the horizon with the Colonial Athletic Association returning to the gridiron, four months after concluding their spring season.

Elon University's football team (1-5) dealt with a fair-share of injuries and hardships during the spring but now the roster is back intact, returning 20 of 22 starters from the spring season, and the team is now ready to give the fans something to cheer for.

Return of the offense

Elon's offense will feature one of Head Coach Tony Trisciani's best and most complete casts he has had in his three years at Elon this fall, with senior quarterback Davis Cheek, junior running back Jaylan Thomas, senior wide receiver Kortez Weeks and redshirt senior tight end Donovan Williams all returning to the line-up.

On Sept. 4, Cheek will return to Rhodes Stadium as the Phoenix's starting quarterback for the first time in 673 days after missing the spring season with his second ACL injury. In his last season as the starter in 2019, Cheek threw for 2,175 yards to go along with 15 touchdowns, earning two CAA Football Offensive Player of the Week honors.

After missing the entire spring season, Cheek found himself in a new role as the veteran arm in the quarterback room, having to teach from off the field as opposed to on it.

"My role just changed from impact on the field to trying to help out the younger guys in whatever way I could," Cheek said. "A lot of it for me looks like trying to coach them when I can. I was around the building as much as possible, just trying to talk to guys, trying to see where everybody was at, see how they're doing, checking on players, and just coaching up as much as I could."

Weeks entered last season as the team's number one option at wide receiver but missed half the season, allowing Jackson Parham, Bryson Daughtry and Chandler Brayboy to each total over 100 yards receiving. Williams, who transferred to Elon last year from the University of Connecticut, finished fourth on the team in receptions despite only appearing in four games.

While challenging, the spring season allowed Elon's young players to gain valuable experience and pairing that with the team's veterans gives the offense a new level of depth they have not had in years.

"I feel great about that group," Trisciani said. "It's a veteran group, and then you add in some youthful athleticism that we've added the last couple of years, I feel good about the group. We've got to keep them healthy and go out there and execute and finish football games."

Revenge of the defense

The Phoenix defense faced its own struggles during the spring season, allowing 30.83 points per game and 406.33 total yards per game. The unit's main struggle came from allowing big plays mainly in the running game. Elon's defense



Elon football players prepare for a snap during a team scrimmage at Rhodes Stadium on Aug. 21.

LUCAS CASEL | PHOTOGRAPHER

gave up a longest rush over 30 yards in four of their six games.

However, with another year of experience under their belt, Elon's defensive unit is expected to become more resilient this season.

"We just have to continue to trust each other and trust in the hard work that we all put in," Torrence Williams said. "Those are really just two things that we have to do and continue to do and that's what we plan to do in the fall."

This season, Elon's secondary looks to return to locking down opposing offenses with junior cornerback Cole Coleman, sophomore safety Tre'Von Jones, redshirt freshman defensive back Omar Rogers and senior cornerback Jalen Greene.

Redshirt junior Torrence

Williams and senior nose tackle Tristen Cox will lead the Phoenix's defensive line this season. Williams was a menace in opposing backfields last season, leading the team in tackles for loss (4.5) and sacks (2.5). Cox served as the team's premiere run stuffer, tallying 12 tackles in six starts earning Elon Football's Most Valuable Player award.

"The area we're strong in: You look at our defensive line, that's a veteran group with Torrence Williams, Tristen Cox, Marvin Pearson played a lot of snaps; I expect those guys to be disruptive," Trisciani said.

Familiar foes

Elon starts the season with three straight non-conference opponents - Wofford (Sept. 4), Campbell (Sept.

11) and Appalachian State (Sept. 18). Wofford and Appalachian State are familiar foes for the Phoenix, as they were all members of the Southern Conference until Elon joined the CAA in 2014.

Elon is 9-32-1 all-time against Appalachian State, who finished the 2020 season 9-3. Elon has not defeated Appalachian State since 1964 but Trisciani is looking forward to renewing the rivalry.

"[App. State] is a great game for us," Trisciani said. "We've got a history of playing them. We got some guys who, maybe they were recruited by App. State but didn't get an offer from them. So, we'll have a chip on our shoulder when we go out there and we'll feed from that environment they've got up there. It'll be a fun football game for us."

Jon Seaton plays student, athlete and TikTok star

Elon University football player has over 1.5 million followers on the video sharing platform

Joanna Dwyer
Elon News Network

Student athletes balance classes, extracurricular activities and their social lives, but one Elon University football player has one more responsibility on his plate — managing his social media stardom.

Though his TikTok account has now reached 1.5 million followers, sophomore Jon Seaton, a defensive lineman for Elon Football said he doesn't consider himself a celebrity.

"I get up in the morning, I make breakfast, I go workout and go to sleep," Seaton said. "It's not anything too different in my daily life."

To keep himself busy during the COVID-19 pandemic, when not working out or running football drills, Seaton turned to TikTok, creating content about football and life.

Seaton said he enjoys creating content focused on being a lineman. He said he has fun making these videos, which allow him to truly be himself.

"My favorite type of content to make really has to do with being a bigger guy in society because that's the most fun for me," Seaton said. "It's almost a way to get away from football because I'm thinking about football for 12 hours of the day."

Redshirt sophomore offensive lineman Nick Cerimele said he enjoys watching Seaton's videos. He said his personal favorite is a series called Big

Boy Probs, where Seaton discusses different topics from the perspective of a lineman.

"I do enjoy the Big Boy Probs because every time he does it and puts up a new video, my girlfriend asks 'Do you do all these,' and I say 'Yeah, I do,'" Cerimele said.

“

HE JUST DOES HIS WORK. HE'S VERY HUMBLE ABOUT HIS SUCCESS, HE DOESN'T SHOVE IT IN OUR FACE.”

NICK CERIMELE
OFFENSIVE LINEMAN

Seaton's first video in his "Big Boy Probs" series blew up. A few days after posting, he looked back and saw that the video had exceeded three million views on the app. What started out as a fun app to kill some time turned into something bigger than he could have ever dreamed of. Seaton said he did not expect such a reaction to the series.

"Originally, it was for fun, I wasn't even super into TikTok," Seaton said. "I got it and posted a video right after I downloaded the app. And then it just started gaining traction."

Seaton's TikTok does, however, spark some conversation between teammates every now and then. Cerimele discovered Seaton's account before he arrived at the school and did not know what to expect when the time finally came for the two to meet

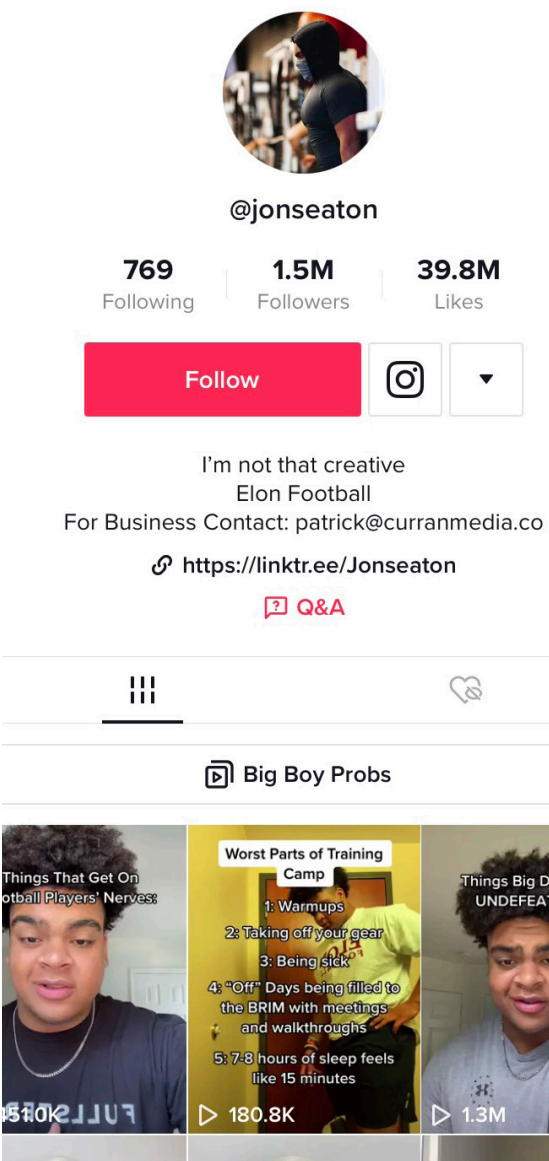
"He's probably one of the most humble people I know," Cerimele said. "He just does his work. He's very humble about his success, he doesn't shove it in our face."

Recently, the NCAA passed new legislation that will allow athletes to profit off their name, image and likeness. Seaton said he is experimenting with different ways to diversify his content and is also working to post more on other social media platforms such as Instagram, YouTube and Twitch in order to reach more people. To capitalize on his TikTok fame, he is currently working to develop his own clothing brand with the first release coming soon.

"Once I get good with all the social media, I'll move into a bunch of other stuff trying to see what other things I can stick my nose into," Seaton said.

Seaton said he sets high standards for himself and hopes to accomplish "something bigger than himself." With his growing platform, he hopes to continue to help people that look up to him.

"I'm just trying to help spread stories, some really cool messages, and put some cool stuff out there," Seaton said.



TAKEN FROM JON SEATON'S TIKTOK

Seaton currently has over 1.5 million TikTok followers.

ELON'S CROSS COUNTRY TEAM LOOKING TO CONTINUE SUCCESS



The men's cross country team is looking to win its first conference championship since 1996.

COURTESY OF TROY SAYLES

SPEED | from cover

"It's about consistency and working hard every day," Ahm said. "It's about going out and running even on the days you don't want to."

Jermyn said Ahm brings "tremendous strength" to Elon's cross country program and serves as a role model for how other runners should conduct themselves both on and off the course.

"She brings a passion and a work ethic that is as high and strong as anybody I've ever coached," Jermyn said.

Other runners returning from last year's championship team include senior Hannah Preeo, juniors Anna Twomey and Maggie Springer and redshirt sophomore Leandra Lorenz, all of whom earned all-CAA honors.

Ahm said the team has strong chemistry and is confident they can win a third straight conference title.

"It would mean a lot and I think it would show how consistent we are," Ahm said. "Winning the title for a third time in a row would be huge and I really believe we can do it."

Looking to break through

While the men's cross country team has not enjoyed the same amount of success the women's team has in recent seasons, the group is confident they are on the brink of breaking through in the CAA.

Among the leaders on this year's team is junior Aidan Tierney, who has earned all-CAA honors each of the last two seasons and finished eighth in last season's CAA championship.

The men's program has not won a conference title since it won the Southern Atlantic Conference in 1996, but with a young core of runners returning, Tierney is confident the team is capable of improving on last season's results and possibly pushing for a CAA title.

"We have the personnel, we have the talent, we have what we need to do something really special in the history of



The women's cross country team has won the last two CAA team championships.

COURTESY OF TROY SAYLES

this school," Tierney said. "I really do believe this could be our strongest year ever."

Other runners returning this year are senior Andrew Miller, junior Tamer Metwali and sophomores Zane Jackson, Ethan Mimeles and Cameron Dunn. Miller earned all-CAA honors in each of his first three seasons and is the only senior on this year's roster.

Jermyn believes some of the younger runners on the roster could take huge strides this season to help expand the team's depth and possibly push them toward the top of the CAA this season.

"Certainly, we've been led by two all-conference guys, so the next step is to see if we can become three, four and five deep," Jermyn said. "If we can have some guys close the gap in the fourth and fifth spots, we can go out there and try to contend for being the top two in the conference."



WE HAVE THE PERSONNEL, WE HAVE THE TALENT, WE HAVE WHAT WE NEED TO DO SOMETHING REALLY SPECIAL IN THE HISTORY OF THIS SCHOOL. I REALLY DO BELIEVE THIS COULD BE OUR STRONGEST YEAR EVER.

AIDAN TIERNEY
JUNIOR

The Elon Opener

Both the men's and women's cross country teams will begin their seasons on Sept. 3 in the Elon Opener at the Elon University cross country course. The race begins at 8 p.m. with spectators allowed.

Due to COVID-19, Elon's cross country program was unable to host a meet last season. Jermyn believes the event will serve as a "rust buster" for both teams and is glad they have the opportunity to compete at home this year.

"We've just gotta go out there and race to know, 'Ok, this is what we're training for,' because when you spend three or four months just training, you get stuck in a mindset where you're doing a lot of easy and medium stuff, but racing is a whole 'nother skillset," Jermyn said. "All we look for in this meet is to get back in touch with that."

ELON VOLLEYBALL SEEKS REDEMPTION



LUKE JOHNSON | PHOTOGRAPHER

Elon Women's volleyball team is hoping older members can assist in redeeming itself this season.

The volleyball team is confident that veteran leaders can help them make noise in the CAA

Jacob Kisamore
Sports Director | @jacob_kisamore

The Elon University women's volleyball team finished its shortened spring season with a bitter taste in its mouth. Needing just one victory in its final two regular season matches against College of Charleston to qualify for the Colonial Athletic Association Tournament, the team lost both matches and failed to secure a spot.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the team was unable to contest a traditional fall season in 2020, but did complete an abbreviated 10 match regular season in the spring of 2021. Though the team went just 5-5 and did not make the CAA Tournament in the spring, the shortened season allowed players to gain valuable experience and build chemistry on the court in preparation for the fall.

Now, the veteran-laden team is looking to redeem itself. With a full schedule and a number of key players returning, the team has set lofty expectations for the upcoming fall season.

"They're very motivated to do well and to push to not only get to the conference tournament but to win the CAA championship," Head Coach Mary Tendler said. "That's the end goal."

Returning stars

The Phoenix return 13 players from last season's roster, including five players who will compete in either their fourth or fifth seasons. The team brings back many of its leading producers, including its top eleven leaders in kills, top four leaders in digs and four of its top five leaders in blocks.

One key player returning for the Phoenix is defensive anchor Jordan Gower. The junior libero earned second team All-CAA honors last season by racking up 203 digs, the second most in the conference.

Gower said her knowledge of the team's defensive schemes and determination allows her to get so many digs.

"I stay pretty disciplined on defense and know exactly where I am supposed to be in the defenses we run," Gower said. "I just try to get the ball up however I can."

Additionally, two players — Natalie Cummins and Julia Crabtree — are exercising their extra year of athletic eligibility this season, an option granted to all NCAA athletes due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Tendler said she "really appreciates" their decision to return.

Last season, outside hitter and Elon University senior Leah Daniel became the first Elon player to win CAA Player of the Year in the program's Division I history. A prolific offensive player, Daniel recorded 177 kills in just 10 matches during the team's spring campaign to lead the entire CAA.

“

IT'S DEFINITELY GOING TO BE WEIRD BEING THE VETERAN SETTER NOW BECAUSE EVER SINCE I CAME IN, IT HAS ALWAYS BEEN ME AND KODI, BUT I THINK I AM DEFINITELY MORE THAN CAPABLE OF STEPPING IN AND TAKING THAT ROLE.

HAYLIE CLARK
CO-CAPTAIN

"Leah is someone that works incredibly hard and she's going to continue to do that," Tendler said. "Her determination and confidence and experience is very helpful to the rest of the players on the team."

'Setting' the scene

Senior setter and co-captain Haylie Clark also returns to the team this season following a stellar junior campaign. Clark was second on the team last season with 183 assists and also ranked second on the team in kills with 87, a testament to her diverse skill set.

"Haylie is a very unique player in that she

sets and hits for us. We ask a lot from her," Tendler said. "This past season, she did a great job balancing that and being able to switch from one to the other and we hope that she continues that in her senior year here."

Tendler equated the setter position in volleyball with a quarterback in football because they call the plays and "have to be a coach on the court." Clark said the position involves a lot of quick thinking and precision.

"You have to analyze who's hitting well but you also need to analyze who the blockers are cheating too and how you're gonna get the blocker to cheat a different way," Clark said. "It's about playing strategically and finding the piece that fits the puzzle best."

While almost all of the Phoenix's key players from last season are back, there is one important exception - setter Kodi Garcia, who transferred to Stephen F. Austin to complete her fifth year of athletic eligibility.

While Clark no longer has her dynamic setting partner to work with, she believes she can carry the load at setter and fill Garcia's shoes.

"It's definitely going to be weird being the veteran setter now because ever since I came in, it has always been me and Kodi, but I think I am definitely more than capable of stepping in and taking that role," Clark said.

Return to a full schedule

The Phoenix currently have 26 regular season matches scheduled, including 16 CAA matches. The team's non-conference schedule includes three Atlantic Coast

strong in our first conference matches would really give us the confidence and show us that we can hang with these teams in the conference."

The Phoenix begin the season by participating in the Virginia Tech Invitational in Blacksburg, Virginia. The team will face Toledo and Lehigh on Friday, Aug. 27 before taking on Virginia Tech on Saturday, Aug. 28.

"I hope we get better each match and improve throughout the weekend and hopefully we'll play our best match against Virginia Tech on that Saturday," Tendler said.

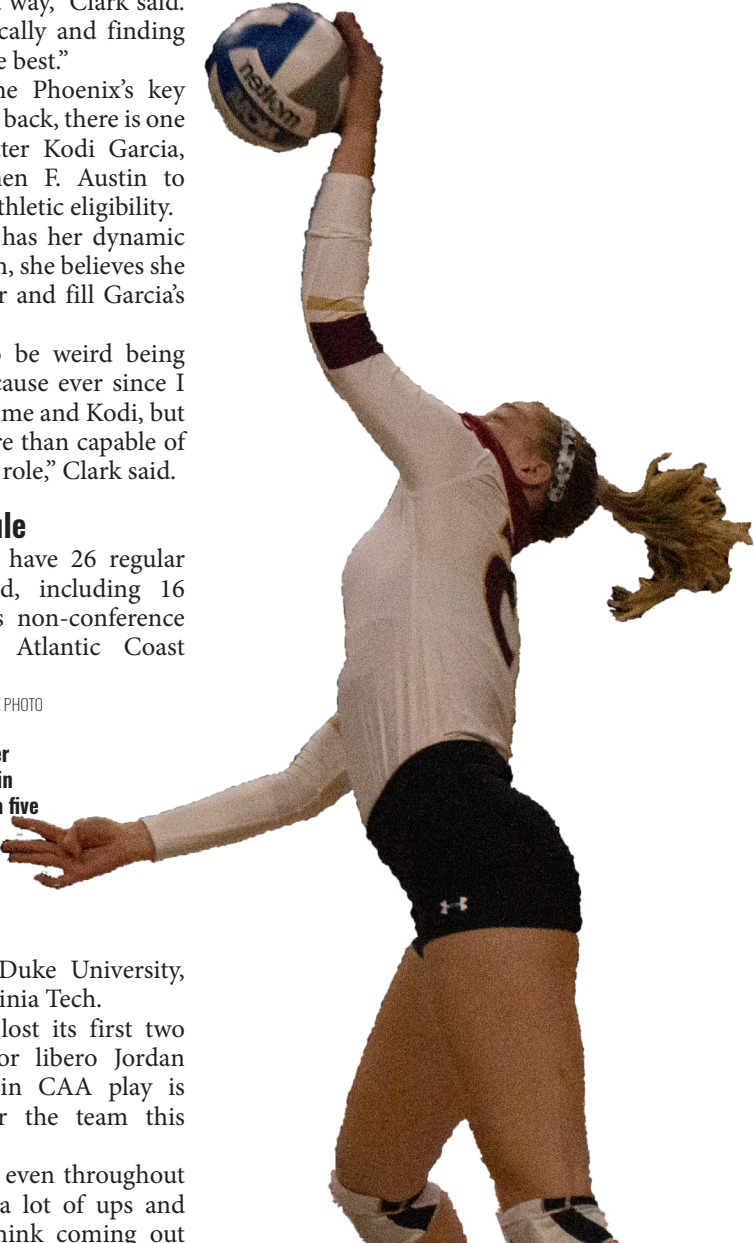
ENN FILE PHOTO

Elon University Freshman Gabi Croll sends back volleyball to her opponent on Saturday, March 6 in Schar Center. The Phoenix won a five set match against UNCW.

Conference opponents - Duke University, UNC-Chapel Hill and Virginia Tech.

Last season, the team lost its first two conference matches. Junior libero Jordan Gower said a fast start in CAA play is "extremely important" for the team this season.

"We really need to play even throughout the season and not have a lot of ups and downs," Gower said. "I think coming out



Women’s soccer aims for another successful season

The team is focused on having another winning season after their first CAA conference title in the spring

Caleigh Lawlor
Elon News Network | @caleighlawlor

With the 2021 Elon University women’s soccer season underway, players and coaches alike are preparing for another winning year. Last season was a historic one for the team. For the first time in program history, the Phoenix won the Colonial Athletic Association Tournament. The conference title gave the team an automatic bid to the NCAA Tournament, making it the first time they appeared in the NCAA bracket since 1999, when they were in the Big South Conference.

As they enter their seventh season in the CAA, the team finished tied for second in the conference’s preseason poll, as voted on by the head coaches of the league’s 12 member schools. The team is tied in the poll with the University of North Carolina Wilmington Seahawks and sits behind only the Hofstra Pride.

Head Coach Neil Payne said he has high hopes for the team, which returns 22 players from last season.

“Within the group, they’re starting to get a real appetite for success. They really bought into our blueprint last year,” said Payne. “This is by far the strongest the group has ever looked reporting for pre-season training.”

Looking ahead to the fall

This season, the Phoenix will face seven non-conference opponents before the conference opener on Sept. 26, where it will face the University of North Carolina Wilmington Seahawks. Elon will host the CAA tournament

in November, but only the top six teams in the regular season CAA standings will qualify. Senior midfielder Sarah Bevington said she has high hopes for the Phoenix and the tournament.

“It would be amazing if we made it there and got to make another statement on our campus. I think that’d be a cool thing for both the program and for the school,” Bevington said.

New and Returning Talent

The team graduated three seniors in 2021 — midfielders Kara Kimbrel, Olivia Kraebel and Caylin Meikrantz — but Payne said he thinks the team will still continue to make

strides with the introduction of the freshman class. The Phoenix is adding five freshmen to its roster this year: forward Lydia Totten, defender Olivia McManes, defender Kelly Degnan, midfielder Kennedy Jones and goalkeeper Anna Hamner.

“That’s what’s exciting is that we look very similar to last year, but we’ve added some players coming back from injury and on the freshmen class that are going to add to the quality of the overall group, so no massive changes other than this group will be now more experienced and better for this upcoming season,” Payne said.

In addition to the five freshmen, midfielder Hannah Doherty, a redshirt senior, and forward/midfielder Jessica Carrieri, are returning after

missing last season due to injuries. “It’s going to be nice to have those two options,” Payne said. “There’s going to be obviously certain games that will be suited to them more than others, but it definitely feels like a strong addition for us.”

The CAA announced their pre-season honors Aug. 12 and sophomore defender Katie Lowe was named to the Preseason All-CAA Team, while senior midfielder Carson Jones was an honorable mention for the team.

“Everyone this pre-season so far has been doing just a great job, super competitive atmosphere,” Bevington said. “I guess it’s also very nice that we actually get a preseason this year because last year was so unique,” Bevington said. “

Rising From the Ashes

Coming off of a season that was changed due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the team is hoping to follow suit the example of the school’s mascot and “rise from the ashes,” as games and the season go back to normal.

The CAA plans to hold a season that looks more similar to those pre-pandemic, with 17 games currently scheduled and non-conference matchups returning, as opposed to 2020’s 10 game, conference-only schedule.

“Hopefully we have a normal season, but I think just getting into a more normal routine and something you can expect, like Thursday games and Sunday games, and just have a more normal routine to kind of get in the swing of things,” Bevington said.

The team is taking the historic conference championship win during the pandemic as a learning opportunity to improve their game.

“I think it’s more of a motivator for us now. We know how great of a feeling it felt last year to kind of succeed and get to accomplish all those things,” Bevington said, “And it’s something that we want to experience again.”



The women’s soccer team huddles up before their match against UNGC on Aug. 22.

LUCAS CASEL | PHOTOGRAPHER

Bend, but don’t break: the Phoenix are ready to fly

Elon University’s men’s soccer team is ready for a break-through season

Luke Jackson
Elon News Network | @lukebjax

Last season was strange for every Elon University sports team due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and the Phoenix men’s soccer program had it no different. Their very first game of the season against Liberty was canceled and they only played eight games, less than half the number they play in a normal campaign.

The Phoenix struggled last season, losing five of eight matches. However, they finished the season on a high note with two decisive victories at home. The Phoenix shutout College of Charleston at Rudd Stadium before winning their final game of the season on a 99th minute golden goal against William & Mary.

Outside of the loss column, last season may have set the stage for a triumphant entry into 2021.

Experienced leadership

The Phoenix return redshirt junior captain Sam Bacon and junior midfielder Jeppe Jordoson, who are the team’s prominent leaders this season.

“Last year was tough for a lot of different reasons,” Bacon said. “As a captain, you’re not only responsible for your own performance but also how the team handles potentially being shut down for two weeks, or having to play without three key



JACOB KISAMORE | SPORTS DIRECTOR
Elon’s men soccer starters huddle up prior to their exhibition match against UNGC on Aug. 20.

guys.”

Bacon had a decorated finish to his redshirt sophomore season, earning the team’s Leadership Award as well as being recognized by the CAA via the Leadership and Sport Excellence Award. He also started seven of eight games, tied for the team lead.

Jordoson also had his best season yet, earning All-CAA Second Team honors to finish the season and appearing for the third-most minutes of any player on the Phoenix.

Jordoson steps into a new role this season as a captain, and though he has leadership experience from his Danish U19 team, SønderjyskE, he said knows Division I college soccer is a new challenge.

“It’s not only myself I’m playing and caring for — I’m stepping into a role where I have to be the

link between the managers and coaches all the way down to the players,” Jordoson said. “Sam and I are the step between the players and the coaches, so that’s definitely something I have to develop so I can step into this role.”

But it goes beyond just on-field leadership for Bacon, who believes last season prepared him to take on additional responsibilities off the field.

“I learned the importance of checking in on guys and making sure team morale is high. I learned about the importance of team

morale for how effectively we’re training and playing,” Bacon said.

Ones to watch

Reeves believes a number of players on the team are poised for a breakout season, and not least among them is junior forward Mason Duval. His outstanding summer season with the NC Fusion men’s U23 team of USL League 2 — joined by Elon teammates Bacon and Cam Pelle — sets him up for a strong campaign with the Phoenix.

“He’s set up to be the piece we’ve been needing,” Bacon said. “He can finish chances and get some goals for us.”

Reeves also highlighted veteran goalkeepers Pelle and Peter Wentzel, two of four keepers currently listed on Elon’s roster, as candidates for breakout seasons.

“Peter had a 2019 campaign where he saw a lot of time and Cam earned his way into the opportunity through the COVID season and performed very well in the spring,” Reeves said.

A new season

“Bend, but don’t break” is a phrase Reeves is keeping in mind as the team nears the beginning of the 2021 season. He is happy that the team is carrying over momentum from last season’s two closing victories, but he knows there is no time for the Phoenix to rest on those laurels.

“It’s a new season, a new team, and a new process,” said Reeves.

The team travels to Durham to open their regular season against Merrimack on Aug. 27.

Elon University club and intramural sports hope for normal return

Club sports and intramural programs expected to return to full capacity

Jacob Kisamore

Sports Director | @jacob_kisamore

When Elon University sent students home in March 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, club and intramural sports came to an abrupt halt. While Elon offered them during the 2020-21 academic year, social restrictions forced a reduction in offerings and protocols.

Now, 17 months after the pandemic began, there is hope that club and intramural sports are finally returning to normal.

“I’m excited to get both intramurals and club sports back to resembling a whole lot more of what they looked like before the pandemic than what they looked like last year,” Larry Mellinger, Elon University’s Director of Campus Recreation and Wellness, said.

Club sports

While some club sports teams played games in fall 2020, others were not so lucky. Club soccer was one of the sports that couldn’t practice due to health and safety restrictions.

This year, however, the club soccer team is ready to return to the pitch with competitive games. Senior and team president Sarah Mouton said that, as of now, there are no social or travel restrictions for the team and that they will look to schedule as many matches as possible.

“We’ve been given the go-ahead to pretty much plan the season like



COURTESY OF ELON WOMEN'S CLUB SOCCER

Elon’s women club soccer team will return to practice and attending games after a year of not playing due to COVID-19 restrictions.

it would be normally without any restrictions at all, but obviously we’re still thinking of ways to kind of accommodate those that are still worried about it and have their doubts,” Mouton said.

Last year, Elon’s Campus Recreation and Wellness staff divided club sports into classifications based on how much contact was inherent in the sport. High contact sports, such as ice hockey, rugby and soccer could not compete and had to either opt out of their seasons or could only practice and condition, while sports that require less contact, such as fencing, golf and equestrian, could travel and compete.

While she anticipates a normal year, Mouton understands that COVID-19 still poses a threat to the team’s season and will encourage

members to make smart choices regarding social interactions.

“We’re just hoping for the best and scheduling all the games that we can while we’re still allowed to,” Mouton said.

There are currently 25 club sports teams registered to compete during the 2021-22 academic year, ranging from traditional sports, such as soccer, basketball and baseball, to more niche sports, such as equestrian, climbing and eSports.

Intramural sports

Due to COVID-19, Mellinger said he and the Campus Recreation and Wellness staff made significant adjustments to operate intramural sports during the 2020-2021 academic year.

“We had to change everything we do in a normal year,” Mellinger

said. “The biggest challenge was trying to balance fun and community and belonging with safety.”

For the fall semester, Elon’s Campus Recreation and Wellness department reduced intramural offerings to outdoor activities with little contact, such as cornhole and sand volleyball, to prevent the spread of the virus. They required all participants to wear masks while playing and reduced the number of students allowed to take part in competitions.

With social restrictions lessening during the spring semester, Elon Campus Recreation and Wellness began offering intramural sports in indoor spaces and also raised the limits on participants for outdoor activities.

“We focus on participation, creating a sense of community and

just bringing folks together in a laid back environment that still allows them to complete or compete, play, or learn a sport,” Mellinger said. “We started to reopen our indoor facilities because the primary outcome for us was to bring people together and we knew that we had to do something.”

This year, more traditional offerings are returning, with flag football, floor hockey and indoor volleyball currently listed on the fall intramural schedule. The only health restriction currently in place for intramural sports is that unvaccinated students must wear masks when they play.

“As it stands now, intramurals will be going largely back to what they looked like,” Mellinger said.

Staying flexible

While both club and intramural sports will in large part return to normal this fall, Mellinger said the campus recreation and wellness staff must be “nimble and flexible” to adapt to any safety policy changes from the CDC or the school.

“Obviously, campus recreation and wellness policies have to fall within campus policies,” Mellinger said. “We’re also paying close attention to news coming out from the CDC and will adjust accordingly.”

For Mellinger, the return to normalcy in both club and intramural sports is long overdue. He said he looks forward to seeing competitions and activities return to full capacity.

“I’m excited to walk out onto our fields on a weekend and see us hosting a match or a tournament and seeing our students doing what they are so passionate about,” Mellinger said.

Elon University dance team claims NDA Gold Bid

The team placed first in the Division I Game Day routine to receive a bid for the NDA Nationals competition

Jacob Kisamore

Sports Director | @jacob_kisamore

Elon University senior dance team member Shannon Treacy’s hands were numb as she awaited the results of the National Dance Association Camp team dance competition in Myrtle Beach, South Carolina. The members of Elon’s dance team all anxiously held hands as their fate hung in the balance.

As the announcer read out the results, Treacy and her teammates broke into elation upon learning Elon had placed first in the Game Day routine competition.

“As soon as they started saying Elon and you could hear the first syllable, we knew it was us,” Treacy said. “We just burst into pure excitement, jumping up and down, hugging whoever was next to us.”

By coming in first place in the game day competition, Elon’s dance team earned a Gold Bid to compete in next April’s NDA Nationals competition in Daytona Beach, Florida. This is the program’s first ever gold bid, which will provide many perks to help the team with its trip, including receiving five free hotel rooms, a reduced registration fee per person and first priority on hotel assignment.

“It really gives our team a lot more opportunities and a lot less stress when we’re preparing because the last thing we want to be worrying about is funds when we’re working so hard on our dances,” junior dance team member Devyn Battaglia said.

Before the team walked onto the floor for the final round of the competition, the team huddled up backstage to get in a winning mindset. Senior and captain Gabby Clancy wanted to make sure her teammates were focused and ready to perform at their best.

“We knew we were doing it for the person next to us, ourselves and our coach too. This is the time to make everything that we’ve worked for worth it,” Clancy said. “It was a really special feeling to see everyone excited to go on stage and dance for one another and dance for themselves.”

The team choreographed its dance to accompany Elon’s fight song, and though they made it look effortless on the dance floor, weeks of hard work went into perfecting the routine, which makes their performance taste even sweeter.

“

I THINK THE
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POTENTIAL IS AT AN
ALL-TIME HIGH.

GABBY CLANCY
SENIOR CAPTAIN

“The feeling that you get when you know you put in all these hours, blood, sweat and tears and get that reward and just saying to each other that all those long practices weren’t for nothing, it’s just an unreal feeling,” Clancy said.

Elon competed against a number of prominent schools, including North Carolina State University, Clemson University and The University of South Carolina, the defending



COURTESY OF ELON DANCE TEAM

The Elon University dance team also scored second place in the Division I Team Dance.

NDA national champions.

For Clancy, defeating two dance teams from Atlantic Coast Conference schools, who have larger rosters and more resources, is a statement that Elon’s dance team can compete with anyone in the country.

“We are a small school and we don’t come from a school that has 40 girls on their dance team and has these huge recruiting classes coming in,” Clancy said. “To be able to compete with them and place that high really showcases the hard work we put in that a lot of people don’t see on the inside.”

While the initial celebration following the event was immense, winning the gold bid did not fully sink in for Treacy until the team’s car ride back to Elon.

“I turned around in the van and I was like, ‘Do you guys realize what actually happened? Like we just won the first gold bid for Elon.’ It’s just so hard to grasp and it’s so surreal and I couldn’t be more proud,” Treacy said.

While Nationals will not begin until April,

members of the dance team are already looking forward to the event and for the chance to represent Elon University on a national stage.

“I think the motivation and drive we have to put in the work in order to perform at our highest potential is at an all-time high,” Clancy said. “This team has so much talent within them that we can go far.”

The team will begin performing at athletic events on Sept. 4, starting with Elon’s home football game versus Wofford, but will also spend time throughout the fall preparing for Nationals.

Junior Lucy Allen is looking forward to the upcoming season and expects the team to perform well throughout.

“Coming out of NDA Camp, I feel really motivated and I feel like our team is going to have a really strong presence on campus,” Allen said. “This year, our team has some of the strongest people and dancers I’ve ever met, all dancing together.”

WHAT CAN WE EXPECT IN 2021-22 ATHLETICS?

Deputy Director of Athletics Mike Ward answers questions about what the upcoming year will look like for athletics

Caitlin Rundle | Elon News Network | @caitlinr_21

THE 2020-2021 SEASON WAS an unprecedented one for Elon Athletics. Due to COVID-19, schedules were moved and shortened, capacity limits were established for fans and games were canceled on short notice due to outbreaks of the virus across the country.

With the Delta variant of COVID-19 spiking around the country, there are still health and safety concerns for Elon Athletics to manage this year. Mike Ward is Elon University's deputy director of athletics and also serves as the athletic representative on Elon University's Ready and Resilient

Committee.

Elon News Network spoke with Ward about the upcoming year for Elon Athletics and how the program will manage fans and events during the ongoing pandemic.

The interview has been edited for clarity.

Q: If rules and expectations were to stay exactly the same as they are right now, what can we expect to see changed within athletics to adjust back to what hopefully looks a little more normal?

A: It will look and feel closer to the 2019 season. We're competing full schedules in all of our sports, and that's exciting. Last year, we had a condensed schedule with all of our teams competing in the spring, and while it was fun, it was also very hectic. Last year when we were in August, we were still trying to figure out what our plan was for the school year. This year, we are in a healthier spot, and our programs have great vaccination levels, and we're better able to practice safely.

Q: What percentage of Elon athletics is vaccinated at this point, including athletes, coaches, training staff and all other staff?

A: I expect athletics to be 95% or above. They've shown great leadership, they know it impacts their ability to do something they dearly love and they want to have a full and complete season.

Q: Have international athletes had the chance to get vaccinated?

A: There's an opportunity for them to receive the vaccine as soon as they can get it on their arrival. I know we've had some student athletes who've been unable to get it in their home countries, but arrangements have been made for them to get it once they get here.

Q: Will fans need to show proof of vaccination to enter Elon sporting events and will there be a mask requirement to get into indoor sport venues?

A: We are not planning on requiring proof of vaccination to enter any of our buildings; however, we are expecting fans to follow whatever the state guidelines are based on their personal circumstances.

Q: Fans were not allowed to attend indoor sports last year. Will fans be allowed at indoor events to start the year?

A: From a fan perspective, I also think 2021-22 athletic seasons will look and feel a little more traditional and normal in nature, normal plus if you will. There will be normal game activities, the plus in our events will be us reacting to what masking rules are for both indoors and outdoors, and a lot of that changes day to day and week to week.

Q: Limited numbers of fans were allowed at outdoor events last year with certain restrictions. Are there restrictions on capacity for this year?

A: This year, we do not have a capacity cap, and we have a pretty good idea of numerically what our attendance will be.

Q: Is the Delta variant of COVID-19 a concern for athletics at this point? Is this something that Elon athletics is keeping an eye on?

A: All of the variants that have emerged or are likely to, we are watching that closely. While we're hopeful to compete in the full schedules this year, we also know it's a possibility that you could lose games sporadically if the variant were to rear its head within our team or someone else's team. We are lucky at Elon University in that we are a highly vaccinated population, and then within athletics, we are also highly vaccinated. We are also aware that the teams we're competing against may have different rules or requirements than Elon, so we will continue to be cautious. The data last year suggests there was very little transmission during sport. That can obviously change with different variants; however, we still believe sport can be conducted safely.

Q: Last year, a big topic was how the mental health of everyone was affected by COVID-19 and with athletes



Mike Ward, Deputy Director of Athletics.

COURTESY OF ELON UNIVERSITY

specifically, competing in sports is a huge part of their college experience. Will there be continued support mentally for athletes who are maybe still getting over what they went through last year?

A: There was a great sense of mourning for student athletes who didn't get to complete their career on the court or on the field, no different than students who didn't get to complete their college career and walk across the stage. We want to be very mindful of balance in life, learning to accept the things we can control, and really having deliberate conversations with our student athletes about health and wellness. We have athletic trainers who work with all of our teams, and then we have a really strong relationship with the campus counseling center. I think we have a great system in place to react to the needs of our student athletes, but I also know that's something we look to improve upon every single year. We've watched what happened this summer with Simone Biles. I think it's a lot easier to have conversations when you see public figures address mental health and wellness very openly. What we have to do is be ready to receive those conversations, engage with our student athletes and walk a path together.

Q: Do you think getting students to attend athletic events will be a challenge this year?

A: When you think about it, 50% of our students now on campus have not been to an Elon football game. What we're counting on is our spirit squads and our upper class students to really take the lead and show the first and second year students what a football game day is supposed to look like, what a basketball game day is supposed to look like. I know we're working with Phoenix Phanatics, our marketing staff is talking with them, but how do you change everything you didn't like to make it as exciting as you ever wanted it to be? These students at Elon's campus have the opportunity to really set the tone for what game day can be and how it can be a vibrant part of a student's experience.

From the Leader: Elon News Network's Sports Director



NYAH PHENGSIITHY | MANAGING EDITOR

Jacob Kisamore, Elon News Network Sports Director.

Jacob Kisamore
Sports Director | @jacob_kisamore

At this time last year, there was a lot of uncertainty about sports at Elon University. Varsity athletic teams were on pause, while club and intramural sports were in limbo. Yet, student athletes and Elon staff members persevered and played through a pandemic, a truly remarkable feat.

Even in unprecedented circumstances, last year showed us all the undeniable power of sports, with Elon fans and students coming together to support the Phoenix's teams and student athletes. We saw watch parties for Elon athletic events, energetic student sections at various games and our dedicated staff at Elon News Network covering athletics despite the unusual year. In a time when socializing is difficult, sports serve as a healing mechanism for so many Elon students and will continue to do so this year. They create a routine in a world where so little is normal anymore.

This past year has also shown us that the power of sports extends beyond the field. We have seen student athletes use their platform to create conversations about social change, mental health and name, image and likeness. We know that there is much more to covering sports than just wins and losses, and we hope to dive deep to better comprehend the sports world beyond the box scores.

This special edition of The Pendulum will introduce you to some amazing student athletes, all of whom we are excited to report on throughout this year. These athletes have spent the last year competing in some of the most difficult conditions imaginable. They represent our university in an incredible manner and deserve our attention.

I am proud to work with a staff at Elon News Network and together we will work to cover athletics whenever and however we can. Please contact me at jkisamore@elon.edu if you have any ideas, questions or comments. We are honored to serve the athletic community and tell your stories.

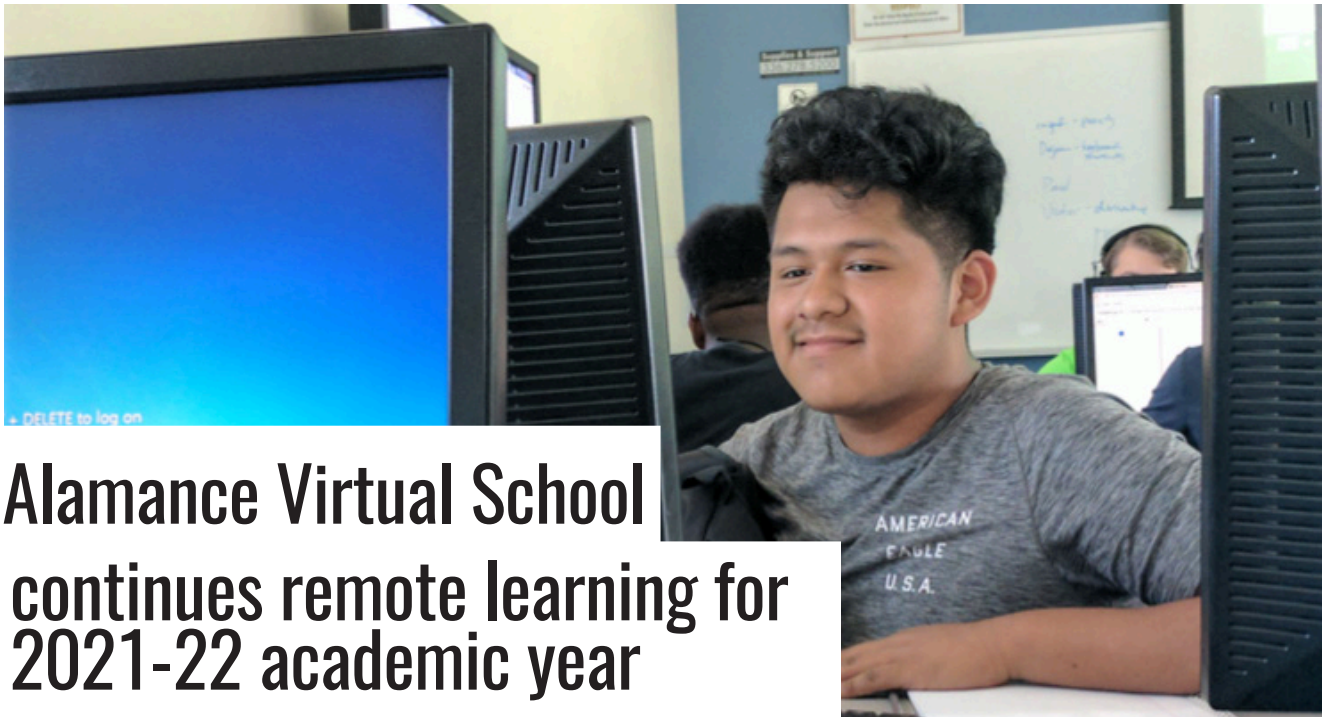
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THE PENDULUM



COURTESY OF JOHN PICKETT

Alamance Virtual School continues remote learning for 2021-22 academic year

ABSS students had the opportunity before the school year began to commit to either in-person or online learning.

With both in-person and virtual learning spaces offered in ABSS, accessing resources comes into play with the digital divide

Nyah Phengsitthy | Managing Editor | @nyahphengsitthy

WHILE MANY STUDENTS IN the Alamance-Burlington School System entered classrooms for the first time after almost two years of remote learning on Monday, Aug. 23, some opened their laptops from home to begin the new school year. Alamance Virtual School will join ABSS this year as a new

learning space for students who applied for the virtual school option. The school system's response to the pandemic offered a perspective to both an in-person and online option for K-12 students this year. "We recognize that not every student is as successful as they can be in a virtual environment,

but for those students who thrive in it, we want to give them that opportunity," Board of Education Chair Allison Gant said. "Obviously the pandemic has provided an insight to that need."

See **ABSS** | pg. 5A

Elon University trustee, Medallion recipient dies unexpectedly



COURTESY OF JEANNE ROBERTSON

Humorist and speaker Jeanne Robertson, supporter of Elon University athletics, died Aug. 21 at the age of 77

Kyra O'Connor
Executive Director | @ko_reports

Jeanne Robertson, Elon University Board of Trustees member and longtime supporter of Elon University athletics, died unexpectedly on Aug. 21 at the age of 77.

A Graham native, Robertson was named Miss North Carolina 1963, where she began speaking as part of the title. While she originally viewed speaking as a way to make some extra money, she continued her degree at Auburn University and eventually became a full-time professional speaker in 1976.

Since her debut as a full-time speaker, Robertson wrote four books, spoke at the White House and was president of the National Speakers Association. In 1989, Robertson became the first woman to receive the association's most cherished honor, the Cavett Award, given annually to a member "whose accomplishments, integrity and reputation are a credit to NSA and the speaking profession."

Robertson was elected to the Elon University Board of Trustees in 2003. Since her appointment, she and her husband, Jerry Robertson or "Left Brain" as he was known to her fans, made gifts to fund renovations to Alumni Gymnasium in 2010, the track and field complex that is named in their honor and supported the development of the Schar Center. Jerry Robertson died in June at the age of 83.

See **ROBERTSON** | pg. 5A

Colorado water shortage is a first for the environment, but not the last

Temperatures records in the US and globally, concern water insecurity in Southwest, Midwest and South

Kyra O'Connor
Executive Director | @ko_reports

As news broke that the United States government declared its first water shortage on the Colorado River, Drew Ball felt frustrated, disheartened and sad — but not surprised.

"We've known that they were in a precarious situation and climate change has really added to that," Ball said. "It's something we've known could happen for a while."

Ball serves as the state director of Environment North Carolina, an organization that researches environmental challenges and advocates for a "greener, healthier North Carolina." While the Colorado River is almost 1,900 miles away from Environment North Carolina's headquarters in Raleigh, Ball said what is happening in the Southwest will make its way through the country, impacting water insecurity in North Carolina and other Southern states.

"Clean water is so, so precious," Ball said. "I don't think enough folks recognize how important clean water is now, but



LUIS SINCO/LOS ANGELES TIMES/TNS

Water levels at Lake Mead hit their lowest point in history amid an ongoing megadrought, creating uncertainty about the water supply for millions in the Western U.S.

how important it is going to be in the future."

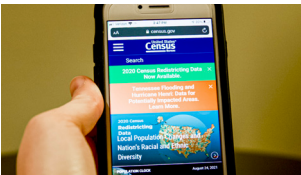
What's happening in the Southwest The federal government declared the first water shortage on the Colorado river on Aug. 16, announcing mandatory water cutbacks next year. The declaration by the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation was triggered by the decline of Lake Mead, a reservoir near Las Vegas which stores freshwater used by Arizona, Nevada, California and Mexico.

The reservoir dropped to its lowest levels since the Hoover Dam was built in the 1930s, standing at 35% capacity

currently. The first shortage declaration shows the severity of the drought and impact of climate change on the river, according to federal water managers. The river provides water for nearly 40 million people.

"It's no coincidence that the first time that Colorado is experiencing a drought at this level, at the same time we've had the highest global temperature for July," Ball said. "It links up, it's scary, it's undeniable."

See **WATER** | pg. 6A



NEWS • PAGE 4A

Census data shows growth in Alamance County



LIFESTYLE • PAGE 7A

Food columnist visits DaVinci's restaurant



SPORTS • PAGE 8A

Burlington Sock Puppets complete debut season

THE PENDULUM

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

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Nyah Phengsitthy and Ted Thomas contributed to the design of this edition. Nyah Phengsitthy, Mackenzie Wilkes, Olivia Romano, Ellis Chandler and Miranda Ferrante contributed to the copy editing of this edition.

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

GAMES

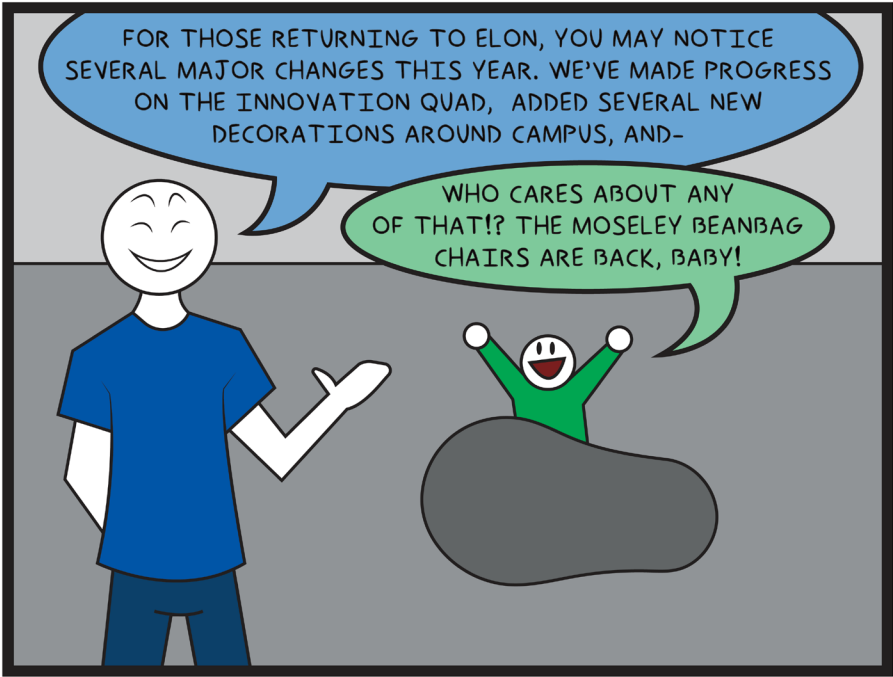
How to Play: Guess the missing word in the five clues, then find them in the word search below. Words can be found backwards, diagonal, etc.

1. Alamance County’s total _____ has increased by 13.4% between 2010 and 2020. *See Page 1 for answer.*
2. Drew Ball serves as the state director of _____ North Carolina. *See Page 1 for answer.*
3. _____ new businesses joined the growing community of downtown Gibsonville. *See Page 6 for answer.*
4. The new Little Library can be found at _____ Slade Park. *See Page 7 for answer.*
5. Anderson _____ is the general manager of the Burlington Sock Puppets. *See Page 8 for answer.*



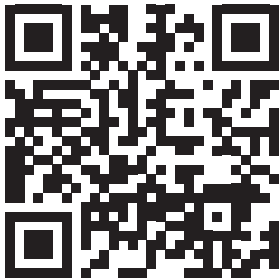
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Orientation Leaders line up to hand incoming freshmen their acorns.



SOPHIE ROSENTHAL | CHIEF COPY EDITOR



LUCAS CASEL | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Tiffany Morris, inaugural chair of Elon's Department of Nursing, addresses the program's inaugural cohort at the Nursing Student Social on Aug. 23. The cohort is comprised of nearly 50 students.



LUCAS CASEL | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Redshirt sophomore wide receiver Jordan Bonner runs with the ball after making a catch during a football scrimmage on Aug. 21.



JOSEPH NAVIN | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Jon Dooley welcomes the class of 2025 to Elon's campus at New Student Convocation Under the Oaks on Aug. 21.



LUCAS CASEL | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Junior forward Molly Mahoney dribbles the ball down the field in Elon's women's soccer game against UNCG on Aug. 22. The Phoenix lost to the Spartans 1-0.

Redistricting data reveals population shifts for Alamance County

Redistricting data released points to impacts in Alamance County sales tax revenue and future development of the town of Elon

Graysen Shirley
Politics Editor | @graysenshirley

In the coming months, legislators in the North Carolina General Assembly will use redistricting data from the 2020 Census to redraw state congressional districts, state senate districts and state house districts. The redistricting data for North Carolina, including for Alamance County, was released by the U.S. Census Bureau on Aug. 12.

The first release of data from the 2020 Census by the U.S. Census Bureau occurred on April 26. The redistricting data from the 2020 Census was released this past month. The delay in the release of the 2020 Census data is due to the ongoing pandemic.

Takeaways from redistricting data

A major takeaway from the release of the redistricting data is rapid growth in unexpected areas, including Alamance County. The county's total population increased 13.4% between 2010 and 2020, according to data released by the U.S. Census Bureau.

Rich Roedner, town of Elon manager, said the population growth in the county shows that Alamance County is a place individuals are gravitating toward living.

"That's good news for the county,

that the county remains an attractive place for people to relocate," Roedner said. "Likewise, the numbers for Elon, they are up at this point. I would say that demonstrates the desirability of Elon as well."

Another takeaway from the redistricting data is the growth of minority populations, while the percentage of white residents has seen a decline for the first time on record since 1790. In Alamance County, minority populations also saw a surge since the 2010 Census. For example, the Black population in Alamance County grew to 20.9% in 2020 and the Hispanic population in Alamance County grew to 13.1% in 2020.

Roedner said this did not come as a surprise to him, as he expects the town of Elon to follow this trend gradually over the coming years.

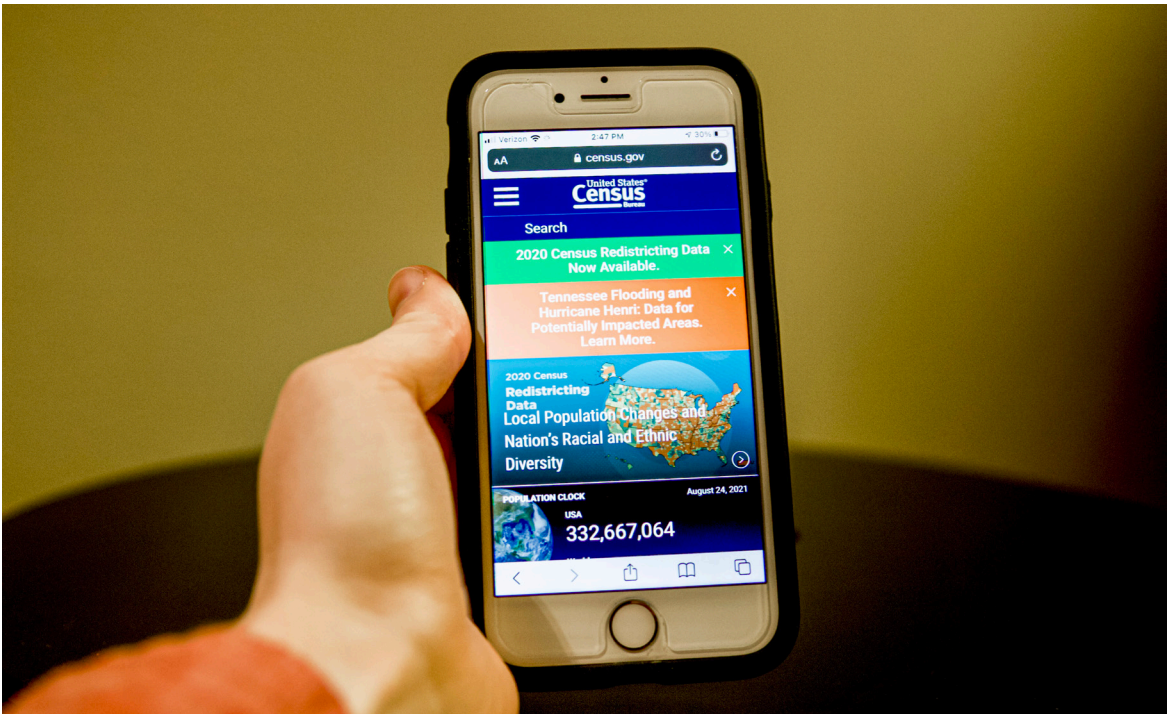
"There wasn't a tremendous shift, so I think it's for us a change or an impact over time as opposed to any major shifts," Roedner said.

Although these population shifts were found from redistricting data released by the U.S. Census Bureau, Roedner said he doesn't expect the town of Elon to see a large impact from this data and with redistricting.

The town of Elon does not have specific districts. Rather, elections are held at large, meaning everyone in the town as a whole gets to vote for the candidates running in municipal offices, and there will be no district changes, according to Roedner.

What redistricting data means for Alamance County and town of Elon

Roedner said the data from the U.S. Census Bureau is used by the county to apportion sales tax revenue and for state allocations.



GRAYSEN SHIRLEY | POLITICS EDITOR

Redistricting data from the 2020 Census was released by the U.S. Census Bureau on Aug. 12.

Sales tax revenue is revenue collected by the county government through taxes levied on the sale of goods and services. Roedner explained the county government receives a certain amount of revenue, which is then distributed back to municipalities based on relative population sizes.

"For a community that is growing faster than the average within the county, they would stand to gain their share of increase of sales tax revenue," Roedner said. "For communities that's losing population compared to other towns in the county, they would lose sales tax revenue."

Roedner said the town of Elon is currently awaiting data from a state demographer to see if the town of Elon has experienced growth or

reduction in their population over the past few years. He noted the town should receive this data within the next week or two.

Looking to the town of Elon's future

The town of Elon is a "growing community," according to Roedner. He said through recent annexations from surrounding communities, like Gibsonville, the town of Elon has acquired additional acreage and land space which will provide additional growth to the town's population.

"We're looking at over the next couple of years about 250 new homes, which for a town of 12,000, for argument's sake, that's a significant boost in population over a short period of time," Roedner said.

Roedner said he hopes the trend in population growth in the town of Elon will present new opportunities for the town's government to help revitalize downtown. Current plans for land development of the town of Elon include having more commercial businesses, restaurants, offices and public spaces. The plans call for having a "higher density downtown rather than just continue to grow on the outskirts of town," according to Roedner.

"There is a real desire to grow downtown, have more services downtown, have more reasons for people to come downtown," Roedner said. "That's kind of been the development goal of the community for the last several years now based on our adopted plans."

CHEAT SHEET

The impacts of Taliban's takeover of Afghanistan

Explaining the Taliban's control of Afghanistan and its potential global impacts

William Wood
Elon News Network



Thomas Kerr

The Taliban, an Islamic extremist militant group based in Afghanistan, seized full control of the country on Aug. 15 following the

U.S. withdrawal of troops. The U.S. military invaded Afghanistan in 2001 as part of Operation Enduring Freedom following the 9/11 terrorist attacks, and occupied the country for almost 20 years. Former U.S. President Donald Trump negotiated with the Taliban in 2020 to withdraw U.S. troops from Afghanistan, a move President Joe Biden plans to complete by Aug. 31.

Thomas Kerr, instructor in political science and policy studies, discusses the global impacts of the Taliban's control of Afghanistan.

Q: What is happening in Afghanistan right now?

A: The United States has announced that it is withdrawing troops completely. The Afghan Taliban has swept in, and in a

very surprisingly short amount of time, been able to take control of in essence, the entire country. Right now, they are the government of Afghanistan. Like it or not, that's the reality of the situation.

Q: How has the Taliban been able to take over Afghanistan so quickly?

A: It was a failure of negotiation. In international relations, you never put timelines on diplomacy. You always want to put metrics on leaving. Another major aspect of it was the rapid corruption within Afghanistan. A lot of the Afghan local governments and a lot of their military hadn't been paid in nine months. The Taliban was, in essence, able to come in and say, 'Hey, we'll pay your salary if you pledge allegiance to us.' They've been paying salaries of people that haven't been getting salaries, and then they started at the local level, went up to the provincial [level], and then they took Kabul.

Q: How is this going to impact human rights in Afghanistan?

A: That is the big what if. A lot of Taliban spokesmen have said that the free press is still going to exist. They're going to be able to criticize the government outside of national interests. Not sure what those national interests are — that's pretty vague — but they are saying that they are dedicated

to an open press, to a certain extent. They are saying that women that hold positions now, both within the private sector and public sector, are going to be able to maintain their positions. That's very interesting. We'll see if that actually happens or not.

Afghanistan had been making progressive steps. There are elected members of the Afghan government that are women. As of right now, the Taliban are saying that they are able to maintain their elected positions, [and] that they will be able to be elected into positions of authority in the future. [It is] yet to be seen if that's going to be the reality. They also said that the escort requirement is no longer going to be [in place]. That's progress from 2001 where women can't go into public without a male escort, which is a big step. If it's actually going to play out that way again has yet to be seen.

Q: Where does funding come from?

A: They're having a big funding [increase]. The government of Afghanistan that was in place, up until the Taliban takeover, had about \$9 billion in foreign reserves, seven of that was held offshore. [The U.S.] immediately froze that, so right now they've only got about \$2 billion in the country to operate on. That doesn't go very far. Primarily, [the] Taliban's been getting a lot of donations from wealthy sympathizers in the Gulf region.

They're already talking with

the Chinese to sell some rare earth mineral mining rights. That could be a big boon to the Taliban for actual income from foreign reserves. Unfortunately, that would be in Chinese foreign reserves as opposed to American foreign reserves, which we have less control over. So that's primarily where they're getting in the capital right now.

Q: What has the U.S. response looked like so far?

A: A lot of backpedaling. A lot of scrambling to mitigate what is going on. Our foreign policy goals haven't been adversely affected yet, though this is still a very fluid situation. It's only been going on for about a little over two weeks now, but really we're just trying to get all U.S. personnel out of there, and our allies and other countries are doing the same."

Q: How have other countries reacted to the Taliban's takeover?

A: "Quite negatively. We invoked Article Five of the NATO Treaty, saying an attack on one is an attack on all. That's why a lot of our NATO allies went into Afghanistan with us. And part of that expectation is you go in together, you leave together. A unilateral U.S. withdrawal stabs our allies in the back. A lot of them had left. The U.K. hasn't had active operations in Afghanistan since 2014, but they

still did have personnel there. So just announcing a unilateral withdrawal was not a good foreign policy decision when it comes to our alliances."

Q: What could this mean for our foreign policy and diplomacy in the future?

A: "We're gonna have to expend some political capital to reassure our allies, to assure NATO members, that when the United States gets involved with a multilateral operation such as Afghanistan, that we're not going to take such action. The fact that we didn't consult with our NATO allies before making these announcements puts a black eye on the United States. We're gonna have to work to make sure that our allies are reassured that the U.S. will uphold its commitments and promises."

Q: Is there anything else you want people to know about what's happening?

A: "As soon as we signed the Doha Agreement [in 2020], the writing was on the wall that this was going to happen. That's when we formally stated that we were leaving Afghanistan and gave the timeline upon our departure. As soon as that agreement was signed, we knew this was going to happen, [but] we didn't know how fast it was going to happen. The surprising part is that they were able to do this in essentially ten days."

ABSS continues to bridge digital divide gap this year

ABSS | from cover

Alamance Virtual School

According to Gant, 486 K-12 students are currently enrolled in a fully online year after submitting an application demonstrating the need and commitment to be remote. Students must stick to their choice of learning, whether online or in-person, for the entire school year.

The idea of offering a virtual school was one ABSS had prior to the pandemic. Assistant Superintendent of Student Learning Angela Bost said planning for this year’s online learning was not as challenging as they thought it would be because the school system had been looking into online learning for years now.

“Opening a virtual school in Alamance County has always been something we’ve planned for in our strategic plan, our vision,” Bost said. “What we realized when we had to pivot so quickly to remote learning was that we were further along than we thought.”

Working to bridge the digital divide

ABSS provided each student with a Chromebook last year to access online assignments.Students with unreliable internet.Connections were also given hotspots to access connectivity with the school. Last year, they distributed over 3,500 hotspots and 17,000 Chromebooks to students. Moving forward this year with Alamance Virtual School, students are given Chromebooks again and virtual teachers are given Dell laptops.

In efforts of bridging the digital divide, the gap between those who

have internet and digital access and those who don’t, especially for students attending Alamance Virtual School, ABSS technology systems assisted families with their hotspots on a case-by-case basis this year in addition to providing Chromebooks. Bost said the pandemic allowed the school system to discover where connectivity issues were for students.

ABSS also made an effort to offer support beyond academic learning for virtual students. According to Bost, online students can access support systems like counseling services. Bost said while students chose to be online, accessing support online and in-person is always an option because some things can’t be addressed over the screen.

“There are things that students need beyond their academics that are critical and they’ll be able to access them,” Bost said.

As ABSS works to reach students across the county, public libraries in the area are making an effort to do the same. Director for Alamance County Public Libraries Susana Goldman worked with COVID-19 relief funds earlier this year to provide digital assistance not only to students, but to other Alamance County residents as well.

“We see a lot of students across all ages, whether it’s [Alamance Community College] students or ABSS, or the charter schools pretty regularly,” Goldman said. “The digital divide is nothing new for libraries. We’ve been dealing with this for 15 years as technology became available. We’ve been trying to bridge that gap for a long time.”

While students can access hotspots from their school in the



NYAH PHENGSIITHY | MANAGING EDITOR

Students who chose the virtual option this school year are offered Chrombooks and hotspots to complete their online learning.

area, the library offers them as well. According to Goldman, there are 20 total hotspots shared between the libraries and can be checked out for 28 days at a time. Goldman said that while the COVID-19 relief funds assisted in bridging the digital divide gap, libraries are still exploring other funds to offer additional resources such as broadband access and in-house library devices. A mobile library by Alamance County Libraries will also launch in September to reach areas where access to library services are low.

“We needed to change how we provide the service. The demand was more of coming to people, instead of people coming to us, especially when we start talking about our underserved communities,” Goldman said. “We’re able to meet the need now by going to places, by going to them.”

ABSS to Elon University

Elon Academy, an enrichment program offered at Elon University for ABSS high school students, also assists in making sure students are provided with the digital resources they need to succeed in their academics. According to Terry Tomasek, director of Elon Academy and associate professor of education, Elon Academy partners with Kramden Institute, a nonprofit that provides technology tools to bridge the digital divide, to make sure each student has access to a laptop.

John Pickett, Elon Academy associate director of scholar support, said the academy makes an effort to let their students know about affordable internet services.

“If you don’t have access to the internet or technology, then you are left behind,” Pickett said. “Right off the bat we are able to identify the families that need a computer...

Our students end up not having the digital divide or something that is not a negative impact on them.”

While Alamance County faces issues of internet access and broadband, the efforts of making sure that those who need digital access are increasing, especially in ABSS, libraries and at Elon University. The steps to creating connections this school year start with making sure everyone has access to resources.

“We’ve known for a long time that there’s a gap between everybody who has easy access to things and people who don’t,” Goldman said. “Creating connections is one of our vision statements, that’s what we’re all about. We want people to come to us. Technology is an area that we can help in, within our capacity and funding. It is an area that we can meet. We’ve done that because we know the community needs it.”

Robertson leaves legacy at Elon University

ROBERTSON | from cover

“We have lost one of Elon’s greatest friends,” said President Connie Ledoux Book. “Jeanne Robertson loved to tell the Elon story wherever she went, and she backed up her words with active participation at meetings, events and games; generous gifts to the university; and personal involvement with our students, who she often hosted at her home for team dinners. Jeanne was passionate about Elon, education and student success, and we will miss her deeply.”

Both Robertsons also received the university’s highest honor, the Elon Medallion, in 2017. President Emeritus Leo Lambert presented the award. Lambert met Jeanne and Jerry before he became president at Elon, when he was introduced to the Robertsons at a basketball game. After meeting Jeanne, Lambert would go on to work with her for nearly 13 years during her tenure as a trustee and his tenure as president.

“She was an active, engaged dynamic trustee, really loved Elon,” Lambert said. “And of course she was a nationally famous speaker, and one of the things she did is I think she mentioned Elon in just about every speech she gave.”

The Robertsons were recipients of the Southern Conference Distinguished Service Award in 2007, which recognized their contributions to Elon athletics. In addition to being mainstays at university sporting events, the couple has endowed multiple scholarships. Dave Blank, director of athletics, said Elon University is fortunate that the Robertsons chose to stay in Burlington.

“You couldn’t ask for two more dedicated and committed supporters of Elon Athletics than Jerry and Jeanne Robertson,” Blank said. “To lose them both this summer is just gut-wrenching. Through the years, they established deep connections with student-athletes, coaches, staff and fellow fans. With a one-

of-a-kind personality, Jeanne lifted up Elon Athletics, whether it was cheering in the stands or lending her support to our programs.”

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SHE WAS AN ACTIVE, ENGAGED DYNAMIC TRUSTEE, REALLY LOVED ELON. AND OF COURSE SHE WAS A NATIONALLY FAMOUS SPEAKER, AND ONE OF THE THINGS SHE DID IS I THINK SHE MENTIONED ELON IN JUST ABOUT EVERY SPEECH SHE GAVE.

LEO LAMBERT
PRESIDENT EMERITUS

Robertson also gave Elon University’s commencement address in 2005, in which she urged graduates to look for humor in their daily lives.

“She was 100% original and irreplaceable,” Lambert said. “They’ll just never be another person quite like her.”

Celebration of life details and an obituary will be posted on her Twitter page at a later date, according to a recent tweet.

“We are sure — Jeanne is now telling stories in heaven, all the angels are laughing, and Left Brain is in the back with a big smile,” a tweet from her account reads.

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Water concerns reach Southwest, Midwest and South



CAROLYN COLE/LOS ANGELES TIMES/TNS

The canals that used to bring water to the fields of Caywood Farms. In Arizona, 99 percent of the land is undergoing years-long drought that has only accelerated.

WATER | from cover

Adding to the strain brought on by the drought is population increase, one reason

water shortages can occur. The population of Arizona has also increased: In 2010, the US Census Bureau estimated Arizona's population to be 6,392,017 people. Now, the state has over 7,151,500 people.

Where's the water

The Earth's surface is over two-thirds water, but less than three percent of that water is freshwater. Freshwater is used for many purposes, from drinking water and laundry to agriculture, industrial needs, recreation and thermoelectricity.

Increasing global temperatures, decreased precipitation and increase in water demand all impact the amount of freshwater available. According to Earth's Future, a research article published by Advancing Earth and Space Science, nearly 204 watersheds in the United States could experience water shortages during the 21st century, some within the remainder of the year.

"Areas that are typically very lush are becoming barren and we can see it before our eyes and the data is telling us it's getting worse," Ball said.

The idea that climate change directly influences weather patterns is called global weirding, referring to the 'weird' extremes regions experience as a result of increasing global temperatures.

"The Midwest, the Southwest and the South really are going to be experiencing some pretty extreme global weirding as temperature increases," Ball said. "We have the risk of losing freshwater to encroaching sea level rise."

Water in North Carolina

North Carolina faces many of the same challenges as the Southwest — a growing population, higher temperatures — but also faces individual, state specific challenges. North Carolina had major drought conditions in 1998 through 2002, resulting in widespread record-low streamflow and ground-water levels in many areas. More than 200 municipalities throughout the state operated under some form of voluntary, mandatory or emergency water conservation.

"The United States government's reports have shown that places like Raleigh to the Piedmont region are going to get much hotter," Ball said. "Climate change compounds a lot of these things."

The hog industry, the impact of agriculture and PFAS, or polyfluoroalkyl substances, contamination also impact North Carolina. Pollution from emerging chemicals, specifically PFAS, impacts the Haw River and the residents of nearby Pittsboro, just 35 miles away from Elon's campus.

"There have been elevated levels found in Pittsboro, Chatham County and the Triad,"

Ball said. "What's really sad is we don't always fully understand where those are coming from."

What's next

When it comes to water conservation, there are some "common sense water conservation" techniques individuals can do. Watering lawns with water collected by rain barrels, at night to beat evaporation or for shorter periods of time, and using low-flow toilets and showerheads, are just some of Ball's suggestions.



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DREW BALL
STATE DIRECTOR OF
ENVIRONMENT NORTH
CAROLINA

But individual water conservation is not enough, Ball said.

"Individuals can't get there on our own. It can go a very long way if you do your part as a global citizen when you are thoughtful about how you use things like water," Ball said. "But at the end of the day, to protect everyone, sometimes we need laws in place that require that everybody play by the same rules ... to ensure that things like clean water are there for future generations."

Buildings constructed with low-flow, smart water technology from the beginning are the best way to put water conservation into infrastructure, Ball said, rather than replacing structures after the fact.

"We can do it, and we honestly have to do it," Ball said. "It's time for leaders to step up and make the tough decisions that they have to make to save the planet — to save us."



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Committee on Elon History and Memory addresses plans for 2021-22 academic year

Chair of the Committee on Elon History Evan Gatti leads conversation ahead of the fall semester, with more to come

Miranda Ferrante
Lifestyle Editor | @ferrantemiranda

Originally launched as the Commemoration Committee, the Committee on Elon History and Memory, as of fall 2021 is chaired by Evan Gatti, associate professor of art history said this new name is representative of the work they do.

“The committee has spent about two and a half years working on history and memory in particular, as it relates to anti-Black racism at Elon, and Elon’s history as it relates to how we have remembered or not remembered,” Gatti said.

In 2020, a report was released with 10 sections of the university’s history and 13 recommendations for moving forward. Gatti said once that report was completed and presented to the community, the new committee was seated and began work last year.

Elon University’s committee is just one of many at colleges and universities across the nation who have worked to revisit the stories institutions tell about themselves. Gatti said this work is continuous and there are ways for faculty, staff and students to become involved with the committee.

The Committee on Elon History and Memory met to discuss how to move



The Committee on Elon History and Memory works to revisit the stories institutions tell about themselves.

forward with recommendations from 2020 and planned for the 2021-22 academic year on Aug. 18.

The committee is not one Elon invented, rather it is based off of work that other campuses have done, according to Gatti. The meeting included an introduction of the committee as well as discussions surrounding what was left on the table from the spring and what still needs to be done.

The meeting also included previous chair of the committee Charles Irons, along with Randy Williams, vice president and associate provost for inclusive excellence, Bob Frigo, assistant dean of campus life and director of the Kernodle Center for civic life Buffie Longmire-Avita, director of the Black Lumen Project and associate professor of psychology and Shaunta

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THE COMMITTEE HAS SPENT ABOUT TWO AND A HALF YEARS WORKING ON HISTORY AND MEMORY IN PARTICULAR, AS IT RELATES TO ANTI-BLACK RACISM AT ELON, AND ELON’S HISTORY AS IT RELATES TO HOW WE HAVE REMEMBERED OR NOT REMEMBERED.

EVAN GATTI
ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR OF ART HISTORY

Alvarez, digital collections and systems librarian and assistant librarian.

Gatti has worked closely with Irons this summer to ensure continuity. Gatti also met with Longmire-Avital, who is the director of the Black Lumen Project — one of the recommendations of the history and memory report — archivists and other colleagues to discuss what has been done and what still needs to be done.

Conversations are set to continue throughout the course of the academic year. The committee does not have a fixed date for their next meeting, but will be in communication to find a time that works best for everyone and their schedules.

ELON EATS

Da Vinci’s Table’s subs makes everyone want a bite



Eddie Keefe
Freshman

My name is Eddie Keefe and I will be the food columnist for The Pendulum this academic year. I’m a freshman and a part of the class of 2025.

Ever since I was a kid, I’ve loved food and exploring the different cuisines in different cultures. I try to experience what a chef wants to make you feel when you have their meal. Food is one of the biggest things that can bring a community together, and I can’t wait to share my thoughts during my time at Elon.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, we got used to online ordering and purchasing takeout. During move-in, all I needed was a good meal to pick up with my family to get my energy back up.

When we were searching around town, Da Vinci’s Table caught our eye. My first impression when we pulled up to the restaurant was that it has a great outdoor seating with interesting music and fairy lights. The atmosphere had a welcoming ambiance for eating a meal.

I ordered the fried calamari and caesar salad, my dad got the chicken cacciatore and garden salad and my mom ordered the meatball sub.

When I received the box of fried calamari, it looked a little undercooked because of the sauce poured on top of it. I usually love crispy calamari, but this one was damp. There still were a few crunchy pieces nonetheless, and it had a good enough flavor to it. As for my caesar salad, it was tasty and the cheese and dressing added texture to the meal. The croutons were also a highlight of the dish.

My dad described the chicken cacciatore as bland — both the chicken and the pasta. Although there was not much flavor to it, he was happy that everything was fully cooked. His garden salad was simple, but there was nothing unique about it.



Meatball sub from Da Vinci’s Table.

EDDIE KEEFE | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

My mom’s meatball sub looked phenomenal — it made someone like me that doesn’t like meatballs want to try one. It was toasty, filled with melted cheese and onions, which is different from a usual meatball sub, but it added a great deal of flavor. Out of all of the dishes we tried, the meatball sub was the best one.

I would rate Da Vinci’s Table a 7/10

because of its welcoming ambiance and decent meals. The food wasn’t anything special, but it wasn’t boring either. If I were to return to this restaurant, I would order something else off the menu or even try the meatball sub.

If you have any questions or want to suggest a place for me to review, please reach out to me at ekeefe5@elon.edu.

Burlington Sock Puppets *complete debut season*

Sock Puppets general manager calls first year of rebrand “wildly successful”

Jacob Kisamore
Sports Director | @jacob_kisamore

When Burlington’s baseball franchise announced it was rebranding as the Sock Puppets, one prominent figure in the organization did not love the new name — its general manager.

“I didn’t even like it at first,” Anderson Rathbun, general manager of the Sock Puppets, said. “And now I’m over here parading about how awesome it is. I’ve kind of went down the same path a lot of the locals did in the sense that you’re taken aback by it, but as you see it and work with it more and more, it’s just impossible not to love.”

Just seven months ago, the franchise was without an identity. Now, as the organization closes the book on its inaugural season, the revamped team has found a new direction and is becoming both a local and national phenomenon.

“The feedback we’ve gotten from everybody, the excitement people still have now, it’s just been a really cool season to come full circle from last year to here,” Rathbun said.

A new beginning

On February 1, Burlington’s baseball franchise announced it was rebranding as the Burlington Sock Puppets, a tribute to the city’s long history in textile.

Previously known as the Burlington Royals, the team was an affiliate of the Kansas City Royals of Major League Baseball from 2007 through 2020. However, in September 2020, the MLB and USA Baseball announced that the Royals’ league – the Appalachian League – would become a summer collegiate baseball league and would lose its affiliation with Minor League Baseball.

Rathbun is in his second season as the

organization’s general manager and helped oversee the franchise’s restructuring and rebranding. He said the organization wanted to create a “community brand” and thus conducted extensive research on the Burlington area and talked with key community stakeholders to help determine a new name.

After a six-month search and a thorough review of over 1,200 names, the organization chose the Sock Puppets as the new name.

“We wanted it to be our own brand,” Rathbun said. “We wanted it to be different and we wanted it to have a local time. Wetie.” Rathbun said. “We crushed all three of those.”

Rathbun said the organization expected the reaction to the Sock Puppets name to be “polarizing” among locals. However, the name has caught on with the local community, much to the delight of Rathbun.

“Whereas the industry critics gave widely positive reviews, locals were split at first,” Rathbun said. “The community has definitely warmed up and come around to it. You’re starting to see the success and the positivity of the brand now a year later.”

Sock Puppets fan David Gaddy has lived in Burlington since 2011 and said the city’s baseball franchise has long served as a “hidden gem.” He loves the team’s new name and brand, and believes it is perfect for a minor league franchise.

“When they told us that they were rebranding and they were becoming the Sock Puppets, I was like, ‘What better name could they have picked out?’ I think that was one of the coolest moves that they made,” Gaddy said.

Another significant change for the organization was the Appalachian League’s transition to a collegiate summer baseball league. USA Baseball assigned first- or second-year college players to all Appalachian League teams prior to the season.

The new-look Appalachian League enjoyed great success this season, with MLB Network televising its July All-Star Game, the first time the league’s showcase event has ever aired on the station. Rathbun liked how the league promoted itself this year and believes it will continue to grow and improve in coming seasons.

“From many facets, I think the league is exactly what we want it to be. And I think this was a great year, one great stepping stone to build off for year two,” Rathbun said.

Dealing with the pandemic

In May, the Sock Puppets organization was preparing to have just 25% capacity crowds at their home games due to national COVID-19 guidelines. However, four days before the team’s opening game in June, they learned they could increase capacity to 100%.

The team developed a COVID-19 readiness plan to keep fans and employees safe at Burlington Athletic Stadium. The team set up hand sanitizing stations throughout the venue and adjusted game many events during games to comply with health protocols. Masks

and proof of vaccination were not necessary for fans or team employees.

“Our biggest goal is, regardless of if you’re vaccinated or not vaccinated, if you still wear a mask or choose not to wear a mask, you can still feel safe when you come to the ballpark,” Rathbun said. “We’ve really tried to find ways to attract those people that might not have felt safe in a huge crowd.”

Rathbun said he is thankful the team was able to have fans at games this season, as without revenue from spectators, he knows the team cannot survive.

“If you take out the ability to have mass gatherings, there goes our business model,” Rathbun said. “It was very tough; we didn’t know what to expect at the beginning of the season. But, at the end of the day, when things loosened up, we kind of went full bore.”

The organization is carefully watching COVID-19 numbers in Burlington and

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I DIDN’T EVEN LIKE [THE NAME] AT FIRST. AND NOW I’M OVER HERE PARADING ABOUT HOW AWESOME IT IS.

ANDERSON RATHBUN
GENERAL MANAGER OF THE SOCK PUPPETS

surrounding communities and will adjust health and safety protocols for next season as necessary.

“We are actively staying on top of guidelines from both the state and from the federal government and from our local authorities, but as far as the planning side of things goes, it’s just very, very difficult to plan months ahead for something that’ll change every other week,” Rathbun said. “We’re going to make sure that we put in procedures that adhere to whatever is deemed safest for our fans and our community at large.”

Promoting the team

Fans are the soul of the Sock Puppets organization, and nothing encapsulates that more than what Rathbun described as his favorite moment of the team’s 2021 season.

Following a 5-3 Sock Puppets victory over the Danville Otterbots on July 4, the team put on a firework show for the nearly 4,000 fans in attendance. As the droves of fans left the stadium after the display, many took time to thank the team’s employees for the fireworks, which Rathbun deemed as an ironic gesture.

“They’re leaving the gates thanking us for the night when, in turn, we were extremely thankful that they chose to spend their holiday with us,” Rathbun said. “Seeing everybody smiling, seeing everybody come together and just having fun was really something special this season.”

Creating a memorable fan experience is crucial for minor league baseball organizations and the Sock Puppets worked hard to deliver family activities and entertaining attractions at their home games.

“When you’re going to a game, it’s not just a baseball game, it really is a show,” Rathbun said.

For their efforts this season, the Appalachian League awarded the Sock Puppets with the Promotional Award, which is given out each year to the franchise with the most outstanding promotional work.

The team hosted promotional nights throughout the season to increase fan engagement. On July 16, the team hosted “Pride Night with the Sock Puppets” along with AlamancePride, a nonprofit organization

that serves the LGBTQIA communities in Alamance County. The team raised money for AlamancePride’s scholarship fund and gave the first 300 fans free pride-themed t-shirts.

“We were extremely proud to host that event for the first time in Burlington baseball history,” Rathbun said. “I think we did a great job to be able to show the community that we’re going to make this place inclusive and welcoming to everybody from whatever walk of life.”

David Gaddy attended “Pride Night with the Sock Puppets” with a group from Storied Church in Mebane. He urged members of the church to attend and support the event.

“We jumped on it and we kind of encouraged people like, ‘Hey, support this.’ Like, this is super important because this is a pride night in the middle of Alamance County,” Gaddy said. “They embraced everyone that came through those gates that day and just made it an amazing time for everyone.”

The team also held an “Olympics Night,” in which fans competed in Olympic themed events, a “Christmas in July Night” where the team decorated the stadium to resemble a ‘winter wonderland’ and a “Superheroes Night” that awarded prizes to fans dressed as their favorite superhero.

Not only did the team host promotional nights, but it also smashed a world record. On June 5, the team gave the first 1,500 fans a free sock puppet to break the world record of most people in a venue wearing a sock puppet, a record previously set in 2019 when 628 people wore sock puppets at The Blue Coat School in the United Kingdom.

“I thought it was a really cool way to start off the season and get people involved with the brand itself,” Rathbun said. “It was a really cool night and a really cool moment.”

Gaddy, a father of two children, said the Sock Puppets do a good job of creating an enjoyable atmosphere at games through themed promotional nights, in-game entertainment options and special vendors.

“Their ballpark creates a safe environment and they are getting kids interested in what baseball is about,” Gaddy said. “They’re also providing in-game entertainment that kids can participate in, but the adults can get involved in too. So, giving things for adults and kids to do while providing that safe environment has been really, really good.”

According to Rathbun, the team increased its attendance numbers by approximately 35 percent from 2019 and nearly 50 percent from 2018. Additionally, the organization increased its following on Twitter from nearly 8,000 followers to over 13,000 and went viral on national news platforms thanks to their zany name, logo and mascot.

“I would say it was a wildly successful season,” Rathbun said.

Looking to the future

While the Sock Puppets enjoyed a stellar debut campaign, Rathbun believes there is still plenty of room for growth. He said among the organization’s goals for next season are growing the fanbase and selling more tickets and ticket packages.

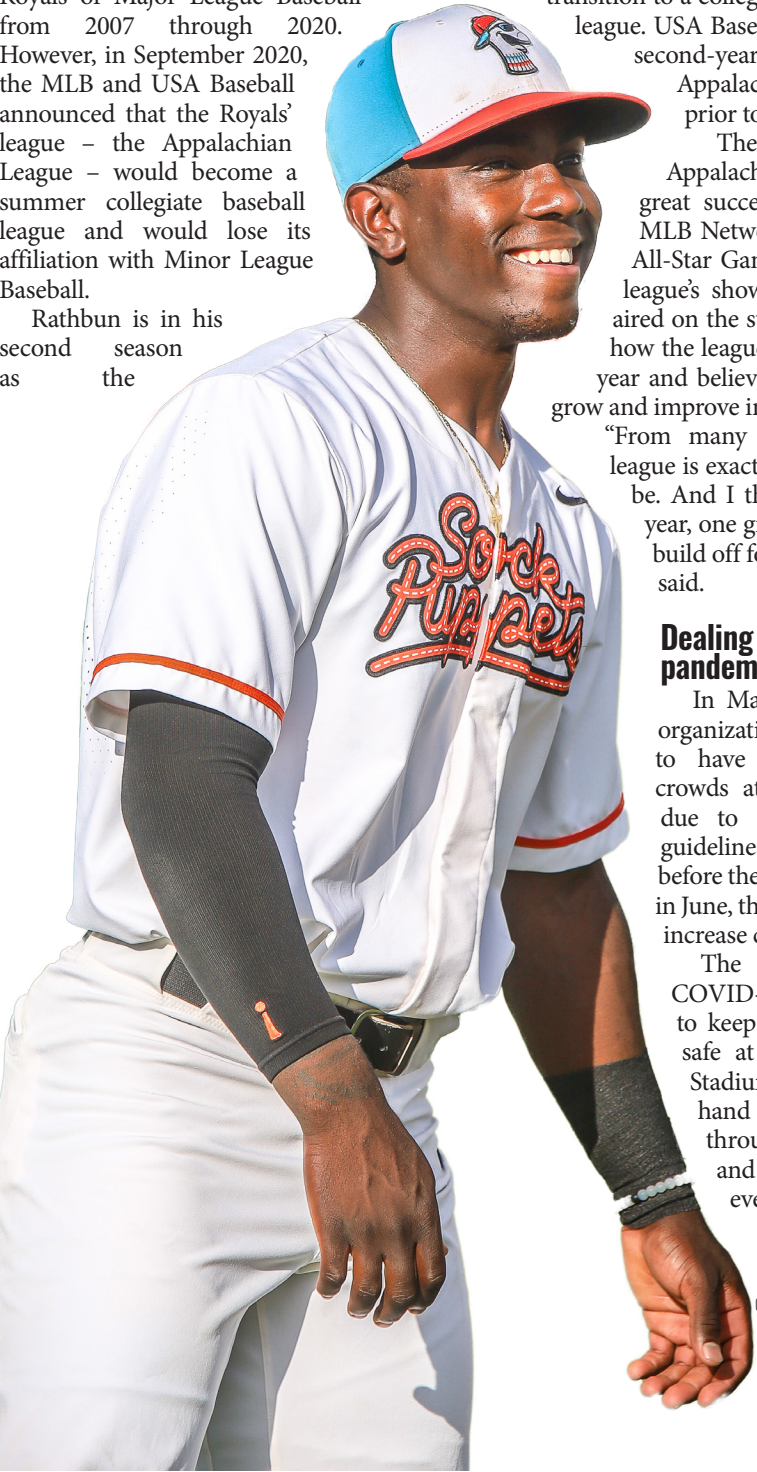
“We want to sell more plans. We want to sell more groups. We want to have more sellouts,” Rathbun said. “I think this year was the bar and we want to blow it out next year.”

Gaddy looks forward to attending more games in the future and hopes that the team can continue to create and maintain a positive environment at the ballpark.

“The continued family friendliness of the venue is super important,” Gaddy said.

Rathbun believes the organization has a bright future and looks forward to building the Sock Puppets brand in the Burlington community.

“The sky’s the limit, I believe, here in Burlington,” Rathbun said. “It’s a very unique community that loves what is theirs.”



COURTESY OF BURLINGTON SOCK PUPPETS
The Sock Puppets currently have 31 players on their roster, all of whom are committed to play college baseball.