

## Search continues for next chief of campus safety, police

11-member committee leads search; Interim chief maintains campus safety, police

**Fiona McAllister**  
Elon News Network

The search for Elon University's new chief of campus safety and police is underway.

Associate Provost for Academic Inclusive Excellence Naeemah Clark, who is on the search committee, said that they are aiming to fill this position before next semester starts. When it comes to looking for someone who fits the position, Clark said that the committee wants someone who is a strong communicator.

"I would hope that we had someone who was aligned with Elon's values around inclusive excellence," Clark said. "Students are thinkers here, and so I hope they will engage in conversation."

Clark is joined on the search committee

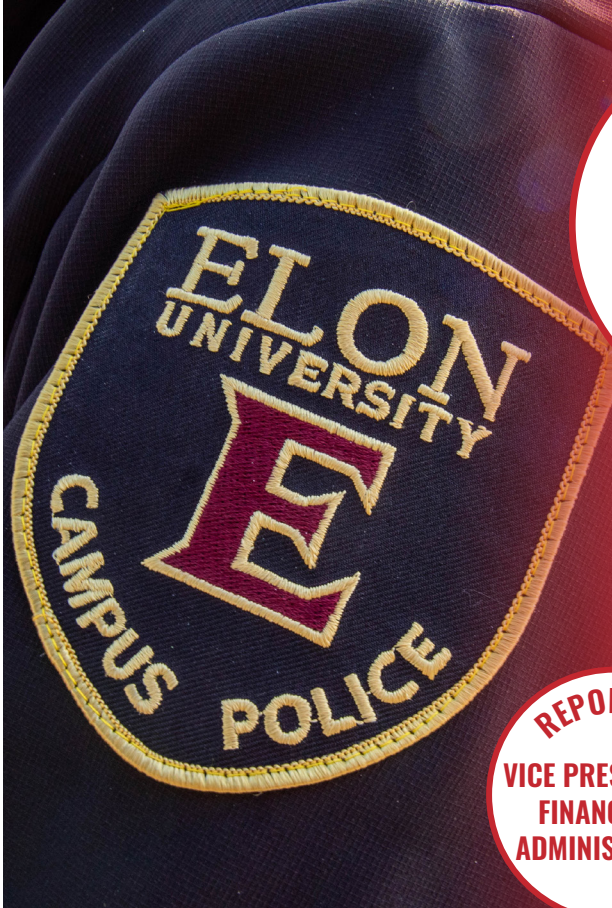
by 10 others, a mix of staff, faculty and one student. The agency Spelman and Johnson is also assisting in the process. Spelman and Johnson is a woman-owned executive search firm specializing in recruiting leaders for organizations, according to their website.

As the search continues, interim chief of police Doug Dotson will lead Elon University Campus Safety and Police.

Clark said that the interview process is standard. There will be a typical first-round interview and then they will narrow down the list. Following the first-round interview, if selected, the candidate will be invited to spend a day or two on campus.

The search started after former Chief of Police Joe LeMire retired on April 3. After five years as chief of police at Elon and 33 years in law enforcement, LeMire took a job as a business agent for a private company.

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Information about Elon University's chief of campus safety and police role from the Spelman and Johnson job description. ENN FILE PHOTO

## Forward declares for NBA draft

Chandler Cuthrell leads team in points, rebounds per game

**Benjamin Berfield**  
Elon News Network

Elon graduate forward Chandler Cuthrell has declared for the NBA Draft following the 2025-26 season.

Cuthrell transferred to Elon in 2025 and was named second-team All-CAA. During this season, Cuthrell led the team in points and rebounds, with 19.8 and 6.5, respectively. He finished the year second in the CAA in points per game, a drastic jump from the 6.1 points per game he averaged before coming to Elon.

In a statement to Elon News Network, Elon men's basketball head coach Billy Taylor said Cuthrell made a tremendous impact on the program in a short time. "We're incredibly proud of the season he put together in a Phoenix uniform," Taylor wrote. "We're excited to support him as he pursues the next step in his basketball journey."

Cuthrell announced his decision on his Twitter account April 6. In a previous interview with ENN, he credited his ascension in play to the coaching and staff at Elon.

"This is the first time that somebody has believed at the level this staff does," Cuthrell said. "It's definitely been such a blessing. I love playing here."

On the court, Cuthrell focused on making defenses pay at the rim.

"I wanted to make sure I made more of a paint presence and establish more dominance in the paint rather than just setting around the 3-point line," Cuthrell said.

## Elon Law works to combat rising law school costs



Elon Law students talk together on April 2 in the Law School Commons. KATRINA HOLTZ | PHOTO EDITOR

Class of 2025 achieved highest bar passage rates in program history

**Miles Hayford**  
Elon News Network

As costs rise and law schools become more expensive to attend, Elon University's School of Law in Greensboro is focusing on promoting accessibility. Dean Zak Kramer said that access is at the heart of Elon Law.

"There have been calls for change in legal education, to focus on access, to focus on opportunity, to make sure that justice be a part of legal education for a very long time, and it took a lot of law schools too long to take up that call," Kramer said. "But access and opportunity are baked into Elon Law. It's in our DNA."

The school's bar passage rate has been over 60% in each of the last three years with over 76% passing in 2024 and over 69% passing in 2025. In 2026, the school achieved a 91.96% passage rate by the class of 2025, the highest

score in school history. Elon Law recently received an A in the National Jurist's "Justice & Opportunity Honor Roll," recognizing law schools expanding access and success. Elon is among 21 schools to earn an "A" nationally and the only one in North Carolina.

Elon's program is designed to be accessible as it is the only law school in the country that is 2 and a half years, contrary to most three-year law schools. This accelerated program reduces costs and gets students into the workforce earlier, Kramer said. The reduced tuition contrasts with rising law school costs. According to LawHub, private law schools were 2.54 times as expensive in 2025 as they were in 1985 after adjusting for inflation.

Zachary Stine, a current student at Elon Law, said the program allows students to take the bar exam in February instead of July, when most students take it. He said this gets them into the working world faster.

See LAW | pg. 4



**19.8 POINTS PER GAME ON AVERAGE**

**2ND LEADING SCORER IN THE CAA**

**6.5 REBOUNDS PER GAME ON AVERAGE**

FULLER DENTAL

KATHAN GANDHI | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Chandler Cuthrell slams down a dunk Jan. 29 during Elon's 79-76 game against William & Mary in Schar Center.



State legislature looks to influence property taxes

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'Romeo and Juliet' runs from April 16-18

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Throwers make solo-event a team endeavor

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THE PENDULUM

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CORRECTIONS

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

# Computer science students enter tense job market

Entry-level applicants compete with AI, one another in changing field

**Anne Thyfault**

Elon News Network

“No” is a word that computer science students are hearing more and more often. When it comes to the job market, college graduates have a 7% unemployment rate, the 5th highest according to the New York Federal Reserve. Students at Elon University have been feeling this pressure.

Some students have applied to more than 100 internships or jobs and only received one offer. Senior computer science major Henry Phillips applied to 98 jobs and received an offer after networking with a company. He credited the job market issues to artificial intelligence replacing entry-level jobs and increased competition. Regardless of the reasoning, he said the repeated rejections could be disappointing.

“It’s very easy to get discouraged because you’re looking at it and you’re like, ‘I have all these credentials, why am I not getting this?’” Phillips said.

Some of Phillips’ assumptions about issues in the computer science job market are true; however, with countless anecdotal stories from students all struggling, it has left many questioning what is really happening to the job market.

Chair of the Department of Computer Science, Duke Hutchings, had said that issues in the job market are due to a number of reasons, which include increased competition, higher hiring standards and fewer job opportunities.

Though software development, programming and testing jobs have increased since 2014, the number of computer science students has also been on the rise.

According to the National Student Clearinghouse Research Center, from the class of ’16 to the class of ’24, computer information sciences and support services saw an 86.6% increase. That increase is significant, especially compared to the 44.4% increase in software web developers, programmers and testers employment from 2014 to 2024, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor.

In this case, simply stating that there are fewer jobs for computer science students would be false, as there is another factor at play. As seen by the graduation rates, a surplus of workers outweigh the job demand. In addition to that, the U.S. Bureau of Labor shows that from 2023 to 2024, there was a slight decrease in employment, a trend that likely could have continued into 2026. Data was not available for 2025.

The increase in degree earners ultimately led to more competition in the computer science field, putting pressure on Elon students searching for careers.

“I’m not just competing with kids from Elon. I am competing for the same job with

kids from Ivy League schools and other schools. Everyone is just trying to get a job,” Phillips said.

Students are having to build out portfolios, personal projects and skills to stand out among a sea of applicants.

“There’s just kind of a leveling up of expectation by students and a need for students to be able to demonstrate a higher quality, maybe a broader quantity of things to be attractive to employers,” Hutchings said. “Students also seem to need to build out more personal projects than they had to in the past to be able to stand out or maybe even now meet a new standard.”

For 2025 graduate Kylie Leyda, personal projects are the exact reason she stood out to her current employers. At Elon, Leyda created a startup called One Tap that used AI for personalized online shopping recommendations.

When interviewing for her current role as a Software Engineer at Surgical Safety Technologies, Leyda was directly asked about the startup she participated in.

“Most of the interviews I landed immediately asked me about One Tap,” Leyda said. “I was a standout because I went and built something on my own and outside of class.”



I'M NOT JUST COMPETING WITH KIDS FROM ELON. I AM COMPETING FOR THE SAME JOB WITH KIDS FROM IVY LEAGUE SCHOOLS AND OTHER SCHOOLS. EVERYONE IS JUST TRYING TO GET A JOB.

**HENRY PHILLIPS**

SENIOR

Experience isn’t the only issue with job applications. Instead, the number of openings isn’t nearly as high as it was five years ago.

“You may notice that three, four, five years ago was one of the easiest times ever in the field to find a job. It was just a huge imbalance of opportunities versus supply,” Hutchings said.

Hutchings mentioned the increase in students who come when the job market is high. Therefore, during the high demand that occurred in 2022, many students likely pursued computer science because of the current-to-the-time good market.

Today, job postings on Indeed are at 70% of what they were in 2020. Hutchings credits the drop to natural fluctuation and uncertainty about AI in the industry.

“There is general political and economic uncertainty, and in those scenarios, companies are going to be reluctant to hire when they don’t know what’s going on and want to be prepared to take a hit,” Hutchings said.

Uncertainty also applies to the implementation of AI in the computer science industry.

“Companies don’t know if they’re going to be able to employ AI in a way that can reduce headcount,” Hutchings said. “When they’re not certain, they don’t bring people on.”

It is still debatable whether AI is a large contributor to the poor job market for computer science students; however, AI is making its impact in the hiring process. With a large influx of applicants, jobs are more frequently using AI to filter resumes.

2006 graduate and Fullstack Software Engineer at Zapier, James Rosebaugh-Nordan, recently found himself looking for a new job. Rosebaugh-Nordan found himself having to reshape his resume to pass through AI filters in his applications.

“A filter I have heard is if it’s longer than two pages, skip it. I put together a one-page version and a two-page version of my resume. The one-page version got more responses, and it’s super simple stuff,” Rosebaugh-Nordan said.

Phillips also found trouble with AI filters in applying, noticing AI speed responses to his applications.

“I would hit submit and 5 minutes later, denied,” Phillips said. “I needed to figure out a way to get past this robot check.”

Eventually, Phillips pivoted from a focus on quantity of applications to quality and connections.

“I would try to find someone I could message and talk to them, not necessarily to say, ‘Hey, can you get me a job,’ but to say, ‘I’m interested in this role,’” Phillips said.

Phillips’ networking ended up being successful, assisting in landing him a data engineering internship at Dell, where he has accepted a full-time position to return post graduation.

Similar to Phillips, Hutchings said he believes that students can still get a job in today’s market. Hutchings recommends that students broaden their expectations.

“The students who are tightly focused on a geographic area or tightly focused on a very specific type of company are struggling a bit more,” Hutchings said. “Broaden the types of organizations that you’re willing to work for. Consider related, but not directly related opportunities. Consider alternative pathways in their career.”

Over everything, Hutchings emphasizes passion as a primary source of motivation in the current job market.

“I think there are going to be opportunities. You might have to work a little bit harder than the students 2 or 3 years ago, but if you do determine that, yeah, this is for me, I like this stuff, I want to keep going. There are going to be opportunities,” Hutchings said.

## New US software development positions on job-listing site Indeed from February 2020 to March 2026

This graph shows the percentage change in seasonally-adjusted job postings using a seven-day trailing average and Feb. 1, 2020, as a baseline. A percentage change of 101% means there were approximately 1% more new listings than there were Feb. 1, 2020.

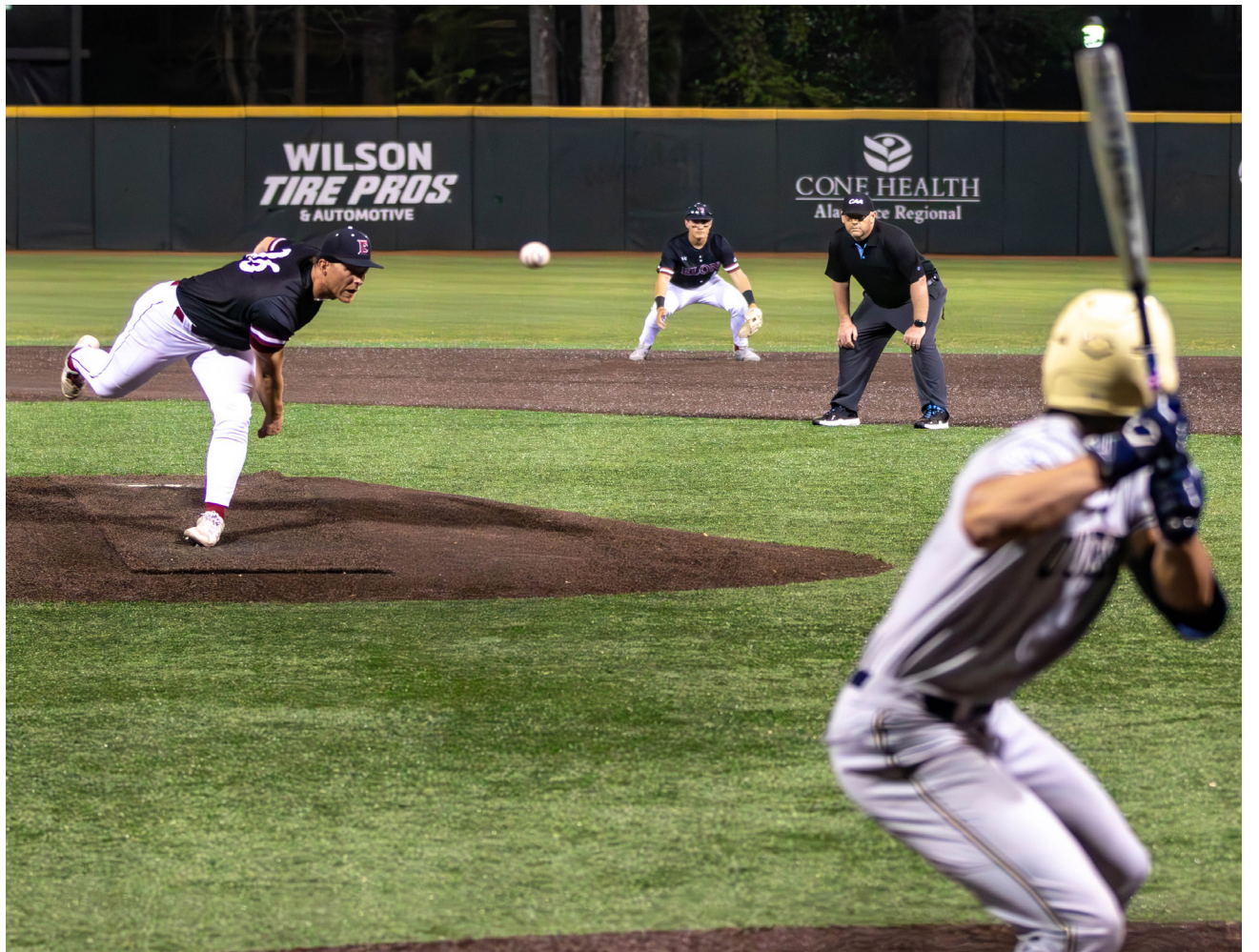


Data from Indeed Hiring Lab’s job postings index.

DATA VISUALIZATION BY SARAH T. MOORE



VENUS SOTO CASTANEDA | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER  
Student vendor Remy Beckman talks with an attendee at the Queer and Trans Art Showcase on April 3 at Irazú Coffee. The event hosted in celebration of transgender day of visibility allowed students to showcase their art.



KATHAN GANDHI | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER  
Sophomore Kehler Hamilton fires an off-speed pitch against Queens batters Bradley Brown in a game March 31. Hamilton pitched two innings, allowing one run and striking out three. Elon won the game 8-7.



ALEXANDER SIEGAL | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER  
Members of Elon University and William & Mary's women's lacrosse teams during their match. The match took place on April 4 at Rudd Field. Elon won 9-4.



EMMA LUCKMAN | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER  
Volunteers at Elon's first Go Baby Go event work to rewire and alter a vehicle for children with mobility challenges in Innovation Hall on April 4. The event was collaboration with students from engineering, physical therapy and the Phoenix Racing team to collaborate and persevere through initial mobility challenges for children. Rebekkah Manning was at the event and watched as a team of students tailored a car specifically for her son's needs. "It's hard to put into words what this event means to us," Manning said. "Our people like Henry, my son, who's 4, don't have as many opportunities as typically developing children have. The world is not made to adapt to their needs."



Chase Lewis drives on a track at Ace Speedway on April 3. On Thursdays, drivers can practice and get their cars ready, while they prepare for Fridays, which are the race days every other week.

ANJOLINA FANTARONI | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

# Elon Law aims to prepare graduates for workforce



Elon Law School's Weaver Building on April 2 in Greensboro.

KATRINA HOLTZ | PHOTO EDITOR

## Interim chief to oversee campus police

CHIEF | from cover

Chief Human Resources Officer Melissa Clodfelter, who is on the search committee, said that the committee is considering both internal and external candidates. Clodfelter said they just want to find the right fit for the position.

"I think what we would take to the future is that we continue to look for someone who's interested in engaging the whole community," Clodfelter said.

The role is listed on the university's job board and on Spelman and Johnson's website. According to the listing, the chief oversees a \$4.2 million budget and manages 42 staff. The chief also contracts security providers for Elon's Greensboro campus and oversees security operations for the Charlotte campus.

"In partnership with institutional leadership, the chief also supports planning related to the merger with Queens University of Charlotte," the job listing states.

Elon's Student Government Association Campus Safety Senator and sophomore Sofia Perez, who is on the search committee, said she is looking forward to meeting a candidate who is open to hearing a student's perspective.

"I think what's also really important, because there's a new chief coming in, is making themselves more accessible, or at least, introducing themselves to the student population," Perez said. "So that way Elon students are aware of who the chief is, and can kind of get to know them a little bit more."

Perez said she has had many meetings with LeMire and his openness and desire to hear from students is something that she liked.

Dotson said that during this transitional period, he is looking to ensure the day-to-day operations remain steady. Dotson said in an email to Elon News Network that his goal is to provide stability for both the Elon University Campus Safety and Police and the university.

"I want the Elon community to know that their safety remains our highest priority, and that commitment does not change during a leadership transition," Dotson wrote. "Our officers are on duty 24/7, dedicated to serving and protecting the campus. I encourage everyone to stay engaged, look out for one another, and continue partnering with us to maintain a safe and welcoming environment."

## LAW | from cover

The program also offers scholarship assistance alongside the reduced tuition.

Kramer said the program also sets up graduates better for the workforce.

"Elon Law graduates are uniquely situated to hit the ground running because of all of the skills education that is baked into our program," Kramer said. "We are doing law school differently, and I think more effectively."

The program includes several experiential learning opportunities, including a residency-in-practice program, opportunities for students to serve local clients directly and mock trials. Kramer said that legal practice is the best classroom for students, so they emphasize sending them out to work in the community with lawyers and clients.

Kramer said that students learn time management and how to grind.

Stine said that their location in Greensboro also allows many actual lawyers to serve as adjunct faculty, providing real-world experience.

"They'll come and teach classes so they bring in these real-world cases that are applicable to what we're learning in class, which is a lot different than a lot of law schools, which are mostly theoretical," Stine said.

Stine said that the accelerated program does have its downsides, however. He said that students have fewer weeks to learn

each trimester.

"You have really 10 weeks, as opposed to other law schools, where it's probably closer to 15 weeks, so you don't go into as much depth," Stine said. "We still do a good job of hitting what matters for the bar. Then it's really up to you whether you go and expand your horizons in that subject."



WE'RE IN THE DREAM-MAKING BUSINESS, RIGHT? PEOPLE DREAM OF BEING ATTORNEYS, AND OUR JOB IS TO FACILITATE THAT.

ZAK KRAMER  
DEAN OF ELON LAW

Elon Law will begin a major expansion into Charlotte soon, with plans for a full-time program in the city beginning in fall 2027, an expansion of Elon's part-time Law Flex program in Charlotte. Vice Dean Alan Woodlief Jr. said that the Charlotte program will be modeled after Greensboro's. Woodlief said Charlotte's prominence in the banking, healthcare and sports industries will provide new

opportunities for students.

"It will probably expand our course offerings around some subject areas that are particularly relevant to Charlotte," Woodlief said.

Woodlief said he thinks the Charlotte program will be highly attractive because Charlotte is the largest city without a full-time law school. Kramer said that having students embedded in the community will help Charlotte because the city has a big need for low-cost legal services.

"North Carolina needs lawyers. There's a huge access to justice issue with the state," Kramer said. "We want to make sure that we're not only creating good, ethical lawyers, but folks who want to make a dent in a lot of the injustice that they see locally, and we think the best way for them to do that is to be educated in that community."

Looking towards the future, Kramer said Elon is looking at ways to expand opportunities and improve the program. Kramer pointed towards their various partnerships with other local universities and their Street Law Program, which connects Elon Law to high schools. Access will continue to be an important aspect of Elon Law, according to Kramer.

"We're in the dream-making business, right? People dream of being attorneys, and our job is to facilitate that," Kramer said. "We want to create a law school that we can bring large swaths of the population in and make a reality where they graduate in two and a half years instead of three, and hit the ground running."

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# AI poster competition sparks conversations across campus

Students work toward \$650 of cash prizes, others criticize contest

ANJOLINA FANTARONI | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Ben Hannam, associate professor and chair of communication design at Elon, shows the winning posters during the "Make Your Mark: AI Poster Competition" awards ceremony April 3 in LaRose Digital Theatre.

Anjolina Fantaroni  
Elon News Network

Elon sophomore Jesse Price was scrolling on Instagram when he saw something that caught his eye.

It was a promotion for the university's first "Make Your Mark: AI Poster Competition," which was hosted by Elon AI, the Elon School of Communications and the Martha and Spencer Love School of Business.

Students who participated in the competition received a prompt in Schar Hall on April 2 and had 2.5 hours to design an original poster.

Submissions combined AI-generated elements with non-AI or hand-crafted components. Participants then had to describe how AI helped their process.

Price said when he read the Instagram post, he was taken aback.

"When I saw all of my fellow students and friends posting and commenting and speaking up for what they believe is right, I decided to join in," Price said. "I think that everybody should, because this is not the type of leadership we want from our education."

As of April 7, the post has 117 comments, with every comment opposing the competition. Some comments are even hidden by Instagram because of foul language.

"Is anyone excited about this?" One comment asked. "Continuously disappointed in this institution."

"Someone please go make a poster without AI and win this," another said.

Other people commented with disappointed GIFs and tomato emojis.

Ben Hannam, associate professor and chair of communication design at Elon, said that both Elon AI and the School of Communications looked for ways to collaborate with one another.

"We had discussed how we could start that process, and thought that a poster competition sounded like a fun thing to do, so that's where we began the conversation," Hannam said.

The competition included both an originally-made element and an AI-generated component. Hannam said that it is important to use AI tools to accompany handmade art because creativity and intentionality of communication come from people.

"I use AI tools, and they're great



ANJOLINA FANTARONI | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Students work on an activity at the "Make Your Mark: AI Poster Competition" pre-event workshop March 31 in Steers Pavilion.



ANJOLINA FANTARONI | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER  
Elon freshman Lorenzo Ribadeneira's poster hangs in LaRose Digital Theatre on April 3 during the award ceremony.

for some things, and then they're not," Hannam said. "It's not great for other things. Kind of exploring the boundaries of that helps us make better informed decisions about when it's appropriate and when it's not appropriate — I think that's kind of part of the discussion that we're trying to flesh out."

The cash prizes were split between the School of Communications and the Love School of Business. Hannam said that April can be a grumpy month at Elon, when many students come back from Spring Break and reflect on all the work they need to do.

"We wanted to get people to participate, and we felt like the way to do that was to say, 'Hey, you just went to spring break. Here's a place where you could participate, very small, low-touch point two-and-a-half-hour type of competition, and you can win some prizes, and the prizes don't suck,'" Hannam said.

Many students on the initial

Instagram post commented about how the \$650 in cash prizes could've been used for something else.

Hannam said that half the prize money came from the Communication Design budget, which is given by the School of Communications. He said that this budget covers the American Institute of Graphic Arts Hub for Graphic Design pizza events, faculty research and supporting classes that need materials for projects.

"Those are the kind of things that that budget is used for, is just kind of things that would directly affect our faculty or our students in a positive way," Hannam said.

Lee Rainie, Director of the Imagining the Digital Future Center at Elon, said that one of Elon's approaches to AI has been to tell faculty members to have their own AI approach. Elon President Connie Book, Rainie and the Pew Research Center created six principles to shape AI policies in higher education.

"We encouraged institutions around the world to think about that, and a lot of them sort of embrace those principles," Rainie said.

While AI expands on campus, Rainie said it's being used in classwork, assignments and as a teaching tool.

"People are studying how AI performs, and there are ways in which there are lots of conversations about the ethical use of AI in teaching and learning, as well as the things not to do," Rainie said.

Rainie said that some professors

talk about AI and find ways to use it and not use it in assignments. He also said that there are some professors who don't use it in classes at all. Finally, he stated that some professors also want their classes to explore AI and use it.

"Exploration is probably not a bad place to start on any subject, particularly one that's a mystery or something that's not fully known, and then the conversation sort of can go whatever direction it wants to go," Rainie said.

The competition included three separate events: a pre-event workshop where students could learn to use AI along with creativity, the actual 2.5-hour competition with the red Solo cup prompt and an award ceremony.

Elon senior and communication design major Emma Larsen attended the pre-event workshop and said an event like the poster competition is important because it represents diverse design elements.

"What makes this competition really interesting is that you are actually required to use a physical element in your work," Larsen said. "So, it's more about combining the use of AI and human-made design work, which is really exciting."

Larsen stated that it is potentially scary that AI could take jobs from designers, but it's important that people can use AI effectively in the job market.

"I think especially in this day and age, it's really important to show that you actually have it as a skill, and that it doesn't actually replace you, because it wouldn't make something as good as what you could produce if you worked with it," Larsen said.

The final part of the competition was the award ceremony, where awards were given to first, second and third place winners, along with the judge's choice and fan favorite.

The judge's choice award was given to Elon freshman Lorenzo Ribadeneira. His poster showed a red Solo cup with a barbecue inside it. Stick-figure people are inside the cup, holding chips and wearing party hats. The caption on the poster states, "THE CUP THAT BRINGS THE PARTY."

The judges complimented his work, which Hannam read to the crowd.

"The Make Your Mark challenge was about more than just using AI to create a design; instead, it pushed participants to make the intangible tangible with their own creativity, leading the way," Hannam read. "And that's what Lorenzo did so beautifully."

The three judges, professors Smaraki Mohanty, Lana Waschka and Michele Lashley, in their praises to Ribadeneira, also noted that he took the time to understand the prompt to consider what the impact of the words and the images needed to be.

"The way Lorenzo incorporated AI into his design process was exactly how we should be using it," Hannam read. "He didn't offload his creativity to it. Instead, he used it to elevate his thinking and ideation, as he explained, he had to keep going back and iterating until the design reached a point where he was satisfied with it."

Ribadeneira is an entrepreneurship and innovation major. He said that he thought the competition was a good use of the practice of his AI skills, as he uses AI every day.

"Every poster in here does not look in any way similar to one of the other ones," Ribadeneira said. "It was a great way to showcase your skills within AI, but also combining it with your creativity."

Ribadeneira, who owns a wakeboarding clothing company called Stoke, said that he has thought more critically because of the competition about how AI can improve his business.

"I feel like I learned that I can design things with AI," he said. "That was never really like something that I got into much with my own clothing company. But now, after seeing that, I am able to be creative while using AI and making designs. Maybe I can implement that too."

# NC General Assembly pushes to limit property tax rates for local governments

House subcommittee looks to put constitutional amendment on ballot

**Charlotte Pfabe**  
Elon News Network

The North Carolina General Assembly is considering a constitutional amendment that would limit the amount local governments can increase their property tax revenues annually.

The House Select Committee on Property Tax Reduction and Reform hopes to add the amendment to the ballot this fall.

The subcommittee has met four times since December, focusing on ways that the legislature could constitutionally limit tax levy rates.

Tax levy rates are the overall countywide or citywide tax bill and have two components: the tax base and the tax rate. The tax base is what is being taxed, such as the value of a property, whereas the tax rate is the percentage or amount charged on that base. Property reappraisals, which Alamance County started in September, update the property tax base to the current, fair market value.

Christopher McLaughlin, professor of Public Law and Government at University of North Carolina's School of Government, spoke to the House subcommittee during its meeting Jan. 14.

McLaughlin told Elon News Network the proposed amendment allows the General Assembly to limit property taxes but does not include a time frame or manner.

"It simply says they have the Constitution that says the General Assembly shall — meaning must — shall pass limits on property tax levies," McLaughlin said. "So it doesn't say how they're going to go about doing that or what type of limits or when. And frankly, I think it's completely unenforceable."

He also said the state government does not need a constitutional amendment to create a tax levy limit.

North Carolina state law already has a maximum tax rate cap of \$1.50 per \$100 of assessed value. 35 states and Washington



Housing development and construction on the PARC Northwest construction site April 2 on University Drive.

KATRINA HOLTZ | PHOTO EDITOR

D.C. have similar caps. In North Carolina, no counties have reached this cap.

As state officials discuss property tax rates, town of Elon Town Manager Rich Roedner said he believes these decisions should be made by local governments.

"When you start tinkering with a fair system, you may not like the system, but when you start tinkering with it, you're picking winners and losers," Roedner said. "You're telling residents of local government, of local towns and counties, 'We in Raleigh know better than you do.'"

The town of Elon reported \$3,607,119 in property tax revenue for the 2024-25 fiscal year, which was about 19% of total revenue for the town, according to financial statements. The town of Elon receives less in property taxes than in other tax revenue, which makes up for almost 23% of town revenue.

Roedner said property taxes fund community resources, including the town of Elon's police department, fire department and public works.

"The reality is, like in Elon, between police, fire and public works, it's over 65% of our budget," Roedner said. "So if suddenly our budget is limited by some artificial number that somebody in Raleigh thought was a good idea, we have to cut budgets. Where do you make those cuts?"

According to Alamance County's Annual Comprehensive Financial Report for the 2024-25 fiscal year, property tax revenue makes up for just over 54% of total revenue for the county.

McLaughlin said that oftentimes people see a change in their property tax rate because of the reappraisal process, which happens every four to eight years, per North Carolina state law.

"When you wait longer to reappraise and as the economy fluctuates, the tax base goes up and you may see a bigger jump because the changes have not happened in so long," McLaughlin said.

When McLaughlin spoke to the committee, he focused on The Constitutional Uniformity Requirement, which requires any tax breaks created by the legislature to apply equally statewide. He said committee members were concerned with tax exemptions for elderly residents and exemptions for low income housing.

The exemptions for elderly residents would mean that anyone 65 and older who makes under a certain income level would pay less in property taxes. However, McLaughlin said that some counties would be affected more than others because of their demographic and economic makeup.

In Elon, U.S. Census data from 2024

shows that 13.2% of the population is over the age of 65. Alamance County Census data shows that 17.6% of the population is over the age of 65.

According to Rep. Dennis Riddell, who represents Alamance County and is a member of the subcommittee, the goal of the committee is to reduce the tax burden for North Carolinians. Riddell was unavailable for an interview with Elon News Network, but instead shared a statement.

"All reforms to be considered must provide genuine relief for taxpayers while still balancing the potential impacts on local governments revenue," Riddell said.

But Roedner said he sees these actions at the state level differently.

"The state is ultimately saying 'We know better than the local voters know, and we're going to apply the same rule across the state' so that the very, very property poor community that needs to repave a road and they need to raise taxes to do it, they may not be able to do it because they won't be able to raise taxes, depending on what the language looks like."

The committee is set to meet again April 15.

Even if the House passes the proposal regarding the amendment, the proposal would also have to be approved by the state Senate to get it to voters in November.

"Even though the House and the Senate are controlled by the same party, they are not particularly the best buds, as evidenced by the fact we do not have a state budget," McLaughlin said. "So I have no idea, even if this committee passes what they talked about, and the full House passes it, what the Senate might do with it."

Roedner said the town of Elon is preparing a resolution that will serve as the official position of the town council. He said he hopes the proposal will stop the committee from putting the proposed amendment on the ballot.

"Yes, we have residents who complain about taxes, but those are local issues, and they need to deal with it at the local level and scrap this idea of the state trying to take over those decisions," Roedner said.

## Burlington rolls out system to rank stormwater projects citywide

New model aims to make funding more equitable, effective

**Lily Mosbacher**  
Elon News Network

For years, Burlington residents seeking help with flooding or stormwater issues relied on a system that was often first-come, first-served. Now, that approach is changing.

The Burlington City Council adopted a shift in how it decides which stormwater-related projects receive funding on March 3.

Amy Barber, assistant director of water resources in Burlington, said the new system aims to bring structure and equity to a process that previously lacked clear criteria.

"We didn't have a way to equitably fund these projects," Barber said. "We would just try to fund them as the applications came in. But there was really no prioritization."

That meant less severe issues could be addressed before more urgent ones. Barber described cases where a homeowner

dealing with a minor nuisance flooding might receive funding before someone facing significant damage, simply because their application came in sooner.

The Burlington Water Resources Department has introduced a formal prioritization system to determine which stormwater projects receive funding through the city's 80/20 Cost Share Program, where the city's budget covers 80% of program costs.

The updated prioritization system scores projects across four categories: public benefit, property damage, public utilities, and community and equity. Each category includes specific criteria, such as where flooding impacts major roadways or residences.

In the new system, projects that pose higher risks to safety or cause significant property damage are expected to rise to the top of the list.

"If someone's livable space is being flooded or impacted, then they're going to score higher than if it's just a nuisance," Barber said.

The city is still grappling with the long-term impacts of development patterns that predate today's stormwater regulations.

City Manager Bob Patterson, who previously oversaw stormwater operations, said that before 2007, the city did not require developers to install stormwater control methods.

As a result of this, Patterson said many

older neighborhoods within the city lack infrastructure designed to slow and manage runoff.

"Everything that was developed before that did not require any kind of stormwater control measures," Patterson said. "In the newer areas, we don't have as many stormwater complaints for volume and flooding."

Barber said one goal of the new prioritization system is to serve those communities better.

"I hope it benefits everybody, but it's really upgrading some of this failing and stormwater infrastructure that is a priority."

According to the City of Burlington, stormwater systems are divided into public and private categories. Public systems, such as pipes and ditches located on city property, are maintained by the city, while private systems on residential or commercial properties are the responsibility of the owner.

Without modern controls, rainwater flows more quickly across impervious surfaces like pavement, increasing the risk of flooding downstream.

The funding program itself has also evolved in response to rising costs. Burlington previously operated a 50/50 cost-share model, but officials found the financial burden on residents to be too great.

"Some of these projects are \$50,000," Barber said. "For a resident to pay 50% is pretty substantial."

The city shifted to the current 80/20 model in an effort to make stormwater management more accessible, but demand grew faster than available funding.

Currently, the program is funded through a \$7 monthly stormwater fee charged to all property owners.

At that level, Barber said, the city can usually fund only one major project per year.

"If we get a stormwater fee change, we can potentially do three and four, really quadruple that amount of projects we can do in a year," Barber said.

Patterson said city officials are exploring adjustments to the fee structure to generate additional revenue, though no changes have been finalized.

Even with increased funding, Patterson said that projects would still take time. Once an application is submitted, it must go through evaluation, design, engineering and bidding before construction can begin.

"It's not an instant fix," Patterson said. "There's a process."

For residents, the new prioritization system may mean waiting longer, but for more urgent problems to be addressed first.

Patterson said the goal is to ensure fairness while addressing the most critical needs.

"If they have a greater impact on life or safety, they're going to score higher and hopefully be completed more quickly," Patterson said.



# ‘Romeo and Juliet’ gets a 1970s revival in McCrary Theatre

Elon’s spring play adds disco-era twist, fresh perspectives to Shakespeare’s tragedy

**Elissa Leka**  
Elon News Network

Shakespeare’s “Romeo and Juliet” may be centuries old, but Elon University’s spring production brings it into a new era, 1970s Italy, complete with disco music, dance numbers and a cast that mirrors the age of its audience. The idea came in January of 2025, when Professor Julian Stetkevych, director of the spring play, was listening to disco music.

“It maps well to the spirit of that age, which is in the fun, cool, cheesy Italian disco music,” Stetkevych said. “That was one of my first inspirations.”

Stetkevych said theater relies on collaboration, which made his rendition of “Romeo and Juliet” possible.

“Sometimes what’s great as a director is having a vision that you actually can’t achieve, but knowing that through the collaborative process, it can be achieved,” Stetkevych said.

Senior Sam Olt said he’s bringing some “swagger” to his character, Romeo Montague. He said that the technology people have today, from phones to security cameras, limits what people do in public. This Romeo, he said, has none of that.

“People were not careful like they are today because now there’s phones and cameras,” Olt said, “but the ‘70s, it was full

unadulterated versions of yourself.”

Senior Isabella Shaffer plays Juliet in the show. While traditionally Juliet is 13 years old, Shaffer will be playing her as a 16-year-old instead. The emotions her character experiences from act one to act two are starkly different as the play flows from lover’s tale to tragedy, a challenge Shaffer said she is excited to take on.

“I just really love the extremes of emotion that I get to play and go through because it is very hard, yes, but it’s very freeing,” Shaffer said.

While Shaffer said her emotional maturity has grown significantly since being Juliet’s age, there are some parts of her that come out as the character on stage.

“Juliet is not punk, but just a little rebellious because she goes against her parents,” Shaffer said. “That’s something that I’ve always gravitated towards as a person, just a bit of edge.”

Olt said that a mutual trust he and Shaffer share allows their performance to thrive, especially during the four dance numbers Stetkevych added to the show. Though dance is not a primary skill of his, Olt said he pulls a lot of inspiration from paintings he’s seen, something he attributes to his mom, an art teacher.

“It’s weird how much lives in you, how art in different mediums always lives in you,” Olt said. “And even though I’m not a really good dancer, I’ve taken stuff in theater, and I’ve walked, I’ve seen paintings of people dancing, and I’ve listened to music.”

Assistant Director and Elon junior

Amelia Brinson created a dramaturgy, a presentation composed of in-depth research into the play and the time period itself, which she gave to the creative team early on in the production.

“It’s a really interesting time because you’re 30 years off of World War II, and there’s a really big fascist movement in Italy at this time,” Brinson said.

Stetkevych said that though history is important to how the characters interact with each other, the politics of the period is not a primary source of conflict in this rendition. Instead, it’s the generational gap between an older generation of WWII veterans and the main cast of hippie youth.

“The central cast of it is about people who are around the ages of the people who are actually playing the roles and the majority of the audience who’s going to come see it,” Stetkevych said. “So, it makes that connection feel more present and immediate.”

Brinson said the point of this show is to get away from the idea that Shakespeare is elitist and boring. During her study abroad in London, she learned that in Shakespeare’s Globe Theatre, actors speak to the audience, interacting with them, because when shows like “Romeo and Juliet” were put on, it wasn’t a “high art,” it was something made for regular people.

Stetkevych said he recognizes that students often dread reading Shakespeare in their high school English classes, but seeing it on stage transforms it from dull to lively.

“The hope is that in watching it, you understand how much it is full of life

and excitement and high stakes, and in this one, romance, tragedy, dancing,” Stetkevych said.

Brinson, Olt, Shaffer and Stekevych each separately said the actors have worked closely with the text, knowing that if they can understand what they’re saying, the audience can too.

“The wonderful thing about Shakespeare is you can sit there and you might not be able to understand every single word but you can feel all the emotions, and you can let it wash over you and be in the moment,” Brinson said.

Brinson said she hopes the community, especially those who aren’t quite comfortable with Shakespeare, come to see the show and understand it with the cast.

“Yes, it’s this love story,” Brinson said, “but it’s also a story about authority oppressing people and oppressing ideas and oppressing love. And right now, especially when there’s a lot of authority oppressing love in every way, how can we stay as a community and rise against that?”

## IF YOU GO

“Romeo and Juliet” will run in McCrary Theatre April 16 to 18.

Show times:

- 7:30 p.m. April 16
- 7:30 p.m. April 17
- 2 p.m. and 7:30 p.m. April 18

Tickets are \$15, or free with an Elon ID, and are available on the Elon Performing Arts website.



Above: Seniors Sam Olt, left, and Isabella Shaffer, who play Romeo and Juliet respectively, rehearse a duet dance together March 31 in Scott Studios.

Top photo: Senior Isabella Shaffer, who plays Juliet, and junior Mikayla Tees, who plays the nurse, dance a part in a disco sequence of “Romeo and Juliet” in rehearsal March 31 in Scott Studios. Photo by Megan Walsh.



The cast of “Romeo and Juliet” rehearses a disco dance sequence together March 31 in Scott Studios.

MEGAN WALSH | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

ELISSA LEKA | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

## Baseball coach mentors students on sportsmanship, service

Head coach takes on 30th season  
leading the Phoenix

**Sarah T. Moore**  
Elon News Network

Elon baseball head coach Mike Kennedy has spent most of his adult life at Elon. As a student, he was catcher for the baseball team. Kennedy signed with Oakland Athletics in 1990 then returned to Elon in 1993 as a pitching coach. He's worked with the team ever since and was named head coach in 1996.

Kennedy said his path to coaching was rooted in a love for the sport and a reluctance to leave it when he finished his Minor League run.

"I wanted to stay in the game somehow," Kennedy said.

A lot has changed over the last 30 years, but one thing that has stayed the same is Kennedy's passion for mentoring the players on the team.

"Some of my most meaningful times in coaching have been after practice in the dugout with three or four of them just talking," Kennedy said. "Just talking about life."

Those meaningful moments aren't confined to practice. Kennedy said he'll go fishing with some of the players and the team often volunteers together.

Kennedy said the rising popularity of the transfer portal has made it harder to develop strong relationships with players

who may only be on the team for a season or two. Still, Kennedy values his time with each player and said he hopes they learn from him and from the other players.

Growing up, Kennedy learned these same lessons of trust, service, discipline and teamwork from his coaches and said he wants his team to embody these values.

"They taught me trust," Kennedy said. "You don't really want to do something, but they were counting on you to be somewhere, to do something. You had to step up."

Elon alum Ryan Conroy '18 was a pitcher on the team and said Kennedy's life lessons and leadership prepared him for the five years he spent with the Baltimore Orioles.

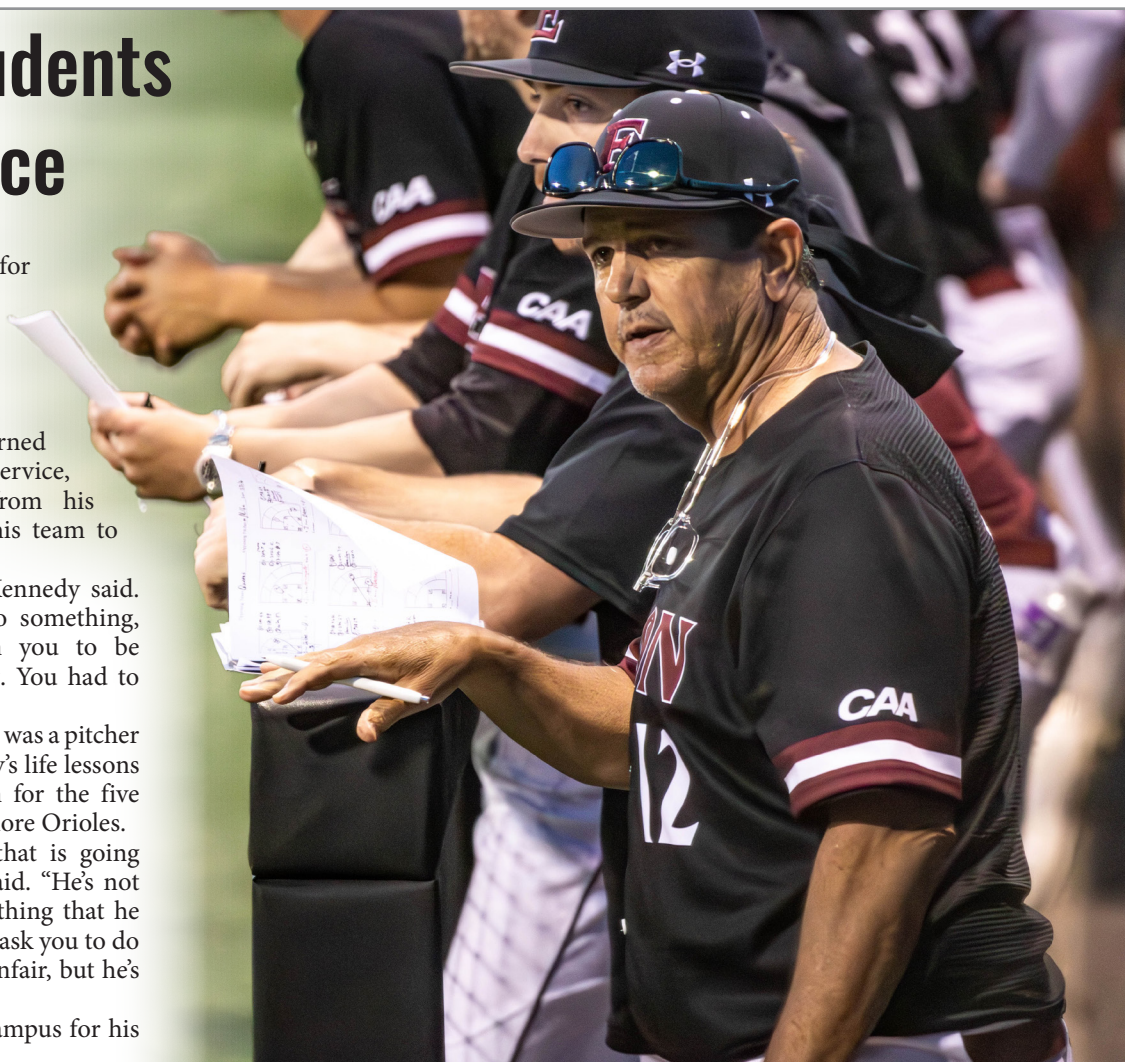
"He's one of those guys that is going to push with you," Conroy said. "He's not going to ask you to do something that he wouldn't do. He's not going to ask you to do something that he thinks is unfair, but he's going to push you."

Now, Conroy is back on campus for his first season as Elon's pitching coach.

"I really didn't notice how much of my coaching style came from him until I got back here," Conroy said.

Kennedy said he tries to lead by example and one of the most important aspects of coaching is showing the team how important it is to support one another.

"Baseball, particularly, is a game of



KATHAN GANDHI | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Elon baseball head coach coaches his hitter from the dugout in Elon's 8-7 win over Queens University on March 31.

failure, so you fail a lot," Kennedy said. "You can have great joy when you're failing by being appreciative when somebody else does something well."

It's lessons like these — the ones that go beyond the athletic techniques and game

strategy — that set Kennedy's career and impact apart from other coaches, Conroy said.

"This place is more than just a place where he showed up to work for 30 years, it's home," Conroy said.

## THE THROWERS Competition fuels dynamic duo

Teammates push each other to  
record-breaking heights

**Kathan Gandhi**  
Elon News Network

A subtle shift between the feet. Grounded, controlled, step by step, the circle shrinks beneath them.

Then the turn. One rotation becomes two, then three — the weight trailing behind before rising, faster each time. Steel and momentum build in sync until everything snaps forward at once.

And then release.

For a moment, time freezes. Practice repetitions become something more: a throw that could rewrite records.

That's been the experience for junior Elon thrower Adriana Clarke. During the indoor Coastal Athletic Association championships, Clarke delivered a record-breaking performance. It was one she didn't fully process until it was already over.

"I just remember letting go, and I was super excited," Clarke said. "Then when the numbers popped up on the board, I remember saying, 'Oh my God, oh my God,' and I started bawling. It was so hard to lock in."

Clarke's throw of 20.04 meters broke her own school record, good for first place at the meet. It was the second time she's usurped the school record this year.

But for Elon's throwing team, success in the circle is rarely a solo moment. Instead, it's shared — built through a mix of competition, trust and a partnership that has fueled the program's rise in the field events.

Before Clarke's throw secured the top spot, sophomore thrower Isabella Johnson had briefly taken the lead with a personal-best throw of her own. The two teammates went back and forth before finishing first and second.

"It was probably the best competition of my life," Johnson said. "We both walked out of there feeling like it was a victory."

Throwing is technically an individual sport. Yet, neither Clarke nor Johnson approach it that way.



KATHAN GANDHI | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Left: Junior Adriana Clarke spirals while preparing her weight throw at a track practice April 7.

Right: Sophomore Isabella Johnson winds up to throw at practice April 7.

### Different paths, same destination

Johnson's journey to throwing started unexpectedly.

The Alabama native originally joined her middle school track team as a runner, but her coach encouraged her to try throwing. By her second meet, she had already won an event.

Johnson said her motivations shifted during the COVID-19 pandemic when her middle school track coach died.

"I wanted to make him proud. I could feel that he was watching me," Johnson said. "I was really throwing for him, and I fell in love with the sport."

Johnson's father would draw her coach's initials on her arm before every competition as a reminder she carried when moments grew tense. That year, she won her first of four Alabama state championships, which she credited to her team and consistent practice.

Clarke's path looked different. The Florida native started throwing in seventh grade but said she didn't take the sport seriously until her junior year of high school, when she missed state regionals by three meters.

"That was the biggest heartbreak I've ever had," Clarke said. "Instead of just mourning that, I decided I didn't want to feel that way again. It pushed me to grind and put in that effort throughout that summer."

That summer, Clarke worked from 6 a.m. to 3 p.m., then drove an hour to practice throwing from 4 p.m. to 8 p.m. before heading home and repeating the routine the

next day.

The work paid off. She went from missing regionals to finishing second in the state, ultimately earning her opportunity at Elon.

### A dynamic duo

Since arriving at Elon, the teammates' relationship has extended far beyond the throwing circle. Johnson often refers to them as the "dynamic duo" — a nickname reflecting their close bond.

Clarke and Johnson always room together at overnight competitions, encouraging each other through every phase of preparation.

"That's a bond most teammates don't have," Johnson said. "I feel like sometimes roommates don't even talk."

Their personalities differ. Clarke admits she can be overly hard on herself, while Johnson brings consistent optimism. But that contrast has only strengthened their connection.

Clarke describes Johnson as a source of energy that lifts those around her.

"I don't think I've ever seen the girl frown," Clarke said. "Even when she's mad, she's grinning ear to ear."

That camaraderie has become essential in managing the mental demands of the sport. Despite their physical strength and technical development, both say success ultimately comes down to mindset.

"It's a battle between me and my mind," Clarke said. "Physically, I can do it. But mentally, it's about believing that I can."

That shared understanding has helped

both athletes continue to improve, regularly setting personal records and pushing each other in practice and competition.

Johnson said her role on the team is to send out an inspirational quote every Sunday, reminding teammates of their shared drive. She calls it "Somebody Sundays."

Her favorite comes from American runner Steve Prefontaine's training for the 1972 Summer Olympics:

"No matter how hard you train, somebody will train harder. No matter how hard you run, somebody will run harder. No matter how much you want it, somebody will want it more. I am somebody."

Those close to Johnson now call her "Somebody." She hopes to remind her teammates, including Clarke, that they are, too.

### Looking ahead

As the outdoor season continues, the duo remains focused on growth, both individually and together.

Johnson is aiming to qualify for NCAA regionals in both discus and hammer throw.

Clarke is looking to defend her first-place finish in the hammer throw at the 2025 CAA Outdoor Championships. She has also set a personal goal of reaching 58 meters, a mark that would break her own school record.

Together, they are chasing a larger goal: helping Elon secure a "triple crown" by winning the CAA cross country, indoor and outdoor track championships — with the outdoor meet set to be hosted at Elon.