

ALAMANCE COUNTY APPROVES WARNING LABEL FOR BOOKS WITH SENSITIVE CONTENT

Stickers will be implemented based on criteria such as sexually explicit content, violence, substance abuse

Miles Hayford
Elon News Network

Some books in Alamance County libraries may be marked with a bright, yellow sticker in the near future as the Alamance County Commissioners approved a content warning labeling policy.

These “parental guidance” stickers, which were approved April 21, will only apply to a book if a patron fills out a form, expressing their reasoning for why it isn’t fit for young readers. From there, a board of high-ranking library staff members will review the patron’s request based on criteria such as sexually explicit content, depictions of substance abuse, references to suicide, underage drinking, graphic violence and profanity. This committee will be made up of the Library Management Team and the Racial Equity Team. The committee will make the final decision on whether the book receives the sticker or not. If a sticker is not decided upon, the patron can appeal

the decision. However, an approved sticker cannot be appealed, according to meeting minutes from the Jan. 31 Alamance Library Committee meeting. The stickers will be placed on the spine of the books.

The stickers, which were initially suggested to look like a rainbow before that idea was discarded, are meant to look like a caution sign with yellow and white on it. The Alamance Library Committee originally considered including LGBTQ+ content in the sensitive material that the stickers applied to, according to the minutes from a Nov. 12 meeting. This sparked some controversy and outcry from some community members. However, County Commissioner Pamela Tyler Thompson said including LGBTQ+ in the sticker policy is no longer the case.

“The point was all about books for the right age for violence and sexual content,” Tyler Thompson wrote in an email to Elon News Network. “That was our vote ... sticker or label concerning violence and sexual content for the right set of eyes.”

Tyler Thompson, who is also a liaison to the library committee, said this has been brewing for a while. She said it started about a year ago because of parents’ concerns about certain books being in libraries

across Alamance County. It evolved into the library committee coming up with the idea of these stickers. The committee called a special meeting on Jan. 31 to discuss the issue. Bonnie Whitaker, a member of the committee, did not respond to Elon News Network’s multiple requests for comment.

With about 50 community members in attendance, 20 of them got up and expressed their opinion on the topic in the public comments portion of the meeting with more than half of them saying that they disagreed with the idea of the stickers. Thompson said she was glad to see so many people at the meeting willing to talk because it shows that people care about this issue.

Noelle Vaught, an Elon University junior from Graham who attended the meeting, disagrees with the idea of stickers.

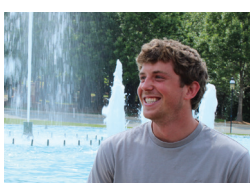
“I don’t think it’s the place of the county government to be able to label certain things as sensitive if people find it objectionable,” Vaught said. “If a parent really wanted to monitor what their children were checking out from the library, what they were reading, they could simply get that information by reading the sleeve of the book.”

See LIBRARY | pg. 5



ETHAN WU | PHOTO EDITOR

The “Teen Spot!” section of the May Memorial Library as seen May 3 in downtown Burlington.



Senior selected to give commencement address

PAGE 2 NEWS



Burlington holds 2nd annual memorial 5K

PAGE 6 NEWS



Elon softball prepares for conference tournament

PAGE 8 SPORTS

THE PENDULUM

A PUBLICATION OF
ELON NEWS
NETWORK

ESTABLISHED 1974 | VOLUME 54, EDITION 27

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

AVERY SLOAN

Executive Director of Elon News Network
Managing Editor of The Pendulum

CHARLOTTE PFABE

Managing Editor of elonnewsnetwork.com

ANJOLINA FANTARONI

Broadcast News Director

ERIN MARTIN

Design Chief

ABIGAIL HOBBS

Copy Chief

ETHAN WU

Photo Editor

MILES HAYFORD

Sports Editor

NIA BEDARD

Assistant Managing Editor for
elonnewsnetwork.com

LILLY MOLINA

Audience Engagement Manager

FIONA MCALLISTER

Executive Producer of ENN Tonight

ABBY GRAVELY

Producer of ENN On-Air

Gaby Maldonado, Sarah T. Moore, Virginia Vance and Karsyn Vann contributed to the copy editing of this edition. Reagan Sizemore, Virginia Vance and Neil Parmar contributed to the design of this edition.

EDITORIAL POLICY:

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

CORRECTIONS POLICY:

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

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

The Pendulum

publishes weekly on Wednesdays

ENN Tonight

broadcasts Monday at 6 p.m.

ENN On Air

uploads Wednesdays

elonnewsnetwork.com

publishes daily



@elonnewsnetwork

Student commencement speaker to share his Elon experience



MEGAN WALSH | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Craig Brandstetter, 2025 student commencement speaker, laughs at a friend outside the Koury Business Center.

Senior Craig Brandstetter will address the class of 2025 at the 135th Commencement

Megan Walsh

Elon News Network

Craig Brandstetter, a member of the first official cohort of Elon University's accelerated 3+1 business dual degree program, will share his perspective as undergraduate student commencement speaker for the 135th Commencement ceremonies on May 23.

In an email to seniors sent April 30, Vice President for Student Life Jon Dooley announced Brandstetter was chosen through a multi-step process involving student nominations, a senior class vote and final approval by Elon President Connie Book.

"Being able to be commencement speaker is a very exciting thing," Brandstetter said. "It's a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity."



IT'S ABOUT GROWTH AND CHANGING THE PERSPECTIVE THAT MOST OF US HAVE ABOUT WHAT ELON IS

CRAIG BRANDSTETTER

ELON SENIOR

When Brandstetter arrived on campus, he said he immediately realized how caring the Elon community is. He said his speech will center around how Elon shapes and changes students.

"It's about growth and changing the perspective that most of us have about what Elon is," Brandstetter said. "As well as

the amount of growth that we've been able to get for ourselves through what Elon is as a place."

During his time at Elon, Brandstetter said he has been involved all over campus including being a member of the Beta Theta Pi fraternity, a tour guide for the Love School of Business, a team lead for the Center for Organizational Analytics and a member of club spikeball.

While he was involved in many things in his time at Elon, Brandstetter said one of the most impactful things he did was work as a resident adviser during his junior year.

"That was an amazing experience, just to help first-years and really get out of the circle I was stuck in," Brandstetter said. "It can be clique-y sometimes at Elon, if you want, but seeing how different so many other people are here really makes it such a better place."

Brandstetter said the people are what makes Elon the place it is, and the thing he said he will remember most from his time at Elon is his friends.

In addition to friends, Brandstetter said his overall Elon experience was memorable, including the close relationships Elon encourages between students and professors.

"The teachers genuinely cared about me, and that made me really love it here," Brandstetter said. "That's not what they say about college, having 30 people in a class and the teacher knows your name. It's a very unique experience that we get here. I wouldn't trade that for anything."

One of those professors Brandstetter has a close relationship with is his adviser, Catherine Parsons, who is the director of the accelerated 3+1 business dual degree program and Brandstetter's academic adviser.

Parsons said Brandstetter's drive, passion and enthusiasm to get to know people makes him a perfect fit for the student commencement speaker.

"He shows up for people and he shows up for the Elon community," Parsons said. "That's who he is. He's a student who wants to give back to Elon, and this is a great way for him to do that."

After graduation, Brandstetter said he

has a job lined up working in corporate credit risk at Wells Fargo in Charlotte.

Brandstetter said he chose to attend Elon so he could be in the accelerated 3+1 business dual degree program, which is allowing him to graduate with a bachelor's degree in finance and a master's degree in business analytics. He is part of the first official cohort of the program to graduate. Members of the program take Elon 1010 and an introductory business class together with their cohort.



HIS SPEECH OVERALL WAS REALLY SOLID, AND HE'S CLEARLY SOMEONE THAT THE SENIOR CLASS WAS INTERESTED IN HEARING FROM

TAYLOR COTE

ELON SENIOR

Parsons said she is very excited to see a member of this first cohort speak, as the group has seen the program grow and take shape into what it is today.

"They've helped pave the way for future students, help us navigate things about the program we need to figure out, and so all students in the program have been very patient as we redeveloped how we can make this program come alive and be what it needs to be for these students," Parsons said.

According to Parsons, the graduating cohort of the program contains 12 students and the overall program currently has 76 students enrolled.

The 2024-25 Student Body president, senior Taylor Cote, served on the selection committee. Cote said Brandstetter seemed to have put a lot of work into his speech.

"His speech overall was really solid, and he's clearly someone that the senior class was interested in hearing from," Cote said.

CORRECTIONS

In the last edition of The Pendulum, the story on Elon esports said Rocket League has a monthly average of about 17,925 players, but this average refers to the amount of concurrent players. Elon News Network regrets this error.



LILLY MOLINA | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc., join together and display their hand sign at Elon’s step show competition on May 3. Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc., were the winners of the showcase. In total, the step show raised \$1,873 for Allied Churches of Alamance, and the National Pan-Hellenic Council sororities and fraternities participated.



ETHAN WU | PHOTO EDITOR

Freshman Saachi Kamath guides an attendee in making paper flowers at her station on April 30 during Maker Takeover in Moseley Center. The event featured over 40 student projects, an escape room, stations for crafts and a presentation about the history of chainmail.



ETHAN WU | PHOTO EDITOR

Over 50 people gathered to enjoy live music, food and drinks during Music at The Plaza on May 2 at the downtown Elon plaza. This event happens at 6 p.m. every first and third Friday of the month and includes live music. This past week, the North Carolina based pop-rock band The Fandinos performed.



KATRINA HOLTZ | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Sophomore Jinelle Gonzalez and junior Janeeta Smith talk at the Gender and LGBTQIA Center’s Spring Pride event May 1 at Young Commons. The event was Western themed and included cowboy hats and boots, as well as games, food and booths. Senior Ana Sofia Rodriguez has worked with the Gender and LGBTQIA Center for four years as an event manager and organized Spring Pride. “It’s about knowing you have a safe space at school,” Rodriguez said.



NIA BEDARD | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

An aerial performer performs a routine on aerial silks, which are long pieces of two-way stretch nylon or spandex that are hung high above the ground. She performed in the old carousel house May 3 at Burlington City Park for the 34th annual Carousel Festival, which featured rides, local businesses, food trucks and musical performances. She is a performer from Upside Aerial, a circus arts and fitness studio located in Burlington.

North Carolina LGBTQ+ communities cope with increase in federal anti-trans legislation

LGBTQ Center of Durham helps support people looking for name changes

Nia Bedard
Elon News Network

Since the start of 2025, 869 bills regarding transgender people have been filed across 49 states and 37 bills are active at the national level, according to Trans Legislation Tracker, an independent research organization tracking bills that impact trans and gender-diverse people across the U.S.

This is a 23% increase in bills filed compared with the entire year of 2024.

Of those 869 bills presented at the state level, there are 12 active in the North Carolina Legislature.

As the number of bills regarding transgender people increases, organizations across North Carolina, such as the LGBTQ Center of Durham, are ramping up efforts to help and educate those who walk through its doors with support groups and assistance finding access to healthcare and legal resources.

One of the resources that the center offers is a quarterly name change clinic to help attendants gather resources needed to undergo the process.

Katie Jenifer, a volunteer at the LGBTQ Center of Durham and secretary of the Pauli Murray Bar Association, a network of LGBTQ+ legal professionals, has been volunteering at the clinic since 2017 and has been overseeing name change clinics across the state.

Jenifer said that since November 2024, she has seen an increase in clinic attendees.

“When we first started the Durham clinic in particular, we probably would get 20 or so clients every time,” Jenifer said. “Immediately following the election, our numbers skyrocketed. We were getting 50 people at a clinic. We were getting a lot of requests for more clinics.”

Jenifer said the increase in clinic attendees is coming from the Trump administration and legislation at the state level.

“People were so concerned about what was going to happen under the new administration,” Jenifer said. “There was a big surge right after the election, and then it kind of slowed down a little bit, and then another big surge right around the inauguration.”

Bo, who did not share his last name, is a recent masters program graduate who attended the LGBTQ Center of Durham’s name change clinic on May 3 and said his concerns over anti-trans legislation have been slowly growing since 2023.

“I know North Carolina, it’s been kind of an ongoing thing for a really long time, where people have, where trans rights have been targeted in the past,” Bo said. “It’s not necessarily a new thing that’s scary and worrying, but it’s definitely compounded over time.”

Bo said he hopes that other identity communities will take notice of what is happening to transgender people.

“It’s definitely something that people in other communities should be aware of,” Bo said. “I don’t think that it will stop with just trans people. It will be a continuous process of trying to take away the rights of stigmatized groups, of groups that have historically been discriminated against.”

Items within the 12 bills that are currently active in the North Carolina Legislature include NC H1000, where any clinics that provide transitioning procedures or hormones must report that procedure information to the state; NC H560, where abuse or neglect allegations can not be based upon a guardian’s choice to refer to a juvenile by their biological sex;

and NC H791, titled the “Women’s Safety and Protection Act,” which Jenifer said recent clinic attendees are worried about.

“It attempts to define gender and sex, which is nearly impossible without leaving somebody out,” Jenifer said. “It tries to keep trans people from using the bathroom in public, in a bathroom that they feel safest in, and it tries to keep people from updating their state ID.”

NC H791 has currently passed its first reading in the North Carolina Legislature and has been referred to the Committee on Rules, Calendar and Operations of the House.

As of now, it is still possible for a citizen of North Carolina to change their name and their gender marker on their state ID, which Jenifer said most attendees don’t know.

“

IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING THE ELECTION, OUR NUMBERS SKYROCKETED. WE WERE GETTING 50 PEOPLE AT A CLINIC. WE WERE GETTING A LOT OF REQUESTS FOR MORE CLINICS.

KATIE JENIFER
LGBTQ CENTER OF DURHAM VOLUNTEER

“What I’ve been trying to encourage all the different organizations that I work with on these is to start to change our communications about it and our information about it, to say, ‘Hey, did you know you still can change your name and your gender marker on North Carolina State ID?’” Jenifer said.

Jenifer said some people are waiting until the Trump administration leaves office.

“In Asheville this weekend, I had a mom, she was coming with her minor child,” Jenifer said. “She emailed me the night before and said that her child decided just to wait out the current administration before he changed his name.”

According to Alix Adrian, the operations manager of the LGBTQ Center of Durham, there are requirements that must be met before a person can change their name in the state of North Carolina.

“The name change process in North Carolina is something that you go through the court system for if you are 18 and over in North Carolina,” Adrian said. “The law is that you can only change your name legally once.”

In addition to the age of the applicant, Adrian also said that petitioners will go through a background check.

“In order to do that, the court needs to know that you are not changing your

name to get out of debt or some other obligation,” Adrian said. “And so that they ask you to present both a state and a federal background check in order to do those things, you do need to have fingerprints, and that’s why that’s part of our process.”

Adrian also said that the clinic assists attendees in informing offices, such as the Department of Motor Vehicles, an attendee’s insurance company and their employer, that have their previous name about their name change. When a petitioner chooses to change their name in the state of North Carolina, the state will only inform North Carolina’s Vital Records.

In a room on the second floor of the Durham Public Library, Adrian and other volunteers waited for attendees to arrive. Inside the room, there was a fingerprint station where clinic attendees would fill out fingerprint cards for their federal background checks. Law school volunteers sat in a connecting room, talking applicants through the legal process of changing their name.

“When someone changes their name, it’s life-changing,” Adrian said.

While resources such as the LGBTQ Center of Durham are able to cover the cost of name changes, that is not something readily available across the state and the country.

“It’s a \$120 court filing fee for adults or anybody 16 and up,” Jenifer said. “You have to have a state background check which is \$14, a federal background check is \$18, you have to have fingerprint cards. For both of those, that’s going to be \$10 to \$12 or more per card. And then if you have to order a certified copy of your birth certificate in addition to that, it can be anywhere from \$25 to \$60 depending on how you order it. And so the cost just keeps adding up, and it makes it really hard for people.”

Jenifer’s list of fees doesn’t include the cost of acquiring federal identification, such as a passport, which can cost up to \$160, according to the U.S. Department of State.

According to the National Institute of Health in a study from 2020, transgender people experience higher rates of long-term housing insecurity and homelessness due to a lack of financial resources, social support and other risk factors. The NIH also found transgender women of color experienced significantly higher rates of

homelessness than their white and transgender male counterparts.

The 2022 U.S. Transgender Survey, the only national transgender survey in the U.S., found that 30% of respondents had experienced homelessness in their lifetime. In addition to that, the USTS reported that North Carolina was one of the top 10 states respondents reported leaving.

“If you have somebody who’s poor, or you have somebody who’s LGBTQ, they’re more likely to be poor,” Jenifer said. “Additionally, if they’re Black or a person of color, they’re going to have that on top of them, like it’s, it’s just where it just piles up and it makes it almost impossible for somebody to get the basic documents.”

As Bo was making his way through the clinic, he said he was grateful to have a support system around him but recognized that not every transgender person has that.

“I’m in a fortunate position where the majority of my support systems are supported, but I know not everybody is in that position,” Bo said. “But I know for people who maybe don’t have an established support system with people who are supported, it would be, I would imagine, a lot more stressful.”

Bo said he was also grateful to go through this process without having to worry about the expenses.

“I know a lot of trans individuals may not have a stable financial situation,” Bo said. “There are a lot of people who are unhoused, unsheltered and people who may have been separated from their family because of their identity. And so having this type of resource where you can come in for free, I think, is really important.”

As Bo collected his legal documentation and prepared to take the next step to be legally recognized as who he truly is, he said he hopes those in the LGBTQ+ communities and other identity communities stay aware and support each other.

“Being defeatist and feeling like everything is hopeless is easy to feel when you stay current with everything,” Bo said. “But it’s important to stay aware, just so you can cope ahead and so you can kind of build up those support systems in advance, so if something bad does happen that does affect an individual, then they’ll already have something established so they don’t feel hopeless and like there’s no one there to support them.”



Shiqi Feng, a Duke University law student and volunteer at the LGBTQ Center of Durham’s name change clinic, helps Bo collect documentation for his name change on May 3 at the Durham Public Library.



NIA BEDARD | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Bo fills out a fingerprint card for his federal background check as a part of the name change process in North Carolina during the LGBTQ Clinic of Durham’s name change clinic on May 3 at the Durham Public Library.

Warning label to show violence, sexually explicit content, substance abuse, profanity

LIBRARY | from cover

Vaught said the stickers threaten freedom of expression. She said certain books across the nation have first been labeled as objectionable and then later are removed completely from library shelves. According to Tyler Thompson, it is less about censorship but rather about protecting children from content that is meant for readers older than they are.



COURTESY OF ALAMANCE COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARIES
Image of the content warning stickers that will be placed on books deemed as containing sensitive content by a committee of high-ranking library staff.

“There are so many things nowadays that are just on the coattails of children,” Tyler Thompson said in an interview with Elon News Network. “I see a lot of kids that get that horror and that brokenness and the police at the house, all that laid on top of them, and it shows up in school. They’re mad, they’re upset, they’re stressed, they’re anxious, they’re just a walking zombie sometimes, and we can’t do that with any kind of topic.”

Tyler Thompson said it is crucial for children not to be exposed to certain things, such as suicide or drugs, in books until they are ready because it can lead to harmful decisions in their real life.

“Every day you learn and you build and you grow and you don’t have wisdom at 17 years old ... I just want kids to see things when they are ready to see them, that they’ll understand them and they can make their own choices,” Tyler Thompson said.

Tyler Thompson said the importance of this issue became clear to her after she received a call from a community member who was perusing the aisle of the Mebane Public Library. The community member’s 7-year-old son was looking at books in the youth department, but someone had just left a book from another area on the shelf. That book contained illustrations of sexually explicit content. Tyler Thompson realized there was a problem and brought the book to a county commissioners meeting. Tyler Thompson emphasized that it is up to the parent to raise their child and protect them from certain things, but said no seven-year-

old should be reading certain content.

“We just have to be really smart and not get so caught up in and pissed off in politics that we don’t think about the effects that some of our decisions have on young people,” Tyler Thompson said. “Young people need to be protected and make their own decisions as they grow up when they’re ready to. Just give them time, don’t grow them up overnight.”



WE JUST HAVE TO BE REALLY SMART AND NOT GET SO CAUGHT UP IN AND PISSSED OFF IN POLITICS THAT WE DON'T THINK ABOUT THE EFFECTS THAT SOME OF OUR DECISIONS HAVE ON YOUNG PEOPLE.

PAMELA TYLER THOMPSON
ALAMANCE COUNTY COMMISSIONER

In the County Commissioners’ April 21 meeting, the sticker policy was approved unanimously, but it didn’t avoid some debate.

County Commissioner Ed Priola voiced his support for the policy but thought it should go a step further.

“Children should not have access to age-inappropriate materials without parental consent ... It’s unreasonable to suggest that a 10-year-old needs unfettered access to everything that has ever been printed,” Priola said at the meeting.

Tyler Thompson said she thinks the public reception to the stickers will be positive if implemented correctly, but acknowledged that it will be difficult for the approval committee to decide on whether certain books deserve a sticker or not. She said certain popular books such as “To Kill a Mockingbird” have sensitive content, so it might warrant criticism, but its popularity might bring others to argue for it to avoid a sticker.

However, Vaught said the implementation of content warning stickers could result in some serious consequences. He believes it could lead to full-on removal of books or even bullying in schools, which multiple community members expressed concern about at the Jan. 31 library committee meeting.

“In the long term, eventually it’s going to go into the territory of starting to remove certain books,” Vaught said. “Putting a label on a book as sensitive content, some kids at school might know what that means. And it might open up a particular kid who has one of those books to bullying or people getting the wrong impression about what it is that they’re actually reading.”

University to increase yearly contribution to Elon fire department

Additional funds goes to replacement of department’s current ladder truck, 2 firefighters

Ruby Burckle
Elon News Network

In the proposed town of Elon budget for the 2026 fiscal year, Elon University is reportedly increasing its contributions to the fire department from \$86,598 to \$423,524.

According to Rich Roedner, town manager for the town of Elon, this increase is going toward replacing the fire department’s current ladder truck and adding two new firefighters to the staff.



HAVING A WELL TRAINED AND WELL EQUIPPED FIRE DEPARTMENT AND POLICE DEPARTMENT HELP TO KEEP OUR STUDENTS AND THE SURROUNDING COMMUNITY AS A SAFE PLACE TO LIVE... SO WE SEE THAT AS AN IMPORTANT INVESTMENT BY THE UNIVERSITY.

PATRICK NOLTEMEYER
UNIVERSITY CHIEF OF STAFF

As detailed in the proposed budget, Twin Lakes, a local retirement community, is also increasing its contributions to the fire department from \$56,000 to \$60,000. In order to help pay for the cost of the ladder truck, the fire department has also proposed an increase to the fire district tax rate from \$0.0865 to \$0.10.

The cost of purchasing a new ladder truck

is the main reason for this steep increase in contributions, said Patrick Noltemeyer, chief of staff and secretary to the board of trustees and associate vice president at Elon University.

According to Noltemeyer, the cost of replacing the old fire truck is \$2 million.

However, this significant increase in contributions from the university will only continue for a short period of time, Roedner said.

According to Roedner, the university has offered to contribute \$225,000 a year for the next two years in order to help pay for the ladder truck replacement.

Outside of the costs for buying a new ladder truck, the university is increasing its annual contribution to the fire department by \$198,000, which will go toward funding three-quarters of the cost of bringing on two new firefighters, according to Roedner.

“That contribution will continue into the future to support those two positions,” Roedner said.

Additionally, according to Roedner, the university accounts for around 40% of the calls made to the fire department, which presents difficulties for a fire station with only 21 firefighters in total.

According to Roedner, to meet fire industry standards, the fire department is required to have 16 firefighters respond to a call about a fire in a dorm building.

However, according to Roedner, there are only around five to six firefighters active on a shift at any given time and because of this, the town of Elon has made agreements with neighboring fire districts, who aid in responding to dorm fires by sending out their own crews and vehicles.

Roedner said because neighboring fire departments are also small, they often have no coverage during the seven to eight minutes they’re driving to provide aid for a possible dorm fire at the university.

“We’ve explained that issue, and the university has stepped up and said, ‘Alright we want to help you get to that next level of coverage in Elon with in-house staff,’” Roedner said.

Although Elon University is a nonprofit organization and is not required to pay property taxes to the town of Elon,

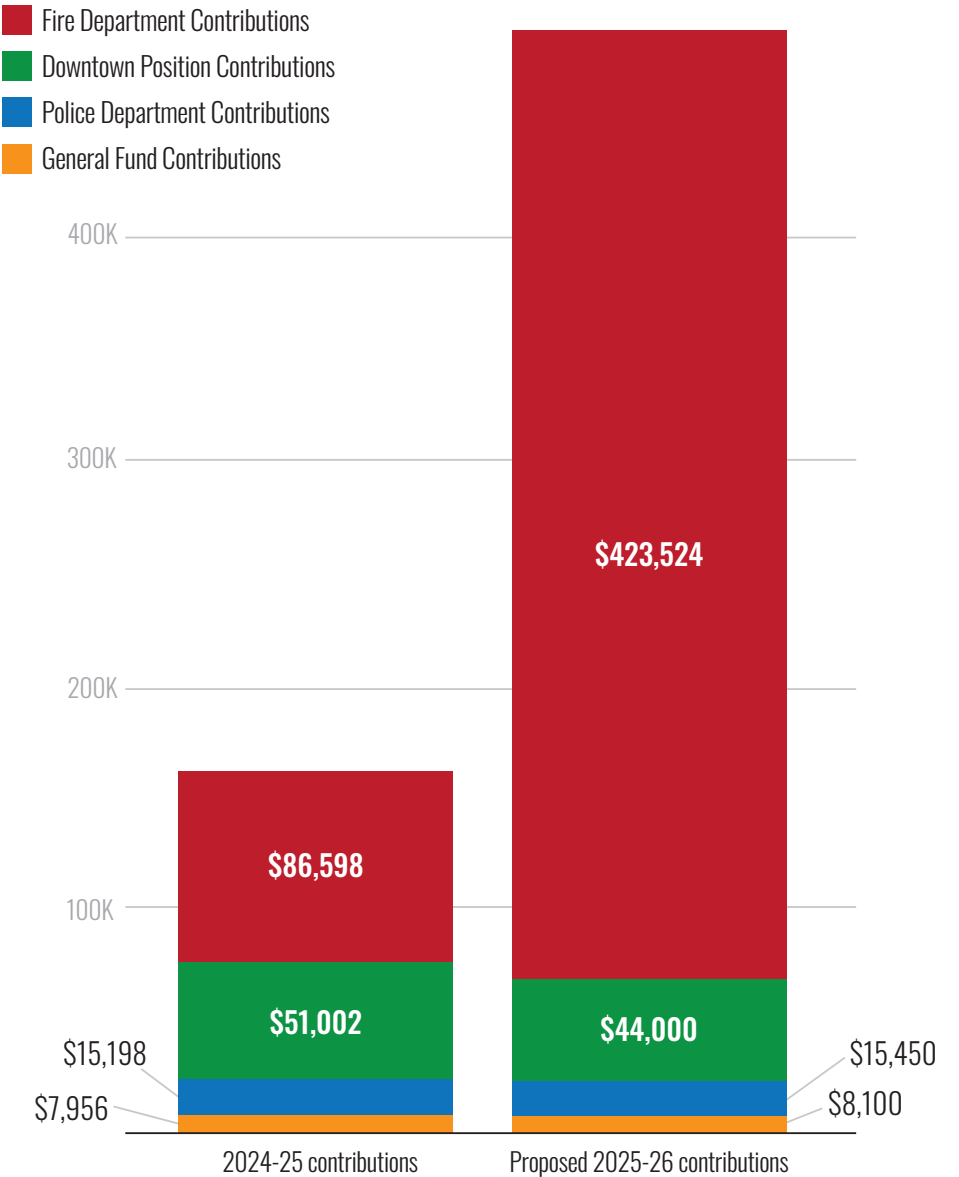
Noltemeyer said Elon chooses to make these contributions to the town annually in order to help support organizations such as the Elon fire department that service the university.

“Having a well trained and well equipped

fire department and police department help to keep our students and the surrounding community as a safe place to live,” Noltemeyer said. “So we see that as an important investment by the university.”

Elon University’s contributions to the town of Elon

In the towns proposed budget, Elon University’s contributions have shifted across multiple different funds.



SOURCE: TOWN OF ELON PROPOSED BUDGET

DATA VISUALIZATION BY AVERY SLOAN



Juanita Hughes hugs a race participant during the Jogging for Josh 5K on May 3. The race honors the life of Joshua Dane Hughes, Juanita and Steven Hughes' son.

AUDREY GEIB | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Family, friends, strangers remember, honor Joshua Dane Hughes with annual 5K

Audrey Geib
Elon News Network

Members of the Elon community gathered outside Atlantic Union Bank in Burlington for the second annual Jogging for Josh 5K. But for most, the morning wasn't just about running — it was about remembering.

The race, held May 3, honored the life of Elon local Joshua Dane Hughes. He was the only child of Steven and Juanita Hughes. The couple organized the event to celebrate their son's legacy and support a scholarship in his name.

As runners crossed the finish line, they were met with cheers, smiles and warm embraces. Among those waiting with outstretched arms were Steven and Juanita, hugging finishers, offering thanks and holding space for grief and gratitude. Twenty-nine participants walked the 1 mile path, and 59 participants ran the 5K through Burlington and Elon, passing Magnolia Cemetery, Josh's resting place.

Steven and Juanita still remember the exact moment they met. They were out dancing in Seattle, where they both lived. He asked her to dance as the last song began to play, but Juanita turned him down. Instead, they talked, and eventually, the club closed, forcing them to move their conversation outside, where they talked for hours. That night their story began, a story that would include marriage, military moves, deployment and the birth — and eventual loss — of their only child.

After having difficulty conceiving a child, Josh was born at 30 weeks on Nov. 15, 1992, and died July 3, 2023.

"He delivered at 30 weeks and he lived for 30 years," Juanita said. "He wasn't supposed to make it past birth."

"He was a gift," Steven said.

Despite suffering a brain hemorrhage and doctors warning his parents that he might develop cerebral palsy, Josh grew up healthy.

At age 4, after waiting his turn at an aquarium, Josh stepped aside for a smaller boy.

"He stepped down, and he let the little boy go up," Juanita said. "I was like, 'You

don't want to look anymore?' He goes, 'No, it's his turn now.'"

"That's how he always was," Steven said. "Even growing up, he was a very nice young man."

When Steven was deployed overseas, 11-year-old Josh walked on stage to accept his father's MBA from Elon University, making him the youngest person to ever receive an Elon diploma.

He was the kind of teenager who researched what made people happy for fun.

"He'd have been a professional student if he could have," Juanita said.

Josh attended the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, where he double majored in political science and religious studies, before earning two master's degrees in the UK — one in international studies from University College London, and another in war studies from King's College.

“

WE BOTH STILL STRUGGLE WITH, 'WHY JOSH?' HE WAS A GREAT YOUNG MAN AND I THINK HE WOULD HAVE DONE EVEN GREATER THINGS. BUT FAITH TELLS ME, WE'LL SEE HIM AGAIN. THAT'S HOW I LOOK AT IT. WE'RE TWO YEARS CLOSER TO SEEING HIM.

STEVEN HUGHES
FATHER OF JOSHUA HUGHES

In London, he met his partner Jonathan Blackwell, who flew from the UK to participate in the race and honor Josh's memory.

"Josh was one of those people that, when you met him, he was so warm and friendly," Blackwell said. "He made everyone feel like they mattered, and he made a brilliant first impression."

Blackwell said he enjoys learning about the person Josh was as he grew up through the stories of those who knew him as a child and telling stories about the man he

became after leaving Elon.

Juanita remembers Josh telling his parents that he wanted to change things, to be the force behind political leaders drafting policies and helping make decisions; his dream was to work in Washington, D.C., at the White House.

After completing both his master's degrees, Josh moved to Los Angeles to work for Space Force Command. That's when he got sick.

What he thought was food poisoning turned out to be heart failure. He needed a transplant.

His family prepared to move to Los Angeles indefinitely, set up a home near the hospital, be there for the transplant, the recovery and the future.

While he was in the hospital, Josh got a call.

"He got a phone call from the White House, they offered him a position to work with the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and he accepted it," Juanita said. "That was his dream, and he got that."

But just hours before his transplant, Josh experienced heparin-induced thrombocytopenia, a rare complication that caused a stroke. He was no longer eligible for the transplant. He died on July 3, 2023, at 30 years old.

Now, nearly two years later, Steven chooses to mark time differently.

"I still struggle," Steven said. "We both still struggle with, 'Why Josh?' He was a great young man and I think he would have done even greater things. But faith tells me, we'll see him again. That's how I look at it. We're two years closer to seeing him."

Through grief, his family turned to action, trying to make the world a better place in Josh's memory. Honoring his love for learning, giving back to the community and running, they established the Joshua Dane Hughes Foundation, organized the Jogging for Josh 5K and created a scholarship in his name at UNC Chapel Hill.

Each year on Josh's birthday, they hand out toys at Duke Children's Hospital. On race day, they hand out his favorite candies — Swedish Fish and Sour Patch Kids — and display a photo of him running at both the start and finish line.

"It's Josh cheering you on," Juanita said. Steven and Juanita credit their community for helping them each day.

"They continue to support us and remember the difficult days for us, like

Josh's birthday, holidays are really tough, and the day that he passed," Juanita said. They surround us with love, they involve us in their families."

Easter and Christmas are especially hard holidays. This past Easter, Steven visited Josh's grave.

"I went over to the cemetery, and we've got a little bench there for him," Steven said. "So I sat on the bench, and it was very emotional. It was tough. But then a train came by, and he loved trains, especially growing up. It was him saying, 'You know, Dad, hey, I'm OK. It's OK. I'm alright.'"

Every Christmas, they decorate his resting place.

"It's hard for us to celebrate Christmas, but Josh loved Christmas, and when I decorated the house, it was always for Josh," Juanita said. "He loved it so much, he would take all sorts of pictures of it, and so Christmas, I try to decorate his resting place, because that's what he loved."

At the end of this year's race, Steven read an excerpt from Josh's journal — a line that continues to guide their path forward.

"There's always something meaningful each of us can do to honor the gift of life in ourselves and the world around us," Josh wrote.

"That really solidified to me that, 'Hey, I'm OK, don't worry about me. I'll always be with you,'" Steven said.



AUDREY GEIB | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

A photo of Josh running in the Pride In London 10K sits on display at the Jogging For Josh 5K finish line on May 3.

BEHIND THE CURTAIN

WITH LG



Lily Gooding
Columnist

Oh hey! It’s me, LG.
I’m so glad you’ve taken a look at this part of the paper because you’ve just come across my column, BEHIND THE CURTAIN, WITH LG.
This mess of text should be a 300ish-word blurb that does the following:
- Make you chuckle
- Reveal something peculiar (behind the curtain)
- Poke the brain
This is a series where I’ll “pull back the curtain” on the quirks, curiosities and hidden gems of Elon (nothing to do with Musk)

University. Expect blurbs on topics such as Jon Dooley, Campus-Specific Life Hacks, Bet-You-Didn’t-Know stories from professors, How Your Brain Makes Excuses, A Talk About Carpets, Addressing Career Anxieties and much more.
But hold on. You might be thinking ... “LG, what even is this? These topics are all over the place!” All in good time. #expecttheunexpected.
This column might not always seem organized or make sense ... but that’s part of the fun.
OK. Without further ado ... read below.

Send

To

Elon Community

CC

SUBJECT: CARPETS

“hey, maybe you should take your carpet with you when you graduate”
Said no one ever — until Ashley Josey stepped on the scene.

This is a talk about carpets — well, sort of. Hold on, stay with me.
This talk about carpets addresses something more than that used-to-be-white 5x8 shag rug you’ve had since freshman year. This carpet is a metaphorical one. This carpet isn’t made from polyester, it’s made from the threads of relationships you’ve made in your time at Elon — so actually yes, maybe there are some threads from freshman year.
OK, let me give you some background context so you can fully absorb the sweetness and practicality of this analogy.
Last spring, my dearest friend and inspiration, Ashley Josey, introduced her concept of “carpets” to me as we processed saying a temporary three month goodbye to Elon. After quoting another of my inspirations, Winnie the Pooh — “How lucky am I to have something that makes saying goodbye so hard”

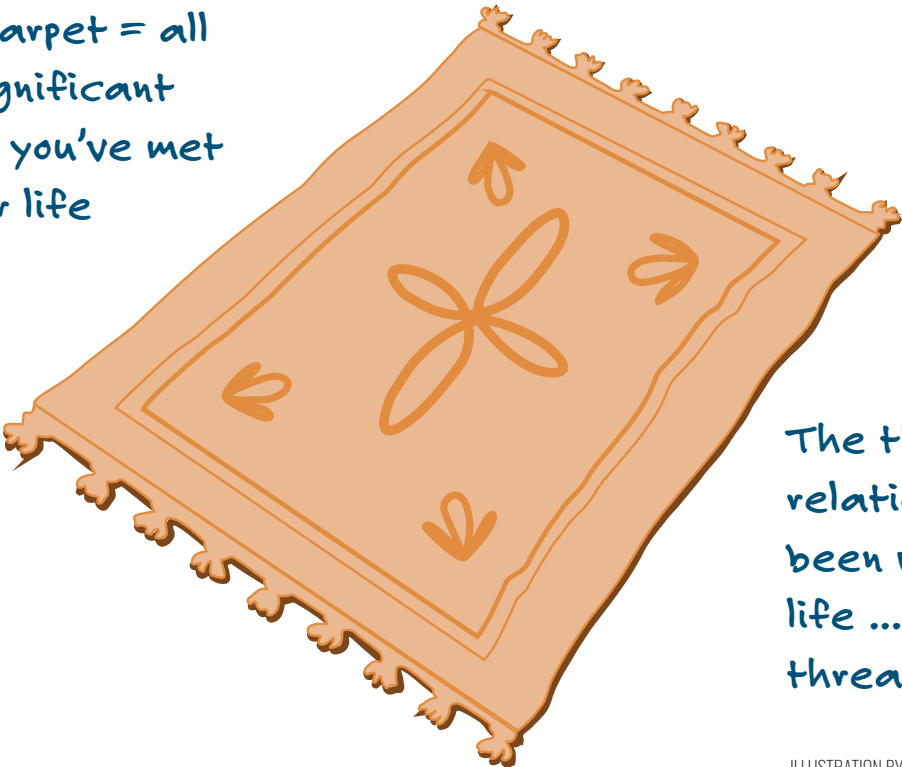
— Josey presented her philosophy on long distance friendships and how she ebbed with the flow of constant goodbyes and new hellos.
Josey’s journal reads (in the most gorgeous handwriting btw):
“To embrace the radical presence of the reality that is here, & through this act, to notice how profoundly beautiful it all is.”
OK that was poetic, Josey — but what does that even mean? My unenlightened mortal brain struggled to keep up with the levitating Josey.
Josey’s journal talks about embracing the present moment, of course — how we can enjoy and savor moments with our friends (especially the graduating ones) while also honoring their everlasting presence in our lives?
A carpet.
OK. This is what you’ve been waiting for. So how the heck is LG going to connect this sentient being’s journal entry to carpets? The greatest thing is I don’t have to — Josey’s got our back.
Let’s skip the paragraph style —let me draw this out for you

visual learners.
As drawn below, every thread is a relationship in your life that weaves together to create the carpet in which you dance on through life. And as you cut-up-the-rug, per say, you reveal old threads (aka reconnect with some old pals). And there are all types of threads — some are really vibrant, sparkly. Those are the threads that stand out, the impactful people. There are also subtle threads, old threads, that sustain your carpet. All the people who have directly or indirectly affected your life in some way.
So as you — trigger warning — start to pack your room up, think about your carpet, about all the threads that you have, and how you can take them with you.
Anyway ... plucking on the heart strings. Stay strong.

Xoxo,
me

FYI: Josey’s thread in my carpet is neon pink with bright yellow sparkle tinsel coming out of it.

The carpet = all the significant people you’ve met in your life



The thread = a relationship that’s been woven into your life ... a person is a thread

Elon softball enters CAA Championships as 2 seed

Elon went 21-6 in conference play this season, the most conference wins in program history

Miles Hayford
Elon News Network

Despite winning 21 conference games this season — the most in Elon’s history — head coach Kathy Bocock and the Elon softball team is adopting a fresh-start mindset going into the Coastal Athletic Association Championships.

“Our mindset going into this tournament is we’re starting a new season,” Bocock said. “Now we’re 0-0, and we have a chance to try to continue to chase our goals. We don’t want to make it too big. We just want to make it just enough. ... Keep things light and not overthink everything.”

Elon finished its regular season on May 3 with a series win over Campbell University, ending the regular season with a record of 29-18 and were 21-6 in conference play. Its strong conference play earned the team the No. 2 seed in the CAA Championships — the second time it earned that seeding. Elon’s seeding gives it a bye, allowing it to start play a day after the tournament starts with a May 8 matchup against the winner of No. 3 College of Charleston and No. 6 Hofstra.

Bocock credits the team’s success this year to improved chemistry. The team traveled to Italy together in the fall of 2024 as a part of a global experience trip, and Bocock said it helped the team bond. She said the team’s two fifth years and eight seniors have helped the younger players grow. Redshirt junior Chloe Hatzopoulos said the upperclassmen have helped create a positive team culture.

“

WE’RE PLAYING TOGETHER AS AS A TEAM SO MUCH MORE THAN I FEEL LIKE I’VE EVER BEEN A PART OF. WHEN SOMEBODY’S DOWN, WE’RE GOING TO PICK EACH OTHER UP.

CHLOE HATZOPOULOS
ELON SOFTBALL REDSHIRT JUNIOR

“We do have a lot of upperclassmen, so we have a lot of experience, but that upperclassmen leadership has also influenced the underclassmen,” Hatzopoulos said. “It’s just created a great team culture within ourselves where we’re just a bunch of resilient, determined girls. We all want the same goal, and we are all bought in.”

Elon began the season with a rocky start, losing seven of its first 10 games. However, Elon began the season with three early tournaments, matching the team up against tough non-conference opponents including the University of Connecticut, Ohio State and Clemson in order to prepare for conference play. Bocock said this schedule was created to help toughen the team up and prepare them for CAA play.

“We always try to start off with really good competition because we’re not afraid to go against anybody, because we have to get ourselves ready for conference,” Bocock said after the team’s win over North Carolina Central on Feb 8.

They kicked off the season with the Elon Softball Classic but went 1-4 at the tournament as pitching struggled early on, letting up an average of eight runs per game.

Hatzopoulos said the tough schedule helped build resilience within the team.

“We played a lot of tough opponents. So,



MILES HAYFORD | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Redshirt junior Taylor Cherry pitches during Elon’s game against the College of Charleston on April 4. She had three strikeouts.

we know that we can compete with the best of the best, and we knew that going into conference, and I think that only helped us,” Hatzopoulos said. “We’re playing together as a team so much more than I feel like I’ve ever been a part of. When somebody’s down, we’re going to pick each other up.”

Once Elon started CAA play, the team began to heat up, picking up wins easily as it went 9-1 in its first 10 conference games. Its offense has been one of the best in the CAA, ranking in the top three in the conference for both hits and home runs. Senior Kaitlyn Wells has been the engine for Elon’s red-hot offense, leading the team in home runs and hits with 15 and 62, respectively. Her home run total ranks second in all of the CAA and she is top five in hits. Her 50 runs batted in also leads the Phoenix and is second in the conference. Hatzopoulos is not far behind with 10 home runs blasted, too. She credited the team’s offensive output to the experience the upperclassmen brought.

“We have just gotten to a point where we’re not perfect in every way, but we know how to approach each and every situation,” Hatzopoulos said. “We’ve been in all these situations. We’ve been in that conference tournament when we lost. We’ve been

Kaitlyn Wells at the plate

15 Home Runs (2nd in CAA)
50 RBIs (2nd in CAA)
62 Hits (4th in CAA)



MILES HAYFORD | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Sophomore Greta Hessenthaler hits the ball during Elon’s win over the College of Charleston on April 4.



MILES HAYFORD | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Junior Mary Moss Wirt bunts in a game against Ohio State on Feb. 8.

in the close games where we’ve won. We know as hitters what the right approach is to go up in the box.”

Pitching has also been a strong aspect of Elon’s game with senior McKenna McCard leading the way with her 1.93 earned run average — which is third among all CAA pitchers — and her 80 strikeouts. Redshirt junior Taylor Cherry was also successful on the mound, earning a team-high five wins and the second-best ERA with 2.68.

Bocock praised the team’s hard work before and throughout the season.

“In the fall, when they started, they committed to something, not only did they commit to the game, but they committed to each other and I’ve been really impressed with that,” Bocock said.

Going into the tournament, Hatzopoulos said the team is prepared for the stressful environment of a conference

tournament because of the pressure they put on themselves to always try and get a series sweep. She also said their effort to earn the No. 2 seed helps prepare them for the environment of the tournament. Additionally, Elon has an advantage going into the tournament because it just ended its regular season by playing at Campbell, who is hosting the tournament. Hatzopoulos said the team is now used to things such as field conditions, the bounciness of the turf and where the sun is. She said the team feels confident and is ready to take advantage of Campbell’s field.

Elon’s primary roadblock to a CAA Championship will be the No. 1 seed Delaware, who has a 23-4 record in CAA play. Delaware will be a tough opponent to get past as the Blue Hens boast the league’s top offense and pitching staff. Delaware’s offense is led by the CAA’s home run leader in Sydney Shaffer, who blasted 18 out of the park this season. Delaware also has its ace Billie Kerwood on the mound, who lead the conference in ERA and strikeouts. Her strikeout total of 238 is almost triple the number of strikeouts McCard notched this season. The Blue Hens hosted Elon earlier this year in late March, beating Elon twice and losing one game 5-4. Bocock believes Elon can get the upper hand this time, however.

“

WE PLAYED [DELAWARE] SO WELL. I MEAN, EVEN WHEN WE LOST THE SECOND GAME, WE WENT TO EXTRA INNINGS ... I DON’T THINK OUR TEAM THINKS THAT THERE’S ANYBODY THERE THAT WE CAN’T BEAT.

KATHY BOCOCK
ELON SOFTBALL HEAD COACH

“We’ll be playing at a site that’s not home for either team, so that helps,” Bocock said. “But, we played them well. I mean, even when we lost the second game, we went to extra innings. ... I don’t think our team thinks that there’s anybody there that we can’t beat.”