

THE PENDULUM

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THE PENDULUM

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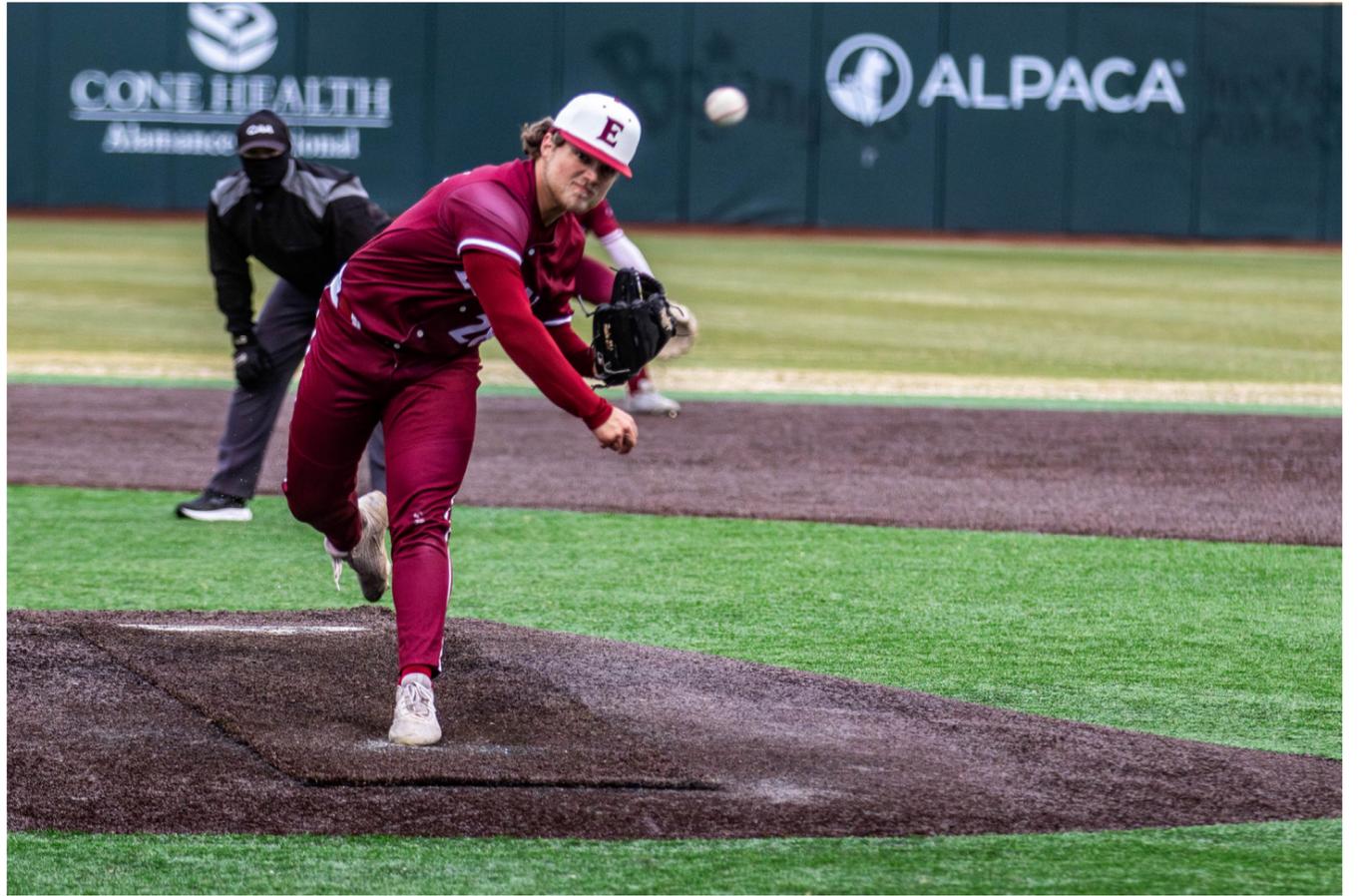
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CORRECTIONS

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

Early lessons shape Elon baseball's season



KATHAN GANDHI | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Sophomore Eric Lintelman fires a strike against Longwood University on Feb. 24. The Phoenix lost 8-3.

New transfers, fresh faces quickly creating united team

Kathan Gandhi
Elon News Network

After an up-and-down opening stretch and a roster filled with new faces, Elon Phoenix baseball enters the heart of its spring season still searching for consistency.

Head coach Mike Kennedy made one thing clear: while this year's roster may look less experienced on paper, that doesn't mean the team lacks game-tested players.

"This team's roster isn't as experienced at Elon," Kennedy said. "But Connor Roche has played every day, Jared Hall has played every day where he was at, and we've got junior college guys like Brian Duroff who have played a lot of baseball. There's experience, maybe just not within our program."

Elon brought in 14 transfers ahead of the season — including Roche, Hall and Duboff. That distinction has shaped how the coaching staff approaches the early season. With transfers and newcomers still adjusting to a new system, Kennedy said the biggest challenge is learning how each player responds to coaching and in-game adversity.

"When you've had guys for two or three years, you know how they tick," Kennedy said. "With new guys, you're learning as you go, when to make a swing change,

when to address deficiencies, and how they'll take it."

Through the first eight games, the Phoenix have shown flashes of strong play, particularly defensively, but Kennedy emphasized that pitcher development remains the biggest area for growth.

Kennedy pointed specifically to younger arms who are still working toward consistency in the strike zone.

"The biggest thing is getting those younger guys to grow and be more consistent," Kennedy said. "The stuff is better overall, but getting them in the zone more, that's where we still have work to do."

That command issue has directly impacted results. After opening the season 4-0, Elon dropped four straight games. Kennedy said the losses shared a common theme: self-inflicted mistakes.

"In each of those losses, every rally or crooked inning started because of something we didn't do," Kennedy said. "When we throw strikes, we're 4-0. When we don't, we're 0-4."

While the pitching staff continues to develop, sophomore shortstop Jake Hajdu has embraced a larger leadership role in the infield. After being one of the new faces in the lineup last season, Hajdu now finds himself among the team's more experienced players.

"It honestly feels pretty similar to last year," Hajdu said. "But having a lot of new guys that gelled pretty quickly, it kind of just feels like it's meant to be. We're all supposed to be out there."

Hajdu said the new roster has brought noticeable grit and competitiveness, regardless of game outcomes.

"A lot of heart," Hajdu said. "We're always competing, whether the games go our way or not. We stick to our plan and put our best foot forward."

That approach will be crucial for an offense that was the team's strength last season. Maintaining that production, according to Hajdu, comes down to consistency in approach at the plate.

"Whether it's hunting off-speed, hunting fastball or fighting with two strikes, we've just got to stick to our plan," Hajdu said.

Time is not on Elon's side. With only a few non-conference games remaining before Coastal Athletic Association play begins, the coaching staff is still evaluating roles and overall identity.

"We only have three weeks to prepare, and it feels like we just started," Kennedy said. "We're trying to establish who does what well and what type of baseball we have to play."

The schedule ahead only intensifies the urgency, with challenging matchups against in-state powers and conference opponents on deck. Kennedy stressed that wins and losses in non-conference games won't define the team as much as overall performance.

"I'd rather us play good baseball than worry about being in a 'good position,'" he said. "You can play good baseball and still lose. What we haven't done is play good baseball and lose. We've played bad baseball when we've lost."

Despite early inconsistencies, internal confidence remains high — driven in part by improved team chemistry.

"I think the team camaraderie has improved drastically," Hajdu said. "We're all very close, and that helps us when we're competing."

For Kennedy, the formula for success is simple but demanding. Throw strikes, limit self-inflicted mistakes and continue defining the team's identity before conference play.

The Phoenix have already shown they can be competitive when executing clean baseball. Now, the challenge is sustaining that level of play against a demanding spring schedule.

If Elon can pair its strong defense and offensive approach with improved pitching command, the Phoenix could position themselves as a dangerous contender in CAA play. Not because of early-season results, but because of how well they're playing when it matters most.



KATHAN GANDHI | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Sophomore first baseman Jose Mariano drives a ball down the line against Longwood University on Feb. 24.

'Always willing to learn': Softball captain's insight boosts Elon's performance, morale

Coach speaks to importance of strong communication, leadership

Abigail Hines
Elon News Network

Elon softball captain and junior Greta Hessenthaler's role this season looks a lot different than when she first joined the team in 2023. As their lead-off hitter, it's her job to read the pitcher and communicate back to her team and coaches what she observes at the plate.

"Freshman year, I was more towards the bottom of the lineup, so it was get my job done, move runners, find a way on base, kind of a mix of everything," Hessenthaler said. "Now in the first at-bat of the game, my role is to see pitches and find a way on base as the lead-off batter, because if I can see pitches, then my teammates behind me can see more of what the pitcher is throwing."

Named a captain as a sophomore, Hessenthaler quickly grew into one of the team's lead voices. She said her understanding of the game makes her a stronger leader. Head coach Kathy Bocock points to Hessenthaler's loyalty to the team as a characteristic of a good captain.

"It's not just because the way she practices and the way she plays, but it's the way she carries herself for her teammates," Bocock said. "Outside of here, you know, she's very, she's very loyal to the program, she's very loyal to her teammates, and she'll be there for anything."

Bocock first met Hessenthaler when her older sisters attended Elon softball camps. Bocock knew early on she wanted Hessenthaler on her roster.

"Her two sisters, we tried to recruit them to come play for us and they didn't, and I was always like, I'm getting her," Bocock said. "I'm getting Greta."

Hessenthaler said watching her sisters play inspired her love of the game. Growing up in Alamance County, she knew early she wanted to be a Phoenix.

"When I was probably four or five years old running around Elon, my sisters played,

so I was down left field watching them play," Hessenthaler said. "I always came through camps here with Coach Bo, knew a few girls that played here, so yeah, I always imagined myself playing here."

During her time at Southern Alamance High School, Hessenthaler stood out as a strong hitter. But the adjustment to playing at the collegiate level was a challenge both on and off the field.

"When I came here, me and Coach Bo had many conversations about how I could not let my academics really stress me out and carry that onto the field," Hessenthaler said. "Once I figured that part out, it helped me a lot mentally and physically in the game because I was able to perform better."

Hessenthaler's balance of academics and athletics has helped her maintain a 4.0 grade point average. Bocock said Hessenthaler's love of learning doesn't stop at the classroom but instead expands to the field.

"She might see things a certain way. She'll communicate back with me about it, or the other coaches, and then we talk things through, which is great," Bocock said. "She's never where she's too big for us, the game, or even her teammates. She's always willing to learn, but she's also always willing to help the others."

Although Hessenthaler's communication is a key to Elon's program, her game speaks for itself. She finished the 2024-25 season with a .354 batting average and was named to the 2025 All-Coastal Athletic Association first team. Elon softball won its first-ever CAA championship last year — a goal Hessenthaler said they had from the beginning of the season.

"It all started when we stepped back on campus, though, in August, we had that conversation as a team," Hessenthaler said. "I don't even know if the coaches were a part of it, but we were like, we're going to win the championship this year. This is our year."

Now, Elon is chasing a repeat. But for Greta, it's about more than the results of each game.

"My number one goal is to have fun," Hessenthaler said. "Play for that little girl that dreamed of being where I am today."



KATHAN GANDHI | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Senior Greta Hessenthaler gets in her batter's stance against Duke University on Feb. 17.



KATHAN GANDHI | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Junior Greta Hessenthaler drives an infield single against Duke University on Feb. 17. Elon lost 13-1.



William Carr was named Coastal Athletic Association golfer of the week at the West Bay Collegiate Invitational on Oct. 9.

COURTESY OF ELON ATHLETICS

New era, same expectations for Elon men's golf

Phoenix enter season with young, hungry team

Kathan Gandhi
Elon News Network

The standard for Elon University men's golf hasn't changed. After a senior-led squad captured the team's first Coastal Athletic Association title and advanced to NCAA play last season, the Phoenix enter spring of 2026 younger but no less ambitious.

Head coach Don Hill said he believes the foundation is already in place.

"We're excited to get going," Hill said. "Our expectation is to keep climbing. If we do the right things, we'll have a chance in April to hoist another trophy."

The championship mindset remains constant in the program. Elon's ultimate goal is clear: win the CAA, return to regionals and push deeper into NCAA play — something they got a taste of last year.

But the path to April hasn't been smooth.

Weather disruptions forced the Phoenix to miss their first spring event, leaving them, as junior Jack Wieler put it, "behind the eight ball a little bit."

Still, both coach and player see opportunity in the adversity.

"We'll play ourselves into form as the spring rolls out," Hill said. "They're hyper excited about competing."

Wieler echoed that confidence.

"I think we're going to surprise a lot of people with how well we play," Wieler said. "We have just as much, if not more, talent than last year."

A new core emerging

While last season's team leaned heavily on veteran leadership, this year's lineup features several freshmen who made an immediate impact in the fall.

Freshman William Carr has stood out for his advanced understanding of course management. Hill describes him as "unusually" polished for his age — a player who knows when to attack a flag and when to play safely to the fat side of the green.



Junior Jack Wieler tees off for the Elon men's golf team.

COURTESY OF ELON ATHLETICS

As Carr continues to grow physically, his mental edge has already proven to be a separator.

"I think some of that was that he wasn't the longest golfer early on in his junior golf career," Hill said. "He had to find ways to be competitive against guys hitting at 50 yards past him. Now he's starting to catch up, and he still understands how to dissect a golf course."

Meanwhile, freshman Drew Yeagley brings a different dynamic. Physically gifted and powerful off the tee, Yeagley pairs length with a steady temperament. Hill notes that Yeagley's attitude rarely fluctuates, whether he's four-under or four-over.

It's a trait that translates well in tournament settings.

"Because of his attitude and how strong he is, he can do things that other guys can't," Hill said. "Not just on our team, but in all of college golf."

The two young players have very different ways of playing the game. Both are cashing in.

That comfort is helped by familiarity. Many of Elon's freshmen grew up competing against or alongside the upperclassmen in junior events across

North Carolina, knowing each other since they were "pea-heads," as Wieler said. It has created a natural chemistry before they even arrived on campus.

The Jack Wieler effect

At the center of it all is Wieler, one of the most talented players in the program's recent history.

"The things he can do with the golf ball, whether it's shot shapes, clubhead speed, ball speed, it's remarkable," Hill said.

A three-time U.S. Amateur qualifier, Wieler's strength starts off the tee, similar to Yeagley. His ability to drive the ball long and straight consistently puts him in constant scoring position.

Once he gets there, it's all down to the green.

"As long as I get that putter going, I feel like I'm in a spot where I can win any week," Wieler said.

Hill praises more than just Wieler's physical tools. He points to the junior's ability to compartmentalize, flushing out both good and bad rounds within minutes.

"I think when you have that level of maturity, it allows you to play better golf on a more consistent basis," Hill said.

In a sport built on momentum, that

confidence is invaluable.

"I'm very competitive, and I would say I'm a pretty emotional player," Wieler said. "But in our sport, you've got to move on, or it'll carry over. It's not only for myself, but also setting an example for my young teammates."

That mindset, combined with his competitive edge, has helped him grow into a leadership role on a younger roster. Having played alongside experienced veterans his first two seasons, Wieler is now passing along those lessons.

"I think staying relaxed is huge," Wieler said. "We love to have a good time off the course. Positive vibes help people play well."

Driving toward a title

If there's a common identity emerging for this team, it's power and precision off the tee. Hill emphasizes driving the golf ball as a recruiting priority and a competitive advantage.

When Elon players find fairways with length, it opens the course. It allows them to attack pins, control shot shapes and stay aggressive across 54 holes.

In college golf — an individual sport scored as a team competition — Hill's philosophy is simple: put five players in position to win individually, and the team result will follow.

"My dream one day is to have five players tie for first," Hill joked. "Mathematically, I think we'd have a pretty good chance."

Behind the humor lies the expectation.

With a 3.5 team GPA and a roster of what Hill affectionately calls "golf nerds," the culture is firmly established.

"They want to eat it, drink it, breathe it, sleep it, the whole thing," Hill said.

If the youthful energy meets the program's new championship standard, the Phoenix could once again find themselves chasing trophies by May.

"The goal is to keep playing and get to the NCAA tournament and then advance to the NCAA finals in California," Hill said.

"Getting a taste of it last year, obviously, we have a few appetites to take it further. You have to dream and set goals in a certain manner to allow that to happen."

'She's a lax rat'



Junior Reagan Kuehn, in black, spars with redshirt junior Ana Lee Vandiveer in a scrimmage Feb. 23.

KATHAN GANDHI | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Lacrosse defender ignites Phoenix intensity

'Quarterback' of Elon's zone backs team's defensive transition

Kathan Gandhi
Elon News Network

When Reagan Kuehn first picked up a lacrosse stick around age 9, something clicked. She had tried it all — soccer, basketball, track, gymnastics, ballet — but lacrosse was different.

"I just got a stick in my hand, and I was like, yeah, this is definitely my sport," Kuehn said.

Years later, the Maryland native is one of Elon University's most important defenders, playing a position her head coach, Josh Hexter, has compared to the most high-pressure role in football.

"He likes to say that the backer is the quarterback of the defense," Kuehn said. "And that lights a fire under everyone around me, too."

Coming from Maryville High School, a program that plays by college rules, Kuehn arrived at Elon better prepared for the jump to Division I than most. But it wasn't skill alone that defined her growth as a Phoenix. It was trust.

Trust is a word Kuehn returns to constantly, almost like a mantra. As the backer in Elon's zone defense, she functions as the last line of communication.

"I trust the girls out on the field with my heart," she said. "And even if they don't feel that same way for me, I don't care — because I have everyone's back."

That trust was partly forged through adversity. Kuehn said her freshman year was a genuine test. She was six hours from home, homesick and learning a new

system in a new place.

"I'm a homebody," she admitted. "Growing up and realizing that it's okay to struggle, because all these girls also feel the same, that was something I had to learn."

What got her through it was the locker room. Gradually, she became the kind of player who helps others find their footing the same way others once helped her.

A defense in evolution

Elon's defense has undergone significant change during Kuehn's three years on campus.

In her freshman year, the team played man-to-man. Her sophomore year brought a shift to zone, and in January of this year, Hexter introduced yet another change: the backer zone, placing Kuehn at the center of it.

"It's definitely been a change, but I think it's a change for the better," Kuehn said.

In the old rover scheme, one player focused solely on interior cutters, tracking movement without watching the ball. The backer zone, as Kuehn describes it, is more layered, part rover, part support, part quarterback.

She backs up the defenders engaging one-on-one, reads the field for interceptions in the middle and communicates constantly.

"It's kind of a concoction of everything our defense has been over the past few years," she laughed.

Hexter sees it similarly, and appreciates what Kuehn specifically brings to the role.

"She's got a job of trying to take away vision, bat down passes, she's gonna have to slide and be the help," he said. "And she's got to be the biggest voice out there."

The switch came with an extra challenge. Elon lost a defensive coordinator, and Hexter stepped in to lead the unit himself. He made the strategic call to install the backer zone, and Kuehn embraced it, even taking it upon herself to help her teammates adapt.

"Teaching the girls this new style of play has actually helped me develop as a player," Kuehn said. "I realize things that can be implemented. And Josh is so open to us coming to him with concerns or things we could work on."

If there's a phrase that defines Elon's defensive identity this season, it's one Hexter repeats consistently: Bet on us.

"I don't want us to be reactive," Hexter explained. "Instead of focusing so much on what we see on film and reacting to it, I want us to do what we do. Be proactive. What we're doing is going to work regardless of what offense we're facing."

But it goes deeper than strategy. Hexter uses it as a psychological anchor against outside noise.

"You make a bad play, you lose a game, there's always chatter," he said. "For our defense to just look at each other and be like, 'Yep, I bet on you. You bet on me.' The rest of it kind of doesn't matter."

Kuehn has internalized it fully.

"Just play our own defense, our own game, and not even think about the other team," she said. "When we play like ourselves, we can dominate any team."

The 'click'

Every player has a moment when it all comes together. For Kuehn, it arrived during her freshman year Winter Term. It's a lesson she still carries.

An assistant coach at the time pulled

her aside and told her something simple: Stop backing up. Take your space. Step forward.

"Obviously, when a full girl is running full speed at you, you want to back up," Kuehn said. "But she really broke that through for me and made me the confident player I am today. She sparked something in how I thought about trust and what it means for a team."

That confidence now radiates outward. Underclassmen seek her out during practice with questions. She studies the game, and she thinks about how to make the players around her better. Hexter has noticed.

"She's a lax rat," Hexter said with a smile. "She works hard at honing her craft. She watches a lot of film, comes in and really hashes it out and tries to get smarter. And out here, she's always pushing to get better."

Away from the field, Kuehn is one of the thread-holders of Elon's team culture. She talks about locker room music like it's sacred ground — country Fridays, throwback days, EDM before big games.

"If we could play music during a game, I so would," she said, laughing.

And when the pressure mounts in a bad practice, a tough loss or a three-hour session in the rain, Kuehn said she knows what it takes to turn the tide.

"One positive attitude helps get rid of all the negatives," Kuehn said. "One person will say something funny and the whole team laughs, and that's the vibe for the rest of practice."

For Elon lacrosse, Reagan Kuehn is that person. The quarterback in the back. The voice in the middle. Betting on everyone around her, every single day.

Elon's No. 2 singles player embraces new mindset for sophomore season

Men's tennis star credits support system for current position, success

Benjamin Berfield

Elon News Network

When sophomore men's tennis player Rafael Ymer arrived at Elon last year, toward the end of January, he admitted that it took a little time to adjust to a new setting. He was coming from Stockholm, Sweden, by himself and would be playing tennis away from home for the first time.

"I struggled a little bit in the beginning," Ymer said. "I didn't have family or anything here."

But as the season got under full swing, Ymer showcased the skills that made him the team's top freshman and second-best singles player. He led the team in singles wins with 11 and reeled off seven consecutive victories in doubles by the season's end. Ymer finished the year All-Coastal Athletic Association first team for singles and second team for doubles.

In order to get to the position he's in now, Ymer said there were multiple communities that helped him feel welcome on campus. Ymer said the different support circles from his academic adviser to members of Elon Athletics helped him navigate his early experience at Elon and become more comfortable both socially and as a student-athlete.

"There were lots of different communities that were very supportive and they all had great camaraderie," Ymer said. "The support system at Elon has also been really good in terms of succeeding as a student athlete with our strength coach Kell [Smith] and my academic adviser."

Ymer said the amount of support has guided him to the position he is now. He said he appreciates all the help from the people around him and hopes his story can help other people recognize how beneficial it is to rely on different support systems at Elon.

"I want to use this also as a way of showing gratitude to the people that's been helping me," Ymer said. "I think it means a lot for these people if they see that he's actually thanking us online, or like giving us praise like this."

As Ymer became comfortable off the court, his life on the team also began to flourish. He began to become more accustomed to playing on a team rather than by himself. Ymer said it was a significant change at first because he was used to playing only singles back home.

"I think the biggest key was that I needed to understand that there was, like the team aspect, and it wasn't all about you," Ymer said. "I can tend to be a bit self-centered at times, but in college you have to see it from everyone's perspective."

Ymer said that understanding the team aspect of play took time. He acknowledged that his personality may not be like everyone else on the team.

Ymer said he can sometimes be more direct than usual, but not in a negative way. He said once he got to know his teammates better, and vice versa, everyone's performance rapidly improved.

"I can be straight up, or different," Ymer said. "It took a while for everyone on the team to understand me, but as soon as that bridge was crossed, I feel like we managed to understand each other way better, and that made us able to perform better and a little more for one another."

Head coach Maciek Sykut has particularly gotten the chance to witness Ymer's growth. He described him as a very determined player who's self-driven and always striving to achieve success.

"The work he puts in every day really enables him to find success," Sykut said. "The sky's the limit."

Sykut said Ymer's experience also made him ready to handle high-pressure moments. He said it was one reason why Ymer had the No. 2 singles spot on the team as a freshman.

"He's been exposed to the high levels of tennis," Sykut said. "I don't think he's afraid of facing anyone on the other side of the net."

But what impressed Sykut the most is Ymer's maturity. Sykut said it has a significant effect on the other players, and credited Ymer for choosing the people he surrounds himself with. He said he'll see Ymer and other players continuing to work on their skills after practice regularly.

"It's really who you spend time with," Sykut said. "There's already a group you know, that's kind of getting together, and they're doing some extra work outside of what we're asking them to do. Those habits spread."

For Ymer, the college season is much different in America. Whereas the season in Europe is evaluated in a longer time frame, the CAA tournament is what defines a team's fate by the end of the year.

"I was a little bit surprised how, like, three days of your season is gonna decide whether you had a successful season or not," Ymer said. "Because in Europe you usually have 11 months to prove yourself, and all you need is



KATHAN GANDHI | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Sophomore Rafael Ymer rips a down-the-line forehand against the University of North Carolina, Charlotte, on Feb. 19. Elon lost 4-3.



KATHAN GANDHI | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Sophomore Rafael Ymer and freshman Nick Fisk cheer on their teammates against the University of North Carolina, Charlotte, on Feb. 19.

basically one good week to have a good year."

Ymer said he wants a shot at redemption after losing the 2025 CAA Men's Tennis Championship, Elon's fifth straight loss in the finals. He believes that his growth as a player and person should be what defines the season. He said he will do everything possible to win the championship, but sees his improvement as something that will develop over time.

"I wouldn't want it to determine whether it was a good year or not," Ymer said. "I will do everything in my power to improve not just for myself but for the team. I try not to put too much weight on that and treat every match the same because I think it will be easier."



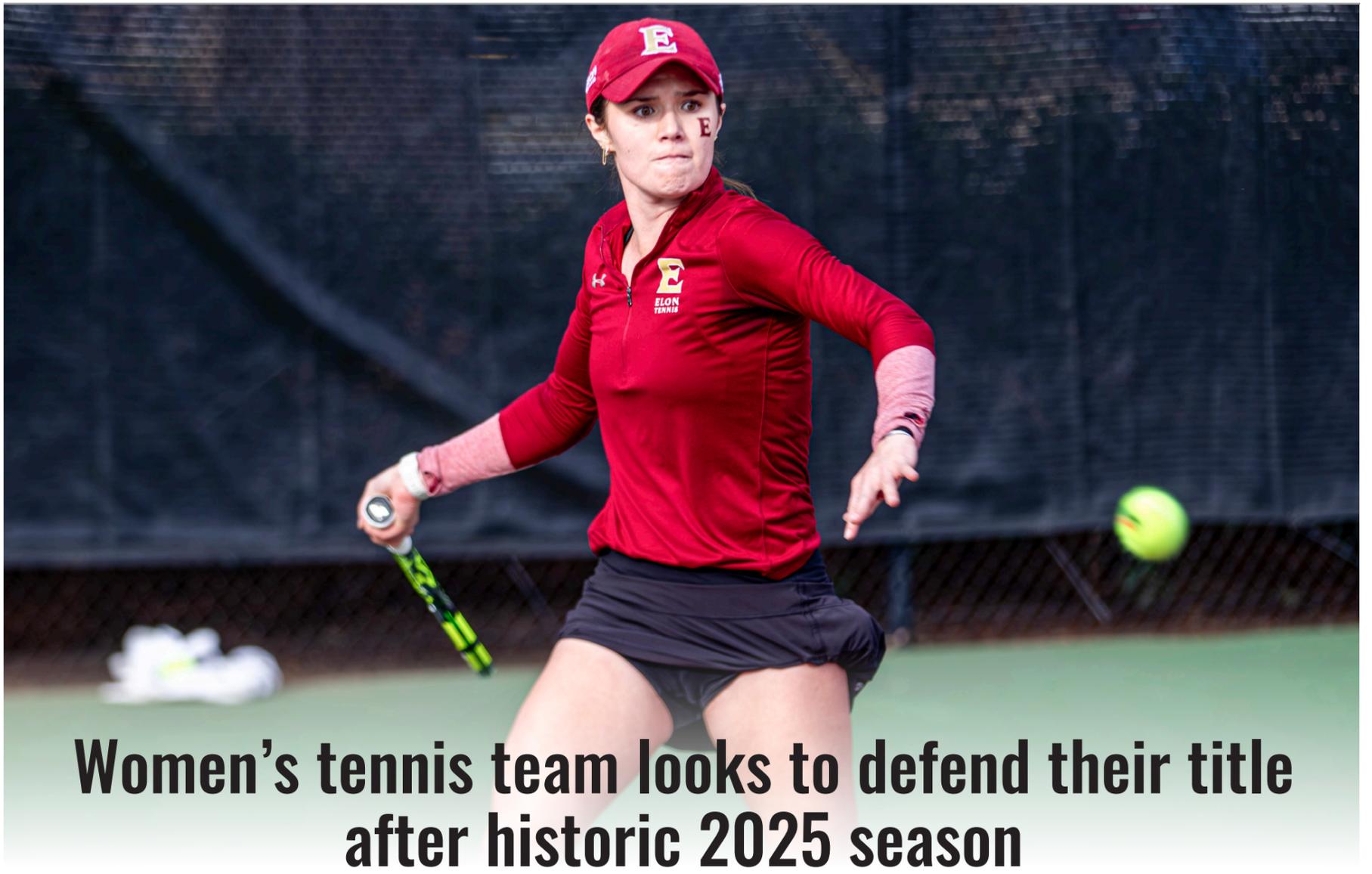
I WILL DO EVERYTHING IN MY POWER TO IMPROVE NOT JUST FOR MYSELF BUT FOR THE TEAM.

RAFAEL YMER
SOPHOMORE TENNIS PLAYER



KATHAN GANDHI | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Sophomore Rafael Ymer fist pumps after a big win against the University of North Carolina, Greensboro, on Feb. 8. Elon won 6-1.



Women's tennis team looks to defend their title after historic 2025 season

KATHAN GANDHI | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Junior Simone Bergeron gears up for a forehand against North Carolina A&T University on Feb. 25. Elon won 7-0.

Elon aiming to improve national ranking this season

Miles Hayford
Elon News Network

Elon women's tennis junior Simone Bergeron is hungry for more.

"We got a taste of what it's really like," Bergeron said. "That was such an amazing feeling. Like, let's do it again. And for all the new girls on the team I know they want a taste of what that feels like."

The team won their first ever Coastal Athletic Association Championship in program history last season, and Bergeron's singles win against William & Mary secured the championship for the Phoenix.

She's now looking to build on an impressive sophomore campaign where she was named CAA Player of the Year. Bergeron was prolific in both singles and doubles, making the All-CAA first team for both positions. Bergeron's pairing with Mariana Reding resulted in 18 doubles wins, alongside a dominant season-long performance at the No. 1 singles spot.

Elon is entering the season with a target on their back as the defending champions

coming off a 19-6 season, but Bergeron said the team is making sure they are focused on the process of getting back there and not getting ahead of themselves.

"Obviously, everyone gets excited for the tournament at the end of the season, but we're all really just focused on doing the best we can every match, getting those out of conference wins as well," Bergeron said. "Later in the season, when we get there, we know we'll be ready for that."

Head coach Elizabeth Anderson said the team spent the offseason focusing on their strength and conditioning. A new assistant coach also joined the Phoenix, Allie Gretkowski.

Gretkowski, who played at South Carolina and Louisville, helped the team with their conditioning, according to Reding.

Reding said she put a lot of work into her serve in the offseason. She said she worked on improving speed on her serve and coming to the net more often. Bergeron said she has worked on implementing more variety in her game, such as improving her drop shot and confidence at the net in singles.

Coming off the success of last season, Bergeron said gaining a national ranking

and making it farther in the NCAA Tournament is a big goal of the team. One way to accomplish this is playing against tougher opponents. Elon added some difficult non-conference opponents to the schedule this year, including the No. 3 ranked University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill; Furman University; and the University of Connecticut.

Anderson said it's good to have a varied schedule and to be able to present the players with those challenges.

"That's where you can see that this year, trying to play a few more varied teams to help us to be able to increase our level," Anderson said. "When we play against UNC it's just continuously playing it, at that high level, point after point, game after game. And I think that's kind of where the difference is. But the more that we do that, and the more we play those matches, the better we're getting."

When playing these tough opponents, Bergeron said they "take the name off the shirt and just play the ball."

The team this year is veteran-heavy, with mostly upperclassmen making up the roster and only one freshman. Bergeron said all five returning players know what it takes to win a championship and all the hard work

that goes into it.

Despite some turnover from last year, Reding said the team's close-knit sense of community is what separates them from other schools.

"I sometimes watch teams around us, and they finish a match and they are five meters away from each other, like they just don't like each other," Reding said. "We usually finish a match and we're just talking about it with each other, and then we're cheering on the people that still play. I think that's a great advantage for us. We get along so well. We can hang out on the court, outside the court. We're really good friends."

Anderson said she believes the team has got some good momentum carrying into the season. In the first few matches the team has illustrated that, going 43-2 on the season.

Bergeron said for the team to repeat the success of last season, they will need to repeat the hard work that it took to get there and move on from last season.

"Rather than staying in that moment for a little too long, it's a whole new season, new slate, everyone in the CAA has got a new team, we're gonna find out where we stand, but if we take care of our side of things, the results will come," Bergeron said.



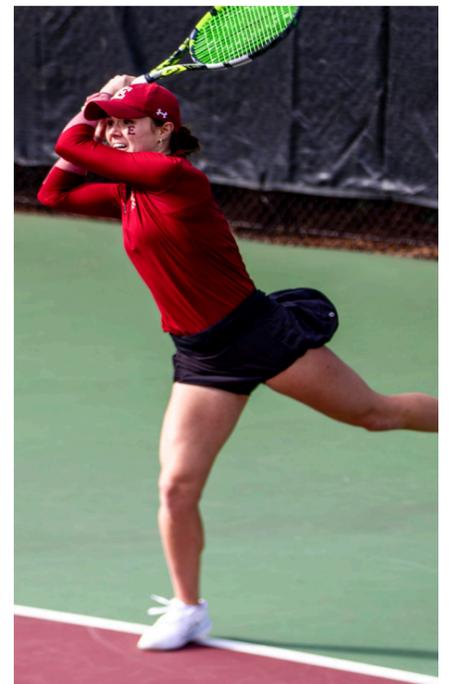
KATHAN GANDHI | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Senior Madison Cordisco fires a backhand winner against North Carolina A&T on Feb. 25.



KATHAN GANDHI | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Junior Mariana Reding yells "vamos" after winning her first-set tie-breaker against North Carolina A&T on Feb. 25.



KATHAN GANDHI | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Junior Simone Bergeron fires a backhand against North Carolina A&T on Feb. 25.

Record-breaking Elon track star reflects on collegiate career

Redshirt junior brings passion, drive to student athlete career

Riley Hale
Elon News Network

As Elon University's women's track and field team continues its season, redshirt junior Katie Blount is leaning on consistency, community and mental toughness while continuing to add to her record-breaking resume.

She has been named the All-Coastal Athletic Association outdoor runner in 2023 and 2024 as well as breaking Elon University's 5k and 6k records this year in cross country.

Blount said it being a college athlete is about drive. She said she thinks if an athlete commits and puts their mind to it then they can excel in any sport.

"It just takes a lot of passion for the sport that you're in," Blount said.

Blount said running takes a lot of hard work, dedication and consistency.

"I think with running there is not as much compared to other sports and it's not as difficult as a lot of the other sports," Blount said.

Elon assistant track and field coach Mark Rinker said that while track is not as technical or difficult as other sports may be, athletes still need a positive mindset or mentality.

He later said athletes have to have confidence in themselves and the ability to put themselves through a lot of work, from workouts to races.

Rinker said track is more defined by mentality than technique.

"I use the motivation from my teammates, family members and anyone who supports me with my races," Blount said.



KATHAN GANDHI | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Redshirt junior Katie Blount runs in front of Elon's track & field championship banner March 3. The Phoenix are the defending 2025 champions.

Blount said they have a really good community of people who support them in their races as well as people who work with them to train better and achieve their goals. An aspect of community is important to find her drive.

Now that they are closing in on the last several races, she said she has some expectations for the upcoming season.

"The goals are just to kind of stay focused on improvement," Blount said. "Like not getting caught up in all of the different little things that you can worry about in running."

She said she thinks the reason why she was able to perform at this high level and continue to break new records is because she kept her head down and just focused on herself as well as staying consistent with running.

Rinker said the team wants to be the same people on race days as they are in workouts — the same amount of effort into running each day.



KATHAN GANDHI | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Redshirt junior Katie Blount races around the track in Elon's practice March 3.

Dance team builds confidence ahead of national competition

Dancers look to break school record in pom category

Abigail Hines
Elon News Network

Less than two months from their performance at the National Dance Alliance Collegiate National Championship, the Elon University dance team has one thing in mind: topping last year's record-breaking performance.

Captain and senior Bella Marrone clearly remembers the moment when she realized their pom routine at the 2025 national competition secured their highest placement in program history.

"Being on stage and hearing the third place team get called and knowing it wasn't us was just insane," Marrone said. "We've never gotten higher than third place, so just knowing that all our work we put in was worth it and we were being recognized for all of our accomplishments was

so incredible."

After placing second, Marrone said the team is even more motivated now to get first place.

"Ever since then, we've just been hungrier and hungrier and working harder every practice," Marrone said. "With our team and the talent and the confidence and our family dynamic, we are going to go out there and do the best we can. I have a really good feeling about this year."

NDA Nationals will take place from April 8 to 11 at Daytona Beach, Florida.

The Elon dance team will be competing in the pom and hip hop categories in Division I. Each routine is scored on a variety of criteria, including choreography, staging, authenticity and uniformity.

Head coach Elly Dirks is in her seventh season with the team

graduating from Elon in 2019. Throughout her time as coach, she said she's worked to build confidence in her dancers.

"If you don't believe it, there's no way you're going to convince judges or anybody else that you deserve to have that title," Dirks said. "But if you have the fire from within, nothing can stop you."

Over the next seven weeks, the dance team will transition from practicing gameday dances to tweaking and revising their routines for nationals.

Dirks choreographed this year's pom routine and said it holds true to traditional pom styles but has a unique flair she hasn't seen other teams

do. Dirks said she and her dancers have worked to make a name for themselves on the national stage.

"When I first took over the team, we felt like we were this little school amongst all these bigger teams that we were competing against," Dirks said. "I think that we've really reframed the mindset of this team through our success, but also even before our success is that, you know, we are supposed to stand there with the rest of them, and not only that, we can be better than the rest of them."

Beyond confidence, Marrone said the close bond between dancers pushes them to perform better.

"Everyone has the same end goal, and everyone wants to be here and I think that just brings such a positive and energetic dynamic to the team," Marrone said.

"Every single person's doing it for the person next to them, and they want it just as bad as everyone else."



ABIGAIL HINES | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Elon dance team captain and senior Bella Marrone, left, rehearses a hip hop routine with members of the dance team at practice Feb. 23 at Schar Center.

IF YOU GO

The dance team will host a nationals showcase at 7 p.m. April 6 in Schar Center. The send-off event is free and open to all who wish to attend.



KATRINA HOLTZ | PHOTO EDITOR

Sophomore Aaliyah Farrington walks in the streetwear portion of the fashion show during African Diaspora of Elon's first ever African Night on Feb. 28 in Alumni Gym. Amyah Farrington was there to support her sister, Aaliyah, who was a model in the fashion show. "I love seeing people embrace their culture and what they wear," Amyah said.



KATRINA HOLTZ | PHOTO EDITOR

Junior Jamari Heredia performs for the fashion category for the annual Kiki Ball on Feb. 27 at the College Street Taphouse. The venue was vibrant and bright as students lined the walls, walked the stage, cheered on friends and competed in the annual event, hosted by Late Night Elon and the Gender and LGBTQIA Center. Inspired by LGBTQIA ballroom culture, the event serves as a way to honor diversity in expression within LGBTQIA communities. "It is certainly different from when I was at Elon. I graduated in '92, so we had nothing like this, so it's really wonderful to see," Elon alum and 2026 Kiki ball judge David Carter said.



KATRINA HOLTZ | PHOTO EDITOR

Elon's dance team performs national's pom routine in practice Feb. 23 at Schar Center. Learn more about the dance team on page 8.



ALI ELSHEIKH | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

North Carolina Brazilian Arts Project Assistant Director Courtney Feliz dances with the crowd in McKinnon Hall during Carnival on Feb. 25.



KATRINA HOLTZ | PHOTO EDITOR

Senior Ethan Lowe performs in the fashion category of Kiki Ball on Feb. 27. The theme of the night was 'Diamond Dust,' and participants brought their own flair to the celebration, as a wide variety of outfits and expressions filled the room. The competition was organized into multiple categories, including best dressed, dynamic duo, vogue and hand performances.



ALEXANDER SIEGEL | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Elon University junior forward/midfielder Jess Beck guards the ball from Lenoir-Rhyne University freshman defender/midfielder Lauren Clonch. The exhibition game took place Feb. 27 at Rhodes Stadium.

Elon town police remind drivers of parking law

1 specific law closes loophole in avoiding time-based tickets

Abby Gravely
Elon News Network

Elon drivers are returning to their parked cars to find white slips of paper tucked under their windshield wipers. But these aren't tickets.

The Town of Elon Police Department left "courtesy notices" on the windshields of cars parked in downtown Elon. These notices contain reminders of eight parking laws Administrative Sergeant Scott Swink said are often violated.

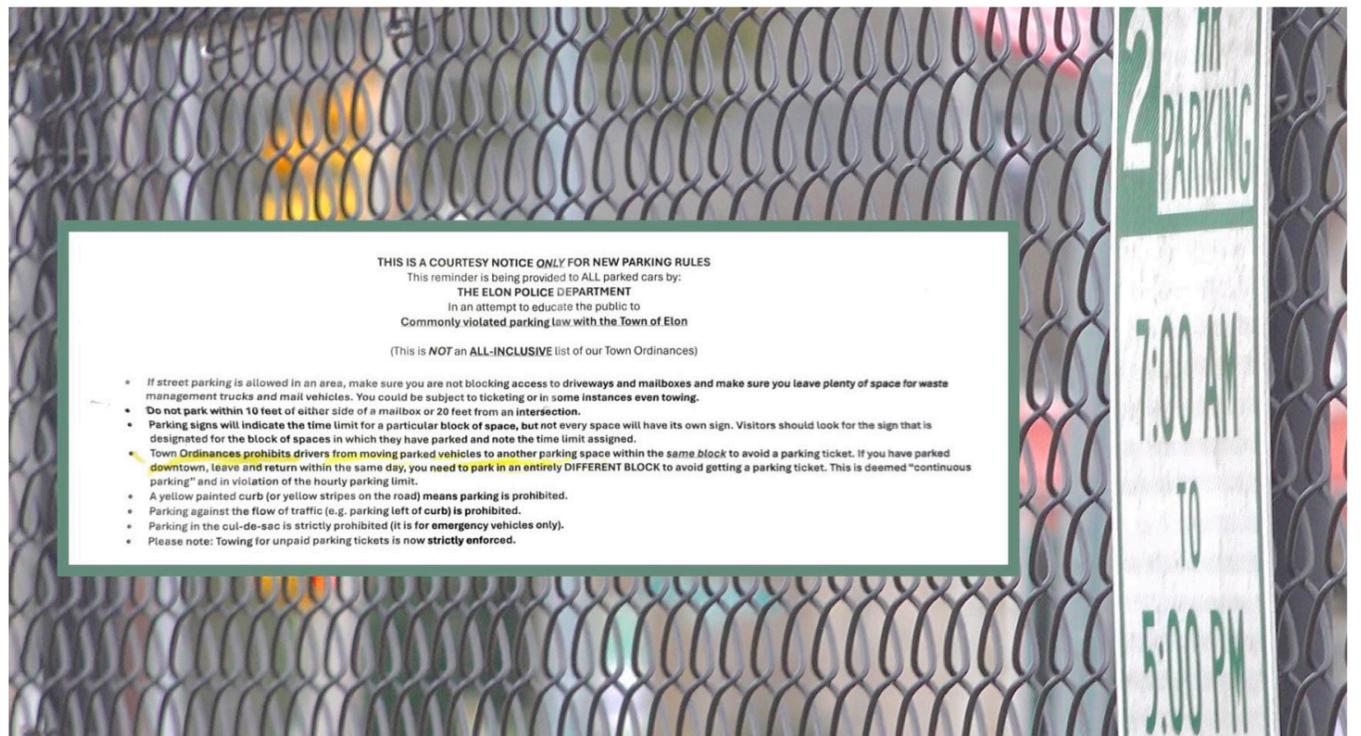
"The reminders are more of a courtesy instead of an actual citation, that way it keeps money in the pockets of students," Swink said.

One rule was emphasized through highlights, underlines, bold lettering and italics: drivers cannot move parked vehicles from one space to another within the same block in time-restricted sections. In order to avoid a ticket, drivers must park on a different block.

Swink said that there has been a recent influx of drivers parking and then moving to another spot before reaching their time limit.

"Why it became an ordinance is because a way around the violation is to move from one spot to another and identify that as a loophole," Swink said.

Swink said this emphasis is essential because drivers often move from one two-hour spot to another to avoid violating time restraints. He said the ordinance closes a commonly-used loophole and makes it so



Town of Elon police cracks down on parking rules, sends out list of ordinances March 2.

PHOTO ILLUSTRATION BY FIONA MCALLISTER

that anyone who wants to park downtown is able to.

"Elon's not the biggest town and doesn't have parking decks, so the emphasis is just try to plan ahead the best you can and that way we can avoid the extra parking tickets," Swink said.

This rule also applies to drivers who leave time-restricted parking sections and return within the same day. Junior sport management major Billy O'Byrne has received two of these notices over the past

two weeks.

O'Byrne parks in the town's two-hour parking spots on W. Lebanon Ave for his 8 a.m. classes, then leaves to go get breakfast before coming back for his 10:30 a.m. classes.

Because his classes are an hour and 40 minutes each, O'Byrne said he never stays in one spot for over two hours.

"It says that if I go get food and come back and still park in 2-hour parking I'm still allowed to get a ticket, which I feel is very wrong," O'Byrne said.

Because he has most of his classes in the School of Communications, O'Byrne feels like there aren't many convenient options for parking besides the two-hour spots.

Other rules laid out included restrictions on the distance cars can be parked relative to intersections and mailboxes and yellow paint on curbs that designate no-parking zones.

The notice also informed drivers that towing for unpaid parking tickets is now strictly enforced.

Candidates for dean of Student Health and Well-Being present in front of Elon community

Dean will oversee management of incoming HealthEU building as part of their job

Miles Hayford
Elon News Network

Candidates for the next dean of Student Health and Well-Being at Elon University presented in front of the Elon community in recent weeks as part of the selection process. The position is currently held by Jana Lynn Patterson, who is retiring in fall 2026 after 40 years at Elon University. The dean will lead the HealthEU Initiative and the Boldly Elon strategic plan, while supervising departments like Counseling Services and Student Health Services. They will also manage the new 135,000 square foot HealthEU building, set to open in fall 2026.

The first candidate to present was Kelly Hogan, who most recently served as associate vice provost for health & well-being at Indiana University. She also served as the associate dean of health & wellness at Central Washington University, where she led COVID-19 campus response efforts, secured more than \$1 million in new funding, and developed plans for a 45,000 square foot integrated health and wellness facility. She also worked at the University of Chicago, Oregon State University and the University of Notre Dame.

In her talk, Hogan emphasized that as dean, she would focus on campus culture and implementing health and well-being into that culture.

"Campus culture shifts when health is embedded in policy and campus structure, not treated as add-ons," Hogan said. "It shifts when environments that's included in academics, residential and recreational consistently support well-being. It shifts when partnership across campus are strong, not siloed."

Hogan said she envisions her role as dean



From left, Joi Alexander and Kelly Hogan present to Elon community members as candidates for a new dean position on March 2 and Feb. 23, respectively.

as being someone who works to ensure that well-being is how Elon works and lives every day.

"Well-being isn't something that students experience only when they walk into the counseling center or the student health center," Hogan said. "It shows up in academic life, in residential and wellness programming, in leadership decisions and in everyday environments that we create."

Promoting well-being also involves long-term student success, according to Hogan.

"How we cultivate student well-being now shapes lives long after graduation," Hogan said. "Isn't that why a lot of us show up to work? Right? We're investing in today, but also into their future selves."

A big focus of Hogan's was improving student counseling services into something that offers care before the crisis happens.

"If we only respond once a student is in crisis, we'll always be behind," Hogan said. "We're the dog chasing the car, if you will. The goal is a system where students experience support early, and where prevention is built in the way in which that we operate."

While at Indiana, she developed an eight-step care model that reduced counseling wait times from 17 days to under 24 hours. She said it was important to recognize that

not everyone is ready for the same step of counseling.

Hogan said she has been impressed by Elon. She said that she can notice well-being present in every building she walks into. Hogan said that Elon is on a mission with many exciting things in the works, like the Boldly Elon plan, the Elon-Queens merger and the incoming HealthEU building. Hogan said she wants to be a part of it.

Joi Alexander, the director of the Wellness Empowerment Center at Georgia Tech, also presented to the campus community. Alexander is also a doctoral-trained health professional. She has also worked at Florida State University and the University of Florida. Alexander, a Greensboro native, has also taught courses in a number of wellness-related subjects, including community health and resilience.

In her presentation, Alexander discussed how, as dean, she would want to remove silos. She said campus recreation, counseling, health services and health promotion all make up an integrated environment.

She said it is vital for her to learn Elon's identity before coming to try and change anything. She also said it is important for her to take a look at data and trends about Elon. Data was a big emphasis of her presentation

on how she would approach well-being at Elon.

"Data has to be the foundation," Alexander said. "We have to make sure that we're telling our story. What is our story right? What is it that we do, and how do we do it? Well, because I think that there's a lot of data and lots of ways to tell the story, and there's missed opportunities when we're not going out there to tell people this is who we are, this is our identity."

Alexander also discussed the need to not overburden the community with initiatives.

"Programs are good right, but policy lasts," Alexander said. "Programs are an initiative. An initiative starts the conversation. But how do we make it lasting? And that often has to go through policies."

Alexander also said she is approaching the position with a public health lens, which means that she wants to prepare incoming students for well-being before they step foot on campus. Alexander said that at Georgia Tech, they require all incoming students to take online courses on alcohol education, sexual violence prevention and mental well-being education.

"I'm looking at it as how are we developing students for skills in resilience, so that they can bounce back when adversity strikes?" Alexander said. "Because adversity is a part of the college experience, and it's our responsibility to ensure that students have a toolkit to create, to make sure they have things to pull from. So the stressor is a moment and not a lifetime."

Alexander discussed the Boldly Elon plan and how she would work within it. She described herself as a people leader and data-informed. Alexander stressed that as dean, she would always look for continuous improvement.

"You've never arrived with well-being," Alexander said. "Well-being is a journey and not a destination, and that journey, you have to be willing to understand that there's going to be ebbs and flows, which is okay, but we always have to be trying to push the needle."



NC electricity costs, consumption expected to rise

Duke Energy proposes 15% price increase amid data usage increases

Evan Cooper
Elon News Network

North Carolina electricity bills have risen 22% since 2020, according to a February report from the North Carolina Energy Policy Task Force. With data centers being proposed across North Carolina, those costs could rise even more.

Currently, North Carolina hosts data centers from companies such as Google, Meta and Apple. With generative artificial intelligence and cloud computing projects requiring high levels of electricity, more power will be needed to maintain operations.

Duke Energy — North Carolina's largest electricity provider — estimates electricity demand could rise between 16% and 60% over the next 15 years. Large users, such as data centers, make up about 80% of the projected energy demand. Comparatively, North Carolina saw only 7% of electricity production growth in the past 20 years.

According to the task force report, problems like rising fuel costs, outdated power grids and large, energy-intensive customers in certain regions are contributing to rising electricity bills. The task force report included nine recommendations for these issues, including large load tariffs for high-demand facilities, investing in grid upgrades, incentivizing small business energy efficiency and reporting energy and water usage for large users.

In November 2025, Duke Energy proposed a 15% rate hike for customers, increasing monthly costs an average of \$20 to \$30. Alamance County is served primarily by Duke Energy, according to data from the North Carolina Utilities Commission. Duke Energy said this hike would contribute to the company making its current power plants more efficient. The Commission will begin considering this hike in July 2026.

The commission was unable to comment on the change due to judicial conduct rules on the commission's proceedings. Josh Sundt, interim general counsel for the Utilities Commission, sent the commission's December 2025 report to Elon News Network. In the report, the Utilities Commission states that North Carolina is working to expand its access to natural gas, encourage the construction of more energy generating facilities, and

increase clean energy and energy efficiency.

According to data from the NC Utilities Commission, nuclear power is the highest source of energy for Duke Energy Progress and Duke Energy Carolinas, with natural gas and oil being the second highest source for both providers. The Trump administration has encouraged development in nuclear energy and oil by decreasing regulations and increasing drilling.

The report noted that — under the Trump administration — many clean energy benefits from the Biden administration's Inflation Reduction Act have been repealed, making it harder to encourage the development of clean energy facilities.

"On July 4, 2025, the One Big Beautiful Bill Act became law, which rescinds numerous provisions supporting investment in energy infrastructure contained in the IRA," the report stated. "Under this new legislation, certain fossil fuel projects are also no longer required to have controls or technologies to avoid or reduce air pollutants or greenhouse gas emissions."

Burlington resident Jeff Tudor said he is worried about pollution increasing with demand, but said he believes that if the Utilities Commission approves Duke Energy's rate hike that it can't be unreasonable.

"I'm not convinced that the data centers are necessary," Tudor said. "But anyway, I guess the point is we need to look at as many alternate ways of generating electricity as we can."

Raymond Fletcher, senior director for facilities management at Elon University, was unavailable for an interview but sent a statement to Elon News Network.

Fletcher wrote that Elon University has worked on their own facilities to decrease their demand for electricity. According to Fletcher, the university has decreased energy use by 37% since 2004 despite university square footage more than doubling in the time frame.

"We continue to build energy efficient buildings, renovate aging facilities and replace older mechanical systems with high efficiency systems that require less energy to operate," wrote Fletcher. "These efforts lower our energy consumption footprint which helps reduce overall costs to the university."

Still, Fletcher wrote that the proposed 15% rate hike would be substantial compared to the increases in previous years.

Local quilt guild creates community through craft

Alamance Piecemakers prepare for upcoming quilt show

Abigail Hines
Elon News Network

Dressed in patchwork sweaters, carrying hand-stitched shoulder bags and wearing name tags made from scrap fabric, the Alamance Piecemakers Quilt Guild meets every month at the Burlington Elmira Community Center. The group, made up of about 50 women, shares their latest crafts, plans upcoming workshops and discusses new techniques they've learned. The guild, for many of these women, is about more than quilts; it's about kinship and collaboration.

The president of APQG, Kathy Lyday, has been quilting since she was in her 20s, but only recently joined the organization in 2023 after retiring from Elon University as an English professor. Lyday said many other women were also looking for a community after retiring.

"If you're retired and you miss your job and you miss your work and you miss your colleagues, this is a great place to come because we're all in the same boat in that sense," Lyday said.

Lyday said she's the only previous professor in the group, and the other members of APQG come from a wide range of occupations and backgrounds.

"Connie is a former physician. We have corporate people here, we have former schoolteachers, we have stay-at-home moms and grandmoms," Lyday said. "It's a community that you would be hard pressed to find anywhere else except maybe at the Y."

What unites them, though, is a passion to create.

"We're all very artistic, and a lot of people in more than one area," Lyday said. "We have knitters and embroiderers and, you know, crochet artists and people who do cross stitch. We're all needle artists, and I think there's just an inordinate amount of creativity around these women and a lot of wisdom."

A typical meeting for the APQG includes a show-and-tell for members to present their most recent work. Susan Hudson has been involved for over three years and said she enjoys seeing the group's individual work.

"The show-and-tell gives me ideas on quilts I would like to make, or it says, 'Oh my goodness, that person is making



Members of the Alamance Piecemakers Quilt Guild show off their projects from a recent workshop at their meeting Feb. 18 at the Burlington Elmira Community Center.

ABIGAIL HINES | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER



Members of the Alamance Piecemakers Quilt Guild admire an antique quilt brought in by another member at their meeting Feb. 18 at the Burlington Elmira Community Center.

ABIGAIL HINES | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER



Two women from the Alamance Piecemakers Quilt Guild present a recently completed quilt at their meeting Feb. 18 at the Burlington Elmira Community Center.

ABIGAIL HINES | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

something I could never do. That's way beyond my ability.' But I can enjoy looking at it," Hudson said.

The guild often donates to local groups to provide quilts to those who need them, such as CrossRoads, a social services organization. They also donate quilts to local veterans every Veterans' Day.

Hudson is a co-chair of the annual joint quilt show with the Burlington Carousel Quilters. The show this year, titled "Art Feeds the Soul," allows for members' work to be presented beyond just their own groups.

The quilt show gives contributors the ability to receive feedback on their work and seek inspiration from other creators at the event. Hudson estimates about 100 quilts will be on display.

This year's show has a special focus on the 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence. Members from APQG and BCQ collaborated to make a patriotic quilt with each state's name embroidered around the perimeter.

The quilt is currently making its

way around the community and will eventually end up in the Alamance Historical Museum.

IF YOU GO

"Art Feeds the Soul" quilt show
10 a.m. - 4 p.m. March 5 to 7
Elon Community Church

Attendance is free, but guests are encouraged to bring a non-perishable food item for the Salvation Army.

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