

Elon University, Queens University of Charlotte plan to merge



ENN FILE PHOTOS

Elon University's President Connie Book announced Sept. 16 that Elon plans to merge with Queens University of Charlotte, pictured on the right.

Announcement raises questions about name, athletics, financials

Elon News Network

Elon University President Connie Book announced a proposed merger between Elon and Queens University of Charlotte. If the merger is approved by the end of 2025 and work between both universities goes well through spring, Senior Vice President of Advancement and External Affairs Jim Piatt said Elon would look to begin operating at Queens by Aug. 1, 2026. Piatt is co-chair of the "sprint team" that is planning the merger. The merger was announced Sept. 16 during College Coffee and was pitched to the Elon community as a step to expand

graduate study opportunities for current and future students. "I want to be clear: Your Elon experience will only be enhanced by this merger as the university becomes more deeply invested in Charlotte, creating new graduate pathways and expanding opportunities for all students," Book wrote in an email sent to Elon students from the President's Office on Sept. 16. Elon first expanded into Charlotte in 2023 with the opening of its regional center in South End. The Charlotte campus is currently home to Elon's Law Flex program and "Sport and Community Experience" academic program for students interested in sport management. In March, the physician assistant program announced they would be heading to Charlotte, and the first class is set to start in January 2027.

According to Rick Seltzer, a reporter for the Chronicle of Higher Education, universities may look into merging or acquiring another institution for a number of reasons, such as financial position or enrollment numbers. "What's happening is these institutions are often struggling to raise additional revenue," Seltzer said. "They cannot get more net tuition revenue, or if they can get it, it's not keeping up with the expenses that they are, expense increases they're facing, and we've seen some pretty high increases in certain inflationary measures recently." **Initial reactions** The announcement of the merger shocked Elon sophomore Sophie Willen, who transferred from Queens this past

spring and attended College Coffee for the first time Sept. 16. "My jaw dropped, actually, and my roommate was standing right next to me," Willen said. "I remember when I was at Queens, there was a lot of talk about financial issues." Willen said she decided to transfer to Elon from Queens because she was looking for more community in her college experience. "You don't really have that community unless you're an athlete or unless you know someone in the Myers Park area," Willen said. Queens senior Emily Wouterse said she chose Queens because of the feeling she had when first walking around the campus.

See MERGER | pg. 5

Olympian Katie Ledecky shares her story, advice with Elon

Olympic swimmer discusses her journey, the importance of support

Megan Walsh
Elon News Network

From making her Olympic debut at age 15 to holding the most gold medals of a female swimmer in the world, Katie Ledecky shared her story and wisdom with audiences at Elon University during Fall Convocation on Sept. 26. Ledecky has competed in four Olympic Games and holds 14 total medals and 17 world records. Ledecky took audiences through her history, from starting swimming at age 6 all the way through her recent experiences in the 2024 Paris Olympic Games. Ledecky said the water has always felt like the right place for her. "I loved the individual nature of the sport, but also the team aspects and the ability to set goals for myself and work toward them, and just felt at home in the water," Ledecky said in an interview with Elon News Network prior to the event. When she began swimming, Ledecky said she never imagined she would make it as far as she has. "I thought you had to be some superhero or whatever, to be able to wear the cool suits that they wear at the Olympics and the stars and stripes and that USA cap," Ledecky said during the event. "I just incrementally set bigger and bigger goals



KATRINA HOLTZ | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER
Olympic Gold medalist Katie Ledecky was Elon University's Fall Convocation speaker Sept. 26 in Schar Center.

for myself to the point that I was at the Olympics with some of the swimmers that I looked up to for many, many years." Ledecky said both her Olympic debut in London in 2012 as a 15-year-old and the 2020 Tokyo Olympics during the COVID-19 pandemic helped her realize the importance of support systems. "I always feel a lot of cheers when I'm off competing internationally, whether it's those people actually in the stands cheering me on," Ledecky said in an interview with Elon News Network. "Just knowing that they're back home watching on TV and yelling at the TV; that means a

lot to me as well." During the Tokyo Olympics, Ledecky said the protocols did not allow any spectators at events. She said this showed her that she could lean on her support systems from afar, something she thought a lot of college students could understand since they don't have their families around all the time. Ledecky said this especially came in handy during one of her longer races in Tokyo. "I thought about my grandparents, and specifically my two grandmothers that I knew were back home watching on TV in the US," Ledecky said during the event. "They're in their 80s, 90s, and I just thought about how much joy I know watching swimming and watching me compete at that level brings up, and it really brought me a lot of joy and happiness in return." In terms of training, Ledecky said she swims nine to 10 times a week and works out in the gym five days a week. Beyond training physically, Ledecky said proper recovery is important to her. "All the hours outside of the training, I think, are just as important. The recovery, the eating well, sleeping well, all those things that I try to do to support that training and also keep my life balanced," Ledecky said in an interview with Elon News Network. She said her goals are what keep her motivated to keep going even when she faces challenges. "I know that there are going to be good

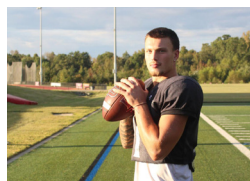
days and they're going to be bad days, whether that's with training or racing or just anything," Ledecky told Elon News Network. "There could be little roadblocks along the way, but I think trusting the process, trusting my coaches, trusting myself at times, I think those have been the biggest things." 10-year-old Caroline Dunlap came to the Schar Center wearing her swim team shirt with her family and friends from Lenoir, North Carolina, to see Ledecky speak. "I thought she was really cool, and all my friends were going, and I just thought it would be a fun experience," Dunlap said. Elon freshman Leanna Tunney said she enjoyed hearing Ledecky talk, especially about the importance of family and finding home anywhere. "As someone who has experienced swimming in the past, I felt like it was really moving, and I could really relate to a lot of what she was saying," Tunney said. Ledecky said she is working toward competing in the 2028 Olympics in Los Angeles. "I am really excited about the fact that the Olympics are going to be in Los Angeles, on US soil," Ledecky said in an interview with Elon News Network. "Not every Olympic athlete gets that opportunity, so it's really motivating every day in training thinking about that goal." Fiona McAllister contributed to the reporting of this story.



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hazing definition, penalties
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THE **PENDULUM**

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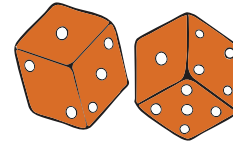
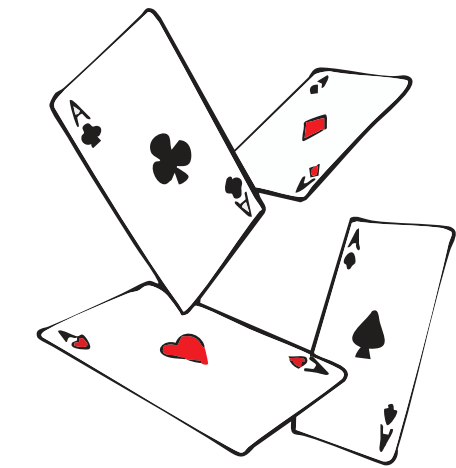
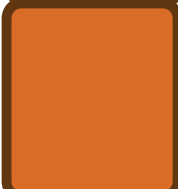
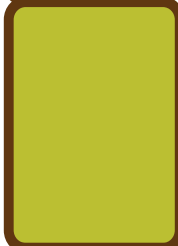
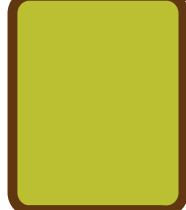
The Pendulum incorrectly identified the full name of the CREDE throughout the Sept. 17 edition. The organization is Elon's Center for Race, Ethnicity and Diversity Education.

A photo on page 12 of the Sept. 17 edition of The Pendulum incorrectly identified an event. The photo was taken at a women's tennis match April 19.

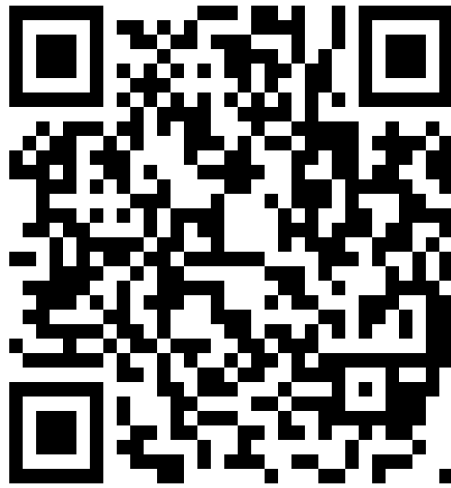
A photo of Sage Kimzey on page 19 of the Sept. 17 edition of The Pendulum was edited beyond acceptable practices as outlined in Elon News Network's code of Ethics.

Elon News Network regrets these errors.

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Redshirt freshman quarterback Landen Clark rushes for a touchdown during Elon's Family Weekend football game Sept. 27 against Hampton University at Rhodes Stadium. Learn more about Clark's development as Elon's quarterback on page 8. PAUL BARRETTO | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER



Three freshman dancers from Elon University's "Dancing in the Landscape" show perform "Break Down," one of the show's six pieces, Sept. 26. The piece was choreographed by performing arts professor Forrest Hershey and was performed at the outdoor learning space by Lindner Hall. ALEXANDER SIEGEL | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER



Fans watch Elon University's football team play against Hampton University on Sept. 27 in Rhodes Stadium. The Phoenix won 41-20. The game was part of Elon's Family Weekend and had 11,158 attendees, according to the Elon Athletics website. ALEXANDER SIEGEL | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER



Elon University senior Majaliwa Msabaha jumps over Campbell University senior Emilio Garza as he tackles the ball out of bounds during the Elon University versus Campbell game Sept. 26 at Rudd Field. The Family Weekend game had 148 attendees, according to the Elon Athletics website. The Phoenix tied 0-0. ALEXANDER SIEGEL | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER



Katrena Henderson, representative of University of North Carolina, Wilmington's Education Abroad program, explains the program to freshman Angela Price during a Study Away Fair on Sept. 26 at Koury Athletic Center. JESUS ROMERO | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

North Carolina expands anti-hazing law; Students, faculty and staff involved with hazing will receive more severe penalties

‘Harrison’s Law’ will go into effect Dec. 1, broadens hazing definition

Nia Bedard
Elon News Network

Seventeen years ago, Lianne Kowiak’s life changed forever.

On Nov. 17, 2008, Kowiak got a phone call at her home in Tampa from one of her son’s fraternity brothers at Lenoir-Rhyne University’s Theta Chi chapter. Kowiak said she was told Harrison, her son, had been hurt in an accident.

“He had said they were playing football on campus,” Lianne said. “Harrison tried to catch the football and landed down hard and he hurt himself”

Lianne cried when she heard the news, doing her best not to wake her daughter, Emma, and flew from Florida to North Carolina as fast as she could. But when Lianne arrived at a trauma center in Charlotte, she discovered that the story she was told may not have been the truth.

“They had bloodshot eyes, and, you know, just wearing muddy clothing and just looked very disheveled,” Lianne said, “They had been there all night. And so to me, that just seemed like a red flag.”

Lianne later found out that Harrison was hurt in a hazing ritual. 19-year old Harrison, who attended Lenoir-Rhyne in Hickory, North Carolina, on both academic and golf scholarships, was told to run across a field while wearing light-colored clothing and touch a sacred rock. Harrison, who was six-foot-one-inch and about 170 pounds, was tackled repeatedly on all sides and hit his head, which caused swelling and bleeding in his brain.

Harrison died the next day. “No parent ever expects to send their child off to college and not have him or her come home,” Lianne said. “Certainly no parent ever expects to have to bury their child.”

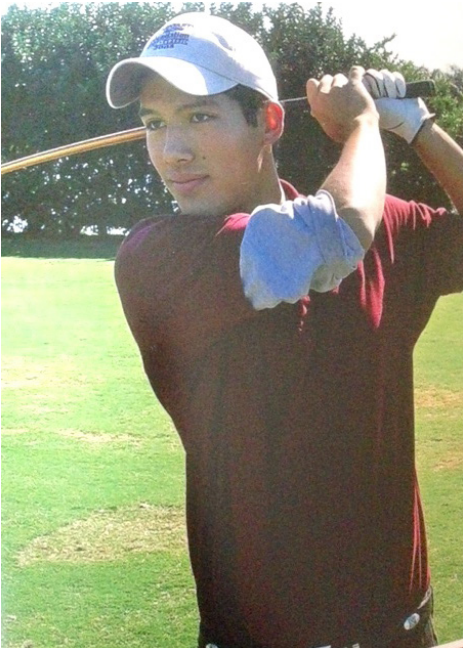
Now “Harrison’s Law” will go into effect in North Carolina on Dec. 1 and includes major changes to anti-hazing law in the state.

Some of the major changes include the definition of hazing and penalties for hazing offenses.

Prior to “Harrison’s Law,” hazing in North Carolina centered on physical injury within college Greek life.

North Carolina now defines hazing as any serious physical or psychological damage as part of initiation for or as a prerequisite to join any organized school group. This includes any athletic team, fraternity or sorority, society, or other similar group.

“Harrison’s Law” also increases penalties for hazing offenses. Originally, offenders would receive up to a Class 2 misdemeanor, which in North Carolina can result in a maximum of 60 days in prison or a fine



COURTESY OF LIANNE KOWIAK
“Harrison’s Law” is named after Harrison Kowiak who died after a hazing incident at Lenoir-Rhyne University in 2008.

of up to \$1,000. Now any students who are found guilty of hazing can receive a Class A1 misdemeanor, which has a maximum punishment of 150 days in jail and is the most serious misdemeanor offense a person can receive.

The legislation also includes a penalty for any North Carolina school personnel who engage in hazing rituals or aid others in rituals. School personnel such as teachers, administrators, student teachers, school safety officers or coaches found guilty will receive a Class 1 felony, which includes a prison sentence varying from 3 to 12 months.

The bipartisan law was cosponsored by North Carolina State Senator Amy Galey, who represents Alamance County.

Galey said that the law includes a difference in punishment because she did not want students to be defined by a mistake they made while at school.

North Carolina also has a law stating that witnesses in hazing trials will not be indicted if they incriminate themselves.

Galey also said that she wants to make sure that educators who take part in hazing are held accountable for their actions.

“If you’re in a position as an educator, you have a responsibility to look out for the students under your care,” Galey said.

While North Carolina has taken steps against hazing, Todd Shelton, the executive director of the Hazing Prevention Network, said the law is not perfect.

“It doesn’t acknowledge that consent to being hazed should not exclude it from being hazing,” Shelton said. “Just because the victim agrees to go along with it, shouldn’t minimize that it’s hazing.”

Forty-four out of 50 states have some form of anti-hazing legislation; however, North

Legal definition of hazing in NC

Before “Harrison’s Law”
North Carolina General Statute 14-35

“to subject another student to physical injury as part of an initiation, or as a prerequisite to membership, into any organized school group, including any society, athletic team, fraternity or sorority, or other similar group”

Under “Harrison’s Law”
Senate Bill 375

“subjecting a student to physical or serious psychological injury as part of an initiation, or as a prerequisite to membership, into any organized school group, including any society, athletic team, fraternity or sorority, or other similar group”

Carolina is one of 13 states that have anti-hazing laws but do not include a component about consent.

Shelton also said that he would like to see the penalties in “Harrison’s Law” strengthened to a felony for all who engage in hazing, regardless of if they are a student or school personnel.

“It would be important down the road to strengthen that by increasing it to a felony, particularly if it involved physical harm or death,” Shelton said.

“

NO PARENT EVER EXPECTS
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OR HER COME HOME.

LIANNE KOWIAK
HARRISON’S MOTHER

Regardless of how North Carolina and other states across the country address hazing, Lianne and her husband, Brian, still lost their son. Emma lost her older brother. Harrison died.

“He was talking about getting a degree in business and potentially being an entrepreneur and maybe even tying it in with the golf,” Lianne said. “By now, perhaps he might have been married and have children, and sadly, all that we as parents want for our children, that won’t come to be for Harrison,

and Emma always wanted to be an aunt, and she will not have any nieces or nephews.”

Lenoir-Rhyne’s Theta Chi chapter was shutdown and became inactive at the university in 2010.

Fifteen months after Harrison’s death, Lianne started speaking at colleges and universities across the country, telling Harrison’s story and advocating against hazing.

Lianne was even invited to Indianapolis to speak at Theta Chi’s national conference as its keynote speaker.

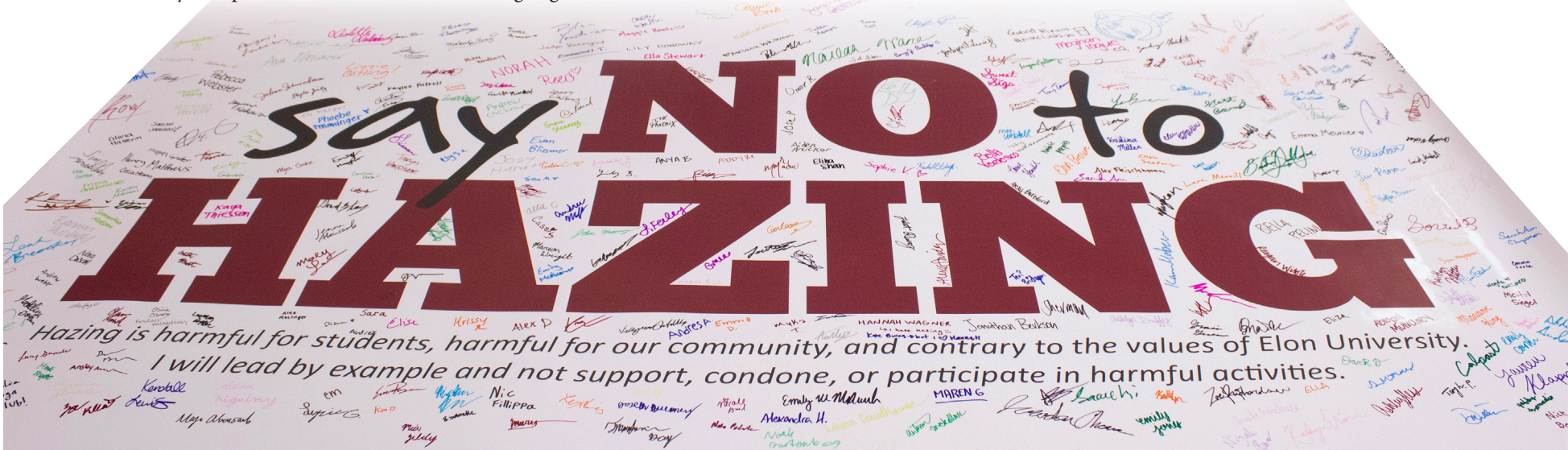
“I had no interest in talking to Theta Chi right in the beginning years,” Lianne said. “It took a while to get there, but then I realized I’m not going to claim to be the expert when it comes to hazing. Theta Chi has the connections. I don’t have the connections around the country. They have the alumni all over, and this is how this bill got started, too, through the alumni.”

Now “Harrison’s Law” has been passed in North Carolina and will go into effect on Dec. 1.

“Nothing is going to bring back Harrison,” Lianne said. “I’ve got a huge portrait of Harrison, and in the mornings, when I walk by it, I’ll just, you know, just talk to him to myself, and it brings a smile to my face.”

Lianne will be speaking at Elon University as the annual hazing prevention speaker on Oct. 27.

To report a hazing incident at Elon University, visit www.Elon.edu/ReportHazing. The form can be submitted anonymously. Elon’s hazing policy can be viewed at www.Elon.edu/u/Hazing/Policy. The Hazing Prevention Network’s Anti-Hazing Hotline can be reached at 888-668-4293.



Elon students signed a “say no to hazing” banner from Student Involvement at different campus events this semester, including College Coffee. Students from organizations across campus will also be attending Elon University’s annual hazing prevention speaker Oct. 27. This year’s speaker is Lianne Kowiak, who visits colleges and universities across the country, telling her son’s story and advocating against hazing.

SARAH T. MOORE | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

‘Sprint team’ promotes merger to campus communities

MERGER | from cover

“Everyone was waving at each other, smiling at each other, as well as just the opportunities that are available here,” Wouterse said. “I’ve already done my internship, and I’m doing another internship, so I feel like things have really helped position me correctly, both personally and professionally.”

When the news about the planned merger was announced to students at Queens, Wouterse said that it was a surprise to most, but she’s looking on the bright side.

“They position it as a way of Queens becoming stronger,” Wouterse said. “That’s how I want to look at it. I feel like change is something you don’t have to resist. Accept, go with the flow.”

Queens junior Oli Kneer, who is originally from Alabama, was recruited to play soccer for the school. He said he and many other students don’t yet know what the merger means.

“It is exciting,” Kneer said. “We’ll see what happens. We’ll see what comes of it.”

Major questions

The announcement of the potential merger has brought up many questions across Elon and Queens communities, including students, staff, faculty, alumni and families.

Piatt spoke at a “listening session” about the merger on Sept. 27 as part of Family Weekend. Some parents at the session were concerned about how the Elon name and brand may change or be influenced by a merger. Elon parent Rocco Impreveduto said that Elon graduates are perceived highly by many companies, and he worries that may decrease if the school merges with a less well-known university.

“One thing I feel very strongly about is that the Elon brand should not change in any way, shape or form,” Impreveduto said in an interview with Elon News Network. “It’s got great value, I would say, in the marketplace — the kids are well regarded when they graduate. From a parent’s perspective, it’s a good return on our investment, and I want to make sure that that doesn’t get diminished or changed.”

Piatt assured attendees that both schools would retain their identities.

During a Student Government Association meeting with Book, class of 2029 senator Christopher Guider asked her about the merger’s impact on sports, since both Elon and Queens have Division I athletics programs. Book said both universities plan to ask the National Collegiate Athletic Association to keep their programs separate.

“We are going to ask the NCAA to allow us to operate two D1 programs,” Book said during the SGA meeting Sept. 18. “The



NOLAN WILLIAMS | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

NCAA has in the last three years been much more flexible in this regard as universities merge. Our plan is to ask for permission from the NCAA to continue to be one program.”

Book and members of the team involved with the potential merger also hosted a town hall for faculty and staff in Alumni Gym on Sept. 19.

At the town hall event, Book said the decision to pursue a merger came from ensuring Elon remains successful through enrollment decreases, mainly caused by the impending demographic cliff, and national discussions around return on investment for college. Elon is also looking to expand its graduate programs while allowing the main campus to focus on undergraduate education.

Queens and Elon also plan to merge their endowments, which are \$170 million and \$420 million respectively, according to Book.

Book said the two boards of trustees have been discussing the potential merger since the summer.

“They started the conversations around partnerships, but then it began to grow more into a conversation around merger,” Book said. “By signing this letter of intent to merge, it allows now a transparent and inclusive process where we can talk about what that might look like, where we can get community input. This period is of conversation, of designing and thinking about, if you do merge, what would it look like?”

The ‘sprint team’ is working in partnership with the Boston Consulting Group and includes six Elon faculty members, each of whom have a counterpart at Queens.

Todd Lee, an Elon mathematics professor,

asked the sprint team about potential cuts in departments such as Information Technology or Teaching and Learning Technologies once Queens and Elon merge their online systems. Book said the board and sprint team are still working on how to combine the schools’ staff and faculty, but cuts are more likely to be at the administrative level.

Stacie Dooley, assistant dean of Career and Student Development at Elon’s law school in Greensboro, told Elon News Network she wants to ensure that students in the Law Flex program in Charlotte continue to receive education comparable to the law program in Greensboro.

“We are one law school — we have a Greensboro campus and we have a Charlotte campus,” Dooley said at the Sept. 19 town hall. “We want to just make sure that whatever our students are experiencing down in Charlotte is going to be on par with the quality of the education that our graduate students are getting.”

Moving forward

During the Family Weekend listening session, Piatt told attendees that the merger shows shared values between Elon and Queens.

“In all of these conversations that have been happening, conversations about balance sheets and money, this is about serving students and serving our communities in the best ways that we can,” Piatt said. “We want to be nationally competitive and locally rooted.”

Several parents inquired about why Elon would expand when the landscape of higher education is shifting and the demographic cliff

is set to hit next year. Piatt said the decision to merge came from years of expansion and studying the markets in Charlotte.

According to Piatt, more than 3,000 Elon alums are located in the Charlotte metropolitan area, and it has become a prominent destination for college graduates both from North Carolina and other states.

Lee said during his time at Elon, the school has continued to grow and push for more student opportunities.

“This is my 31st year, and when I got to Elon, this school was in the middle of this revolution,” Lee said. “It was a regional, small college, and I have been on that ride, and to me, this just seems part of it.”



I FEEL LIKE CHANGE IS
SOMETHING YOU DON’T HAVE
TO RESIST. ACCEPT, GO WITH
THE FLOW.

EMILY WOUTERSE

QUEENS UNIVERSITY OF CHARLOTTE
SENIOR

Nia Bedard, Monika Jurevicius, Anjolina Fantaroni, Fiona McAllister, Kate Gray, Sarah T. Moore and Trista Panagakos contributed to the reporting of this story.

Trump administration repeals de minimis exemption

Packages valued under \$800 now charged tariffs

Evan Cooper & Virginia Vance

Elon News Network

Elon students who frequently shop at Amazon or other online marketplaces may see a price hike following the repeal of the de minimis exemption, which allowed packages valued under \$800 to be imported to the United States without tariffs or other taxes being charged.

Cedric Bozeman, manager of Mail Services, wrote in an email statement to Elon News Network that Amazon makes up a lot of the packages coming into the mail room.

Bozeman wrote that the mail room sees around 2,200 packages per day, and that recently more of those packages have been delivered by Amazon.

In an executive order put out July 30, President Donald Trump repealed the de minimis exemption as of Aug. 29.

According to data from US Customs and Border Control, 1.36 billion packages claimed the de minimis exemption in 2024. Customs and Border Patrol reported that up to June 30, 945.3 million packages had claimed the exemption in 2025.

Online shopping has been impacted heavily by the order. In 2024 data from ECDB, an e-commerce data firm, only 30% of the products available on Amazon are produced in the United States.

Justin Duszlak, a small business owner who recently started a clothing shop called “Brown” in downtown Elon, said in an email to Elon News Network that she didn’t expect to see much impact from the end of the exemption because the brands she works with — all of which, she said, are US-based — import shipments too large to qualify for de minimis.

In a press release put out by the White House, president Trump said this executive order will strengthen U.S. businesses, enforce tariffs put on countries, and combat drugs entering the U.S. through Canada, China and Mexico.

The Associated Press reported on Aug. 29 that the national post services of more than 30 countries would temporarily suspend or restrict packages being shipped to the U.S., with post services saying they were not given enough time or information to start collecting taxes on shipments. Suspended countries include France, Italy, Japan, Sweden and Taiwan.

With the de minimis exemption repealed, shippers will pay taxes based on the tariff



SARAH T. MOORE | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

An Elon student picks up mail on Sept. 29. Many packages that come through the mail room are from Amazon, according to Cedric Bozeman, manager of Mail Services.

rates of the origin country, or they can pay a fixed fee between \$80 and \$200 per package, according to the White House. The fixed fee option will only be available for six months.

The Biden Administration took action towards reforming the de minimis exemption in 2024, issuing notices of

proposed rulemaking to reform de minimis and encouraging Congress to pass legislation that would reform de minimis.

With many of President Trump’s tariffs being challenged in U.S. courts, it is unclear how this will affect the repealing of de minimis.

Gov. Stein signs executive order to implement AI in North Carolina government

AI leadership council set to advise, support state agencies

Trista Panagakos
Elon News Network

As artificial intelligence becomes more prominent in the lives of students, workers and everyday citizens, the North Carolina state government is tapping into the transformative technology. Gov. Josh Stein signed an executive order Sept. 2 that focused on how artificial intelligence can enhance the state government and technology sector of North Carolina. The executive order established an AI leadership council, an AI accelerator, oversight teams for each state agency and training programs for AI literacy and fraud prevention.

As per the press release from Gov. Stein, the emphasis on AI will prepare the state government for emerging industries and technology that are rapidly affecting the lives of North Carolinians.

The AI accelerator will be overseen by the North Carolina Department of Information Technology and will add to the implementation of AI across state agencies. The council will make recommendations to multiple state agencies including NCDIT and the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction to develop literacy training that will be accessible to the public.

The AI leadership council is made up of 25 active members who represent three areas of expertise: government, academia and private sector work. This council is appointed by the governor to two-year terms, where they may be reappointed at the end of those terms. The council will be co-chaired by the secretary

of the North Carolina Department of Information Technology, Teena Piccione and Lee Lilley, the secretary of the North Carolina Department of Commerce. The council has yet to hold its first meeting.

Stan Ahalt, the dean of the University of North Carolina Chapel Hill School of Data Science and Society, was approached by the governor's operations team to gauge his interest in joining the leadership council. While he has not been assigned a specific role within the council, he said he believes that because of the diversity of expertise and experience of people on the council, they will be able to approach any problems that the governor or state agencies may face with a wide range of knowledge.

"Given the variability of the type of people they've asked to be on the council, I think they have a distribution of people from the private sector, industry, state agencies, the General Assembly and academia," Ahalt said. "So I think they tried to pull together people that could give advice across a broad swath of activities at the state level."

The creation of this council comes a few months after Amazon announced a \$10 billion data center in Richmond County and as other states such as Rhode Island and Virginia create AI task forces.

"An early indication is the number of companies that have shown interest in moving into the state for various technological and I'll even say geological reasons, in the sense that we have a lot of natural resources in the state of North Carolina that are very useful for AI, for example, I think some very significant portion of the quartz that's used to make chips is mined here in North Carolina," Ahalt said.

Part of the council's role is to advise state agencies on the implementation of AI and

provide support. Tommy Sowers is the deputy director of Duke's Initiative for Science and Society and another member of the AI leadership council. Sowers said the council will collaborate with civil servants to form ideas on how to utilize this new technology.

"It's not just sort of outside counsel coming in and coming to the government and saying, 'you should do this,' but there are loads of really smart, dedicated public servants that are already exploring and thinking about these tools," Sowers said. "It should be a very mutual beneficial relationship of ideas being generated from within government, and the council also bringing in ideas from outside of government."

This past summer Sowers led a program at Duke that worked with the governor's office on how to implement AI to alleviate the workload of government agencies.

While there is a concern that implementing AI can lead to government workers losing their jobs, Ahalt said that while he shares that same concern about emerging technology replacing workers, he ultimately agreed that the goals of the council will be to help alleviate the workload of civil servants.

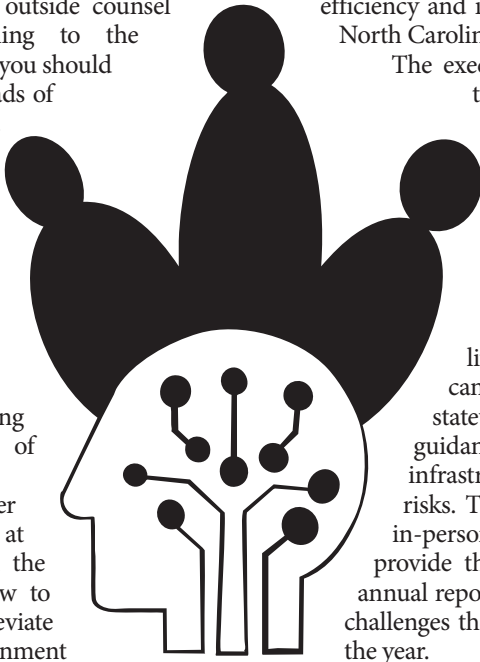
"In contrast to the way it's portrayed by some, I think our government workers are very hard-working, and in many cases, areas

are understaffed," Ahalt said. "If we can find ways of bringing a greater degree of joy to people who are doing the hard work for the citizens of North Carolina, that would be just a wonderful outcome, and I hope we're doing that in ways that increases the efficiency and impact for citizens of North Carolina."

The executive order outlines the duties and responsibilities the council will focus on such as providing recommendations to the Department of Commerce, creating an AI literacy strategy that can be implemented statewide and providing guidance on ways to protect infrastructure from AI risks. The council will meet in-person every quarter and provide the governor with an annual report on any progress or challenges they have faced during the year.

"I would be optimistic that people would look at the fact that this council is being set up in a way that's very inclusive and have some confidence that the government is trying to wrap its collective head around all the things that AI might impact and take advantage of it for the state of North Carolina and the citizens," Ahalt said.

Megan Walsh contributed to the reporting of this story.



DESIGN BY REAGAN SIZEMORE

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Elon University’s fall play explores the concept of truth

‘Describe the Night’ will run in
Roberts Studio Theatre Oct. 3-7

Emma Perman and Megan Walsh
Elon News Network

Audiences will grapple with the concept of truth and reality in Elon University’s fall play “Describe the Night.” “Describe the Night,” written by Rajiv Joseph, takes place across different periods of time, such as the 1920s Soviet Union and Russia in the 2010s. It will be performed in Roberts Studio Theatre in Scott Studios from Oct. 3 to Oct. 7.

The show weaves together the stories of seven characters during different time periods. All the characters in the show are based on real people, but the events of the show are heavily fictionalized.

Sophomore Carter Sindelar plays an author named Issac Babel. Sindelar said being a writer was a very dangerous profession in the Soviet Union.

“Usually when a government is switching over to tyranny, and a form of fascism, they go after artists and journalists,” Sindelar said. “That’s because that’s where you control the truth.”

Director and Elon professor of theatre Kevin Otos said the show focuses on the manipulation of truth and how it affects people’s lives.

“One of the big questions in the play is ‘Can human beings live a meaningful life when truth is being distorted and manipulated in an effort to try and control them?’” Otos said.

Otos said the theme of truth is particularly relevant in society, and how truth is viewed today.

“In 2025, there is a lot of manipulation of truth,” Otos said. “I’m 54 years old, and during my lifetime, I’ve watched our society move towards a truth-optional society, and I’m startled, and I imagine other people are too.”

Sindelar said he wants the audience to leave the show thinking about this theme of truth and the dangers of it being manipulated.



MEGAN WALSH | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Sophomores Lachlan Apple (left), Carter Sindelar and senior Kelly Gillan rehearse together for “Describe the Night” in the Center for the Arts on Sept. 11.

“The truth is malleable in some ways,” Sindelar said. “What our show wants to highlight is that if the truth falls into the wrong hands, that malleability and the way in which the truth can be changed can be one of the most weaponized things on this planet.”

Freshman Milo Timpanaro-Throop is understudying the role of Nikolai, who he said begins the show as a soldier in World War I and rises to become Joseph Stalin’s right-hand man during World War II.

Timpanaro-Throop said Nikolai contrasts Sindelar’s character, Isaac, in his view of truth.

“He’s very full on transparency, unless

it affects Soviet Russia,” Timpanaro-Throop said. “He’s a man definitely battling himself and his wants, but he can’t, because he wants to please his country.”

Senior Kelly Gillan plays Yevgenia in the show, who is married to Nikolai. Gillan said her character also has a small love affair with Isaac, Sindelar’s character.

Gillan said the small cast of the show reminds her of the work she did in her early classes as an acting major.

“We’re going back to the basics of our acting classes and doing our acting techniques,” Gillan said. “It’s really reminding me why I love acting in the

first place.”

Gillan said she hopes people come into the show with an open mind, ready to see a show full of human connection, not just history.

“Even if history isn’t your best subject, it’s still something you’ll understand, because you understand personal relationships and love and heartbreak,” Gillan said.

“Describe the Night” will run with evening shows at 7:30 p.m. Oct. 3, 4, 6 and 7 and afternoon shows at 2:00 p.m. Oct. 4 and 5 in Roberts Studio Theatre in Scott Studios. Tickets are available on the Elon Performing Arts website.

Elon receives honorable mention from Playbill magazine

University is recognized for having
more than 20 alumni on Broadway

Mia Torres
Elon News Network

Playbill, a world-renowned theatre magazine, recognized Elon University for having more than 20 alumni on Broadway during the past Broadway season. It was joined on this list by New York University, Yale and Juilliard.

The magazine analyzed Broadway actors from during the 2024-25 Tony Awards eligibility period, including where they attended college.

Jacob Brent, a music theatre professor at Elon, said the program has a strong conservatory-based training where students train professionally at a high level.



IT’S NOT A COOKIE-CUTTER PROGRAM; THEY UNDERSTAND THAT WHEN YOU WALK IN, YOU ARE YOUR OWN PERSON.

SIDNEY NICOLE WILSON
ELON UNIVERSITY CLASS OF 2021

The Performing Arts Program offers seven different degree programs: acting,

arts administration, dance performance & choreography, dance science, drama and theatre studies, music theatre, and theatrical design and technology. Four of the programs require an interview to get in.

Sidney Nicole Wilson ’21 recently spent time starring as Sarabi in Disney’s “The Lion King” on Broadway.

Wilson said she is very happy with the training she received from Elon.

“I loved the theater program specifically,” Wilson said. “I felt like I got great training. I got great advisers, teachers who really understood me and saw me and pushed me to get the best out of myself.”

According to the Department of Performing Arts website, it strives to create a collaborative, innovative environment where diversity, equity and inclusion are celebrated. Brent said it is “baked into the program.”

“It makes people — makes our actors — attractive to people and want to work with them, because they bring so much into the room,” Brent said. “Being well versed in everything is something the Performing Arts Department takes pride in.”

The department’s mission is something Wilson said she can attest to, saying the program is authentic.

She said, the program puts its students first and accepts them for who they are.

“It’s not a cookie-cutter type program; they understand that when you walk in, you are your own person,” Wilson said.

The department pushes its students to try everything, and that is something every student can attest to, according to Brent.



KARSYN VANN | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Elon student Campy Rodriguez (left) rehearses for “Merrily We Roll Along,” the performing arts department’s spring 2025 musical. Rodriguez is currently taking a break from Elon to be in the Broadway cast of Disney’s “Aladdin.”

“They weren’t people who just took it easy; they really pushed you to explore all parts of your artistry and pushed you to be capable of doing some of everything,” Wilson said.

Brent said that Elon University is a small school and a lot of students feel as though they will be stuck in a bubble, but that’s not the case.

As of spring 2025, 2,995 students were enrolled in the College of Arts and Sciences.

Elon University was recognized for its strong alumni base working in Broadway. These alumni come back often to speak to students. It’s really great for the students

to see what’s capable when you work to achieve your goals, Brent said.

“It’s really great for the students to see that it’s very possible,” Brent said. “It’s not like Broadway is this ethereal thing, but it’s something that they can really see in their future when these alumni come back.”

Brent said being recognized for having a lot of alumni on Broadway is something that the department is proud of and they use it to their advantage.

“It’s a passed down art form that they want to keep on passing down,” Brent said. “It just feels great for them to have a hand in producing it.”

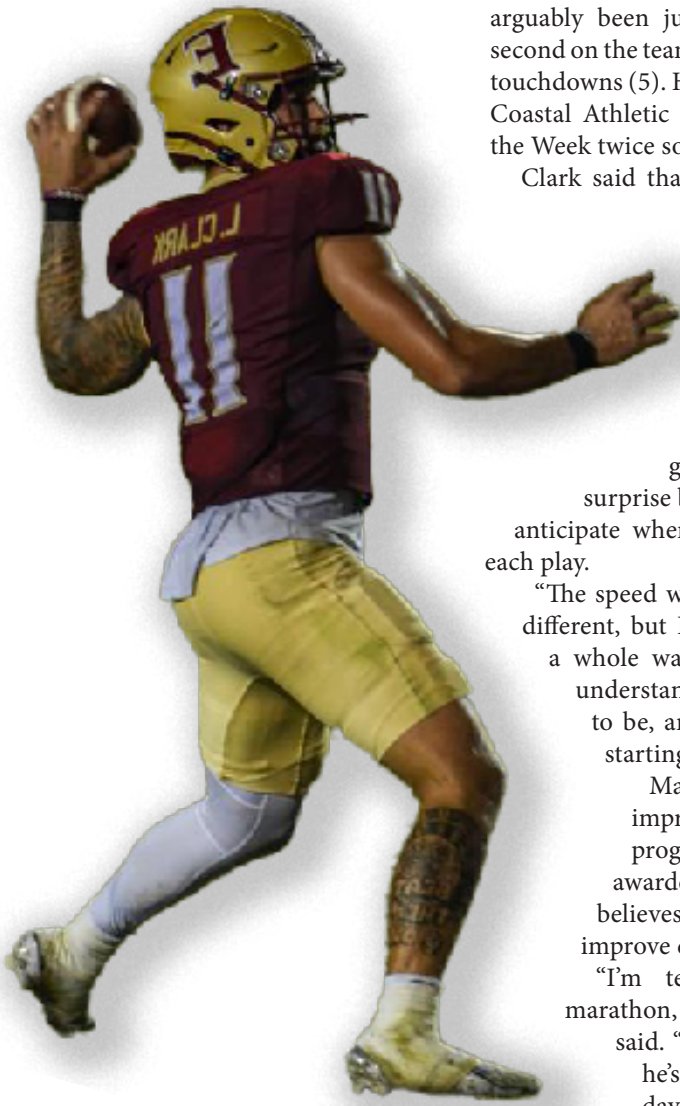
Redshirt freshman quarterback grows in first year as starting player

New starting quarterback evaluates his impactful start to 2025 season

Benjamin Berfield
Elon News Network

As the Elon University football team prepared for the season, redshirt freshman quarterback Landen Clark spent the summer competing for the starting quarterback position. The previous season, Clark had played only four games where he was occasionally used as a runner. Elon had also signed Iowa quarterback Marco Lainez through the transfer portal in December.

Even with the inexperience and competition, Clark said he refused to let any outside noise get to him over the offseason. He set to just focus on getting better and to maintain that mindset. “It was just to focus on myself,” Clark said. “Don’t let anything get in my way.”



While Clark admitted that it was easier said than done at times, he said that approach helped him play well throughout training camp. This resulted in Clark winning the starting job heading into the season. Despite the accomplishment, Clark simply said it was a cool feeling. That was because Clark had already visualized becoming the starter and knew he did the most he could to put himself in that position. “I had played that situation over in my head so much that I had pictured it, so it didn’t throw me off guard,” Clark said. “I told myself, ‘You know what work you’ve done and now you just got to go do it.’” Clark’s journey to the starting quarterback position is a long way from his high school career. When Clark first started at Radford High School, he said he wanted to play defensive back or receiver. Quarterback wasn’t even considered at first, but Clark began to embrace the

position over time. “It was my dream to play defensive back or receiver,” Clark said. “I didn’t really buy into this quarterback thing and now that’s all I got. I’ve enjoyed growing my knowledge at quarterback.” Clark’s emergence as the starter caught the attention of coaches such as offensive coordinator Doug Martin. Martin said he was especially impressed by Clark’s ability to throw and run the football as a dual threat quarterback. He described Clark’s mobility as an opportunity toward opening up the playbook because he can use Clark in various ways. This season, Clark has made an impact in more ways than one. He’s led Elon to a 3-2 record which is good for third place in the Coastal Athletic Association. As a passer, Clark has thrown for 1,045 yards and eight touchdowns to only four interceptions. He’s especially shown the ability to make big plays with eight completions over 30 yards. In addition, Clark’s rushing has arguably been just as impactful. He is second on the team in yards (217) and first touchdowns (5). He’s also been named the Coastal Athletic Association’s Rookie of the Week twice so far this season. Clark said that compared to the first game against Duke, he feels a lot more acclimated toward playing quarterback at the college level. He admitted that the speed of the game was a little bit of a surprise but now feels like he can anticipate where everyone will be on each play. “The speed was definitely something different, but I feel like everybody as a whole was calm,” Clark said. “I understand where guys are going to be, and now I feel like we’re starting to gel together.” Martin said he is very impressed by Clark’s progress since being awarded the starting job. He believes Clark has continued to improve during each practice. “I’m telling him this is a marathon, not a sprint,” Martin said. “He’s got work to do but he’s getting better every day. He learns more and he doesn’t make the same mistakes twice.” More importantly, Clark has established himself as a leader on the team. Martin said the players rally around him and added that as long as Clark is behind center, the offense is capable of scoring. “The guys believe in him,” Martin said. “We’re never out of a drive, or a game because they think he can do special things.” Going forward, Clark said he’s confident the rapport between him and his teammates will only continue to grow as the season progresses. He thinks it’s just a matter of continuing to stack up big plays. “We’re going to be a whole lot more confident of each other,” Clark said. “I know they’re going to go out there and make plays, the line’s going to protect me, and everybody will do their job.” The same can be said for the coaching staff who Clark described as super supportive. He said they’re always available to help in any way and that they will always

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YARDS
PASSED TOTAL

DESIGN BY REAGAN SIZEMORE

BENJAMIN BERFIELD | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

listen whenever needed. “These coaches are more than just coaches,” Clark said. “They’re your friend and if you have something going on, you can go sit down in their office and talk to them. It just feels like a big brotherhood.”

“I DIDN’T REALLY BUY INTO THIS QUARTERBACK THING AND NOW THAT’S ALL I GOT. I’VE ENJOYED GROWING MY KNOWLEDGE AT QUARTERBACK.”

LANDEN CLARK
ELON FOOTBALL FRESHMAN

Upcoming Elon football home games

	VILLANOVA 10/11 2 p.m.
	RHODE ISLAND 11/8 2 p.m.
	NORTH CAROLINA A&T 11/22 2 p.m.