



Popular resources students are using to look for jobs include the on-campus Student Professional Development Center and websites like Glassdoor, LinkedIn, ZipRecruiter and Indeed.

NYAH PHENGSIITTHY | DESIGNER

# FOCUSING ON THE FUTURE: ELON’S SPDC PREPARES UPCOMING GRADUATES

As seniors prepare for life after graduation, the SPDC has been keeping up with labor market

**Nyah Phengsitthy**  
Elon News Network | @NyahPhengsitthy

WITH LESS THAN 20 days left of the academic year and commencement underway, seniors are preparing for life after Elon. The university’s Student Professional Development Center is one group on campus working closely with the upcoming graduates to figure out the next steps.

The SPDC, which assists with career development, works with undergraduates, graduate students and alum, but during this time of year, many of the students walking through the center’s doors are seniors.

According to director of the SPDC, Brooke Buffington, the center is finding a variety of opportunities available for students, even with the job market looking unpredictable in many industries. The office constantly keeps up with the job market and employment trends to guide students.

“Even though we’re seeing a lot of news about the job market looking questionable, the entry level market is pretty solid right now,” Buffington said. “I wouldn’t say it’s as strong as it was last year when it was really crazy, but it’s not atypical for a traditional year of hiring.”

Since January, mass layoffs have been hitting many companies in different industries — entertainment, finance, retail, and most recently, tech. Companies citing layoffs are often due to recession fears, cutting company costs and staff reorganization.

While some students are worried about bigger companies cutting positions across the board, the SPDC is finding that many

of the layoffs are occurring at the mid-level positions, and not so much at the entry-level positions. For seniors going straight into the workforce after college, this can be positive as many of the positions available are entry-level. The SPDC and its satellite offices, located in separate schools across campus, are constantly sending new job, internship and program opportunities to students.

“We’re still seeing our university recruiting and relations teams working with us,” Buffington said. “We’re still seeing them have hiring needs.”



EVEN THOUGH WE’RE SEEING A LOT OF NEWS ABOUT THE JOB MARKET LOOKING QUESTIONABLE, THE ENTRY LEVEL MARKET IS PRETTY SOLID RIGHT NOW.

**BROOKE BUFFINGTON**  
DIRECTOR OF SPDC

The opportunities available also align with the Bureau of Labor Statistics’ current unemployment rate of 3.5%, showing that the U.S. labor market is strong. In March, the Labor Department reported that nonfarm payrolls, a measure of the number of U.S. workers that excludes proprietors, private household employees, unpaid volunteers, farm employees, and self-employees, grew by 236,000. The Bureau is set to release the April employment situation May 5.

See **JOB SEARCH** | pg. 5



PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE YELLE FAMILY

Junior Jackson Yelle stands with his mother, Andrea Yelle.

## Jackson Yelle remembered as “happy-go-lucky” by family, friends, teammates

Jackson Yelle, a 21-year-old Club Baseball player, was killed in Myrtle Beach in a hit-and-run April 30

**Miranda Ferrante & Kyra O’Connor**  
Elon News Network

Jackson Yelle’s father, Scott, remembers his son’s caring and warm demeanor; he said it was easy for him to build friendships, and he had a strong love for his family.

“He loved life, was always up for an adventure,” Scott said. “People would find it easy to make a friendship with him.”

Jackson, an Elon University junior from North Eastham, Massachusetts, died at the age of 21. He was in Myrtle Beach on a weekend trip when he was killed in a hit-and-run on April 30.

Jackson was killed early in the morning trying to cross Highway 17 Bypass north of 21st Avenue North by Jason Todd Sauro, 45-year-old Myrtle Beach resident, who was arrested by the Myrtle Beach Police Department on May 1. He has been charged with traffic hit-and-run resulting in Yelle’s death. At Sauro’s bond hearing, held at 4 p.m. May 1, a lawyer for Yelle’s family asked that bond be denied because he fled the scene. The judge set a \$50,000 surety bond.

Jackson was a business analytics major with a statistics minor, and a member of Club Baseball. Scott said he was still trying to figure out what he wanted to do for a career. He worked for the Cape Cod baseball league last year doing analytics and statistics work and gravitated toward the sports environment. Scott said Jackson loved his time at Elon.

“It was his happy place. He really loved it,” Scott said. “He really enjoyed school, he liked being there, and the friendship. ... He had a nice cross section of folks that he was engaged with.”

To his teammates, Jackson was someone who led by example, with an energy that touched the lives of those who knew him.

Adam Faberman, an Elon senior and Club Baseball coach, provided a statement to Elon News Network on behalf of the organization. Jackson is remembered by his teammates as a “fierce competitor” and “a comforting and consistent presence within the club.”

See **YELLE** | pg. 4

THE PENDULUM

A PUBLICATION OF  
ELON NEWS  
NETWORK

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EDITORIAL POLICY:

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

CORRECTIONS POLICY:

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

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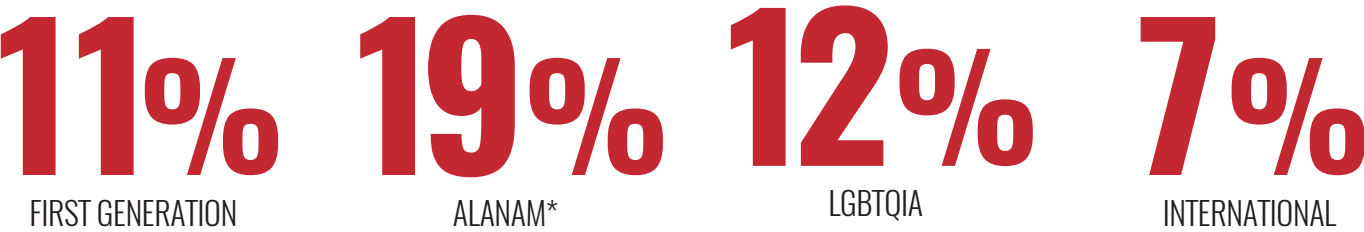
CORRECTIONS

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

A LOOK INTO ELON UNIVERSITY'S  
CLASS OF 2027 DEMOGRAPHICS

1,700 STUDENTS HAVE COMMITTED TO THE ELON CLASS OF 2027. DATA COURTESY OF GREG ZAISER, VICE PRESIDENT FOR ENROLLMENT

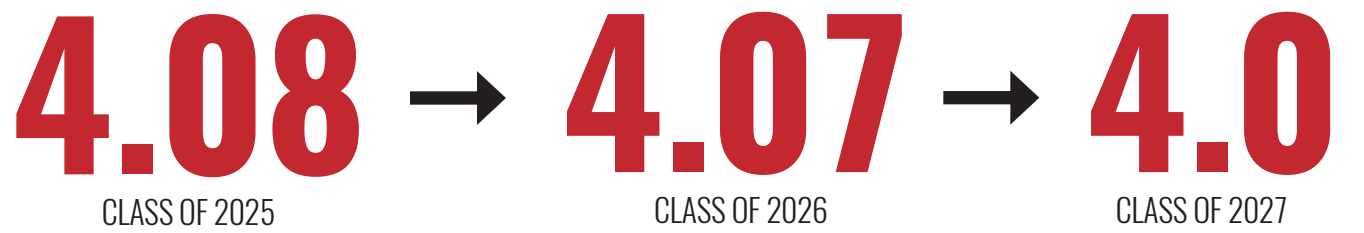
CLASS OF 2027 DEMOGRAPHICS



COMPARED TO LAST YEARS CLASS

\* ALANAM STANDS FOR AFRICAN-AMERICAN/BLACK, LATINX/HISPANIC, ASIAN/PACIFIC ISLANDER, NATIVE AMERICAN, ALASKAN NATIVE AND MULTIRACIAL

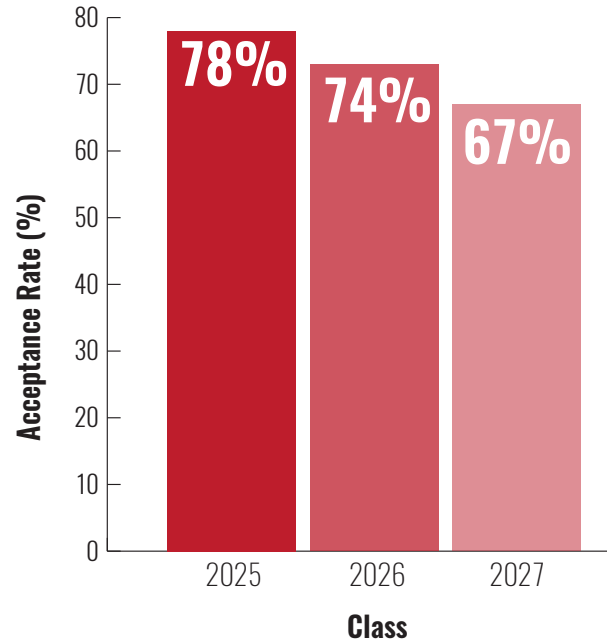
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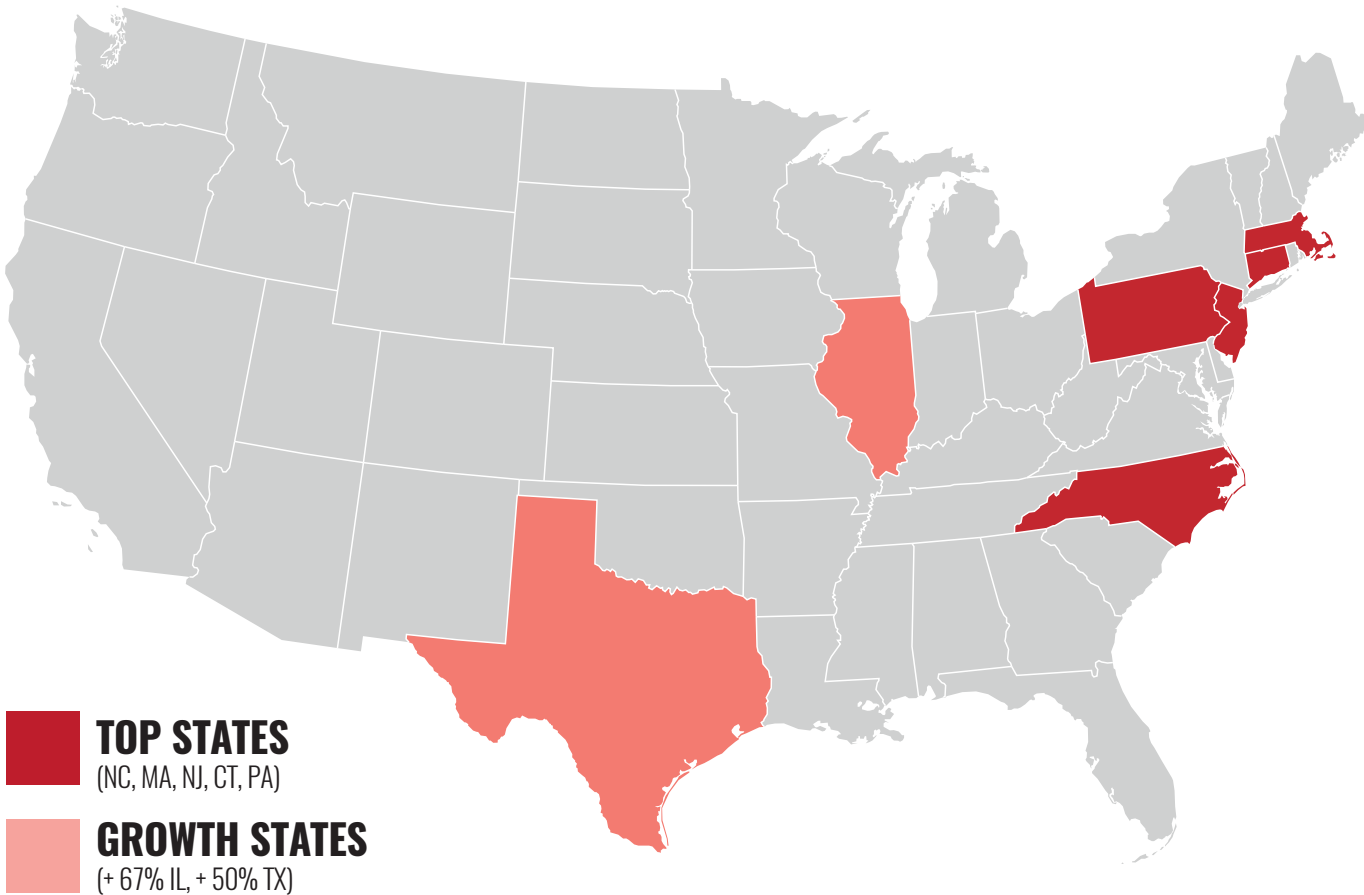
TOP MAJORS

- PSYCHOLOGY
- BIOLOGY
- BUSINESS ANALYTICS
- MARKETING
- SPORT MANAGEMENT

ACCEPTANCE RATE



LOCATION





# SOFTBALL SENIORS SAY GOODBYE

After the completion of its final home game, the Phoenix honored six seniors for their contributions to the program

**Sydney Spencer**  
Sports Editor | @SydneyASpencer

After the conclusion of its final home game at Hunt Softball Park April 29 against the College of Charleston, both players and family of the Elon University softball team stuck around to celebrate its six graduating seniors.

Head coach Kathy Bocock said she was happy to celebrate the team for its hard work over the years.

“The seniors this year and for all three years prior to this, they’ve impacted this program,” Bocock said. “Them and their families, and I can’t thank them enough.”

One by one, each player was honored at home plate with their families and Bocock, as she presented them with flowers and their framed jersey. Senior first baseman Claudia Penny has been a part of the Phoenix for four years and said leaving the team is

bittersweet. “It came really quickly, but I’m glad to be here,” Penny said. “Glad to be a contributing part of the team. I just love this team so much and I really want to get it done for them going forward.”

During the first game of the doubleheader, sophomore pitcher McKenna McCard combined for a no-hitter with senior pitcher Kaitlin King over six innings, winning 8-0. McCard said she was honored to have had a special game on Senior Day.

“It was such a big moment for us,” McCard said. “I didn’t even realize it until after the game and she hugged me and we shed a few tears because we’ve always been so supportive of each other. It was just so special having that moment with her. I wouldn’t be who I am without Kaitlin King.”

Reflecting on her career, Penny said growing up with her teammates is what she will remember most.

“Coming in as an 18-year-old and now being 21, it’s a very different experience each year,” Penny said. “I’ve really grown so much as a person and player overall. I’m so glad to have been a part of Elon softball.”

*Joanna Dwyer contributed to the reporting of this story.*



CLARE GRANT | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER  
Senior catcher Carley Davis walks onto the softball field with her family before she is recognized for her accomplishments.



SYDNEY SPENCER | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER  
Senior shortstop Bella Devesa hugs head coach Kathy Bocock, surrounded by her mother, father and sister.



SYDNEY SPENCER | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER  
After the 8-0 victory in game one, sophomore McKenna McCard hugs senior Kaitlin King. The two pitchers combined for a no-hitter in the game.



CLARE GRANT | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER  
Senior third baseman Megan Grant attempts to get Mary-Kathryn Scott out during the top of the sixth inning.



CLARE GRANT | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER  
Senior center fielder Drew Menscer is presented with flowers. Menscer shares a hug with head coach Kathy Bocock.



CLARE GRANT | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER  
Senior first baseman Claudia Penny gets a College of Charleston runner out with a diving play at first base.





PHOTO COURTESY OF THE YELLE FAMILY

“ HE LOVED LIFE, WAS ALWAYS UP FOR AN ADVENTURE. PEOPLE WOULD FIND IT EASY TO MAKE A FRIENDSHIP WITH HIM. ”

SCOTT YELLE  
JACKSON'S FATHER

# Elon community mourns loss of Jackson Yelle

## YELLE | from cover

“The entire EUCB family is absolutely devastated by the incomprehensible, sudden, and unexpected loss of a brother, friend, and true representative as to everything that the club stands for,” the statement said. “Jackson embodied everything that our club stands for and it was an absolute blessing to know him, be friends with him, and have him as a part of our organization. This loss is genuinely devastating to a club full of brothers who will be doing everything in their power to honor Jackson at all times, make him proud, and ensure that his name lives on forever.”

Scott said the Club Baseball team were Jackson’s “boys, his guys,” and he talked about them often. He wants the team to be taking care of one another in the days ahead.

“I want them to know that A, he loved them, and B, it’s not their fault,” Scott said. “It’s a tough world, and we have got to look out for each other and take care of each

other, I think he would want that.”

Jaden Ryan, an Elon junior and club baseball fundraising chair, remembers his friend and teammate as someone with a “special kind of energy to be around.”

“He was a ball of energy,” Ryan said. “When he walked in a room, everyone lit up.”

Ryan called Jackson “the life of every party” and said he always found a way to make situations fun.

“He loved to dance, any song that came on he would be up dancing getting everyone up and having fun,” Ryan said. “At the baseball field, at practice, always having a good time. He was just someone who loved to have fun.”

Off the baseball field, Jackson’s professors remember him as an engaged student and a friendly face.

“Every greeting from Jackson came with a smile,” Tony Stafford, an instructor in marketing, wrote in a statement to Elon News Network.

John Wimmer, lecturer in management systems, was Jackson’s adviser.

“Jackson was a bright student always looking for ways to grow and improve,” Wimmer wrote.

Lecturer in Management Lakeisha Vance said Yelle enjoyed the full “Elon experience.”

“He immersed himself in academics, sports, and social activities that helped him grow into a well-rounded young man,” Vance wrote.

The Elon community came together for a memorial May 1 at Numen Lumen, where hundreds gathered and those close to him were able to share their memories of Jackson.

As the campus community honors Jackson’s legacy, Scott said he hopes his son is remembered as outgoing, warm and caring to others, and carefree.

“I think he would want people to go on living and not be too sad for him,” Scott said. “He was notorious for saying, ‘Oh I’m fine,’ and I think that would be his attitude still.”

*Max Wallace contributed to the reporting of this story.*



PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE YELLE FAMILY

(LEFT) Jackson, left, stands next to junior Harley Wilf. (MIDDLE) Jackson, right, stands next to his family. (RIGHT) Jackson, right, stands next to his mother, Andrea.

For resources, students, faculty and staff can contact the Truitt Center for Religious and Spiritual Life at 336-278-7729, staff with Student Care and Outreach in the Office of the Dean of Students at 336-278-7200, or counselors from Counseling Services at 336-278-7280.

Students can access 24/7 resources from the crisis counselor on-call at 336-278-2222, TalkNow from TimelyCare, or Student Life administrator on-call through Campus Safety and Police at 336-278-5555. Faculty and staff may also utilize Elon Work-Life Resources for support.



# SPDC keeps up with labor market, prepares students for future

JOB SEARCH | from cover

“Already off the bat with an entry level job, it can be really difficult to get something, especially with not having a master’s degree with some of the roles and different jobs that I would probably like,” Burgess said. “It’s been genuinely very difficult.”

“

IT TAKES LONGER THAN YOU THINK IT WILL, AND IT’S NOT GOING TO HAPPEN THE WAY THAT YOU THINK IT WILL. THE JOB SEARCH PROCESS TENDS TO HAVE ITS UPS AND DOWNS.

**BROOKE BUFFINGTON**  
DIRECTOR OF SPDC

Despite the challenge, Burgess said she is still optimistic with the job search, especially after using the SPDC as a resource and other sites such as Indeed, Glassdoor and LinkedIn. “It’s been a very long process, definitely very difficult to get an interview right now, too. But I’m glad that I’ve been doing it,”

Burgess said. “Still hopeful, but it’s been difficult.” For those confused or concerned about employment, Buffington said students need to realize there’s different subsets of hiring as different industries hire around different seasons and phases. The SPDC often finds that business employers tend to hire earlier in the school year and in mass, large groups. On the other hand, employers in communications, art and education tend to hire in the spring.

“It takes longer than you think it will, and it’s not going to happen the way that you think it will. The job search process tends to have its ups and downs,” Buffington said. “You’ll apply to maybe a handful of things, and for a week, not hear anything, and then all of a sudden get three interviews on the same day.” To keep up with seniors after graduation, the SPDC sends out a destination survey given around the time of commencement and two weeks after graduation. The survey essentially asks if the student has secured a job, what the next steps are or if they need more assistance. The purpose of the survey is to keep up with graduates even after they leave Elon. As employment is different for everyone, Buffington’s biggest advice to not only seniors, but to anyone in the process for a job, internship or program, is to show quality over quantity in their work. “The more that you can show that you’re really interested in that opportunity and that organization in that location, and that role specifically, the more that you’re going to be on their priority list right,” Buffington said.



Student Professional Development Center student workers Sam Greenberg and Lainey English monitor the front desk during their shift.

## 94.7 ▲ NEW FINTECH MAJOR OFFERED IN FALL - 7.3 ▼

Business school catalog will now include a major merging finance, business analytics that teaches new technologies

**Madison Powers**  
Elon News Network

Elon University will offer a new fintech major this fall in the Love School of Business for students wanting to pursue data analysis and programming within the field of finance. Fintech, a combination of finance and technology, merges the theory of finance with the more technical side of payment processes and automation. The new major will offer electives in trading and markets, blockchain and other technologies like artificial intelligence. Chris Harris, chair of the finance department, said the major teaches financial theory with the application of current and future technology. “Technology is really changing the pace that things happen and how they happen,” Harris said. “It was unheard of not even that long ago that you could just send some cash to a friend online. Now it’s just so natural and common.”

“

IT WAS UNHEARD OF NOT EVEN THAT LONG AGO THAT YOU COULD JUST SEND SOME CASH TO A FRIEND ONLINE. NOW IT’S JUST SO NATURAL AND COMMON.

**CHRIS HARRIS**  
CHAIR OF FINANCE DEPARTMENT

Harris said the major requirements include a liberal arts elective that will help students understand the ethics of new financial technologies, especially AI.

“If I’m trying to accomplish a financial task, how will these other things make it possible?” Harris said. “And how will it — hopefully if I have some type of moral grounding or ethical grounding — allow that to happen in a responsible way?” According to Harris, the university created new electives for the major in addition to using courses already offered. The three new courses offered next fall for the major are FIN 4973: Blockchain and Emerging Technologies, FIN 4974: Trading and Markets and FIN 4975: Data Analysis in Finance. Each has been offered at least once this year and will apply toward the major, which was officially approved in December 2022. “Let’s not think about it in terms of the electives we already have,” Harris said. “Let’s look at it to say, ‘What is the future about to be, and what would be the things that students need to know to be ready for that?’” Harris said the decision was made collectively between members of the finance and management departments, as well as the business school dean’s office, who came up with the idea in fall 2021. Elon will be one of roughly 20 schools nationwide that offer fintech as an undergraduate degree. Joe DelGrippo, a senior finance major, said he wishes Elon offered the major earlier.

Last spring, DelGrippo held an internship with Alinea Invest, a fintech startup with an app that encourages young people to invest in mutual funds and competes with apps such as Robinhood or Acorns. He worked as a business development specialist and worked with blockchain technology — new to him at the time. “I definitely had to learn on the job when it came to blockchain and things of that nature like blockchain, finance and cryptocurrency — just more of the new age finance,” DelGrippo said. “I wasn’t as prepared for it as I could have been.” He also said fintech allows average citizens to invest without a middleman. “There’s a new wave of finance coming. Personal finance is really being put into the hands of the retail investor,” DelGrippo said. “Instead of going to your financial advisor or your broker and saying, ‘Hey, I want to buy X many shares of this,’ you can

just do it on your phone now.” Professor of finance Thibaut Morillon currently teaches Blockchain and Emerging Technologies and will continue to teach the course next academic year. Morillon said his course teaches the basics of blockchain, which is often associated with digital currency.

“

STUDENTS ARE HAPPY TO JUST TO DIVE INTO SOMETHING THAT IS BRAND NEW. A FEW OF THEM TOLD ME THAT IT WAS AMAZING TO HAVE THE POSSIBILITY TO STUDY SOMETHING THAT IS HAPPENING RIGHT NOW.

**THIBAUT MORILLON**  
PROFESSOR OF FINANCE

“Bitcoin comes to mind, but that’s hardly the only thing you can do with it,” Morillon said. “In fact, cryptocurrencies are barely just one application of blockchain.” Morillon said blockchain acts as a digital public ledger that allows people to track transactions. “It cannot be tampered with,” Morillon said. “So it holds a lot of value because it allows you to track something extremely accurately.” Morillon said while the concept seems intimidating, it’s easier to understand once students have an understanding of the basics. “Most of it is not outrageously complicated,” Morillon said. “It’s more complex than complicated.” Morillon said he has seen students excited to learn about new technology in finance. “Students are happy to just to dive into something that is brand new,” Morillon said. “A few of them told me that it was

amazing to have the possibility to study something that is happening right now.” Adam Aiken, professor of finance, will teach two of the three new electives next year and said it will be necessary for finance faculty to keep their courses updated as technology changes. “It’s up to us to stay interested and to stay engaged, and not get set in our ways,” Aiken said. “You never can lose sight of the foundation or the fundamental principles — those will never change — that’s the core of finance, but how you go about things will.” Aiken said the fintech electives have been popular so far. “Students are revealing a preference to get some of those skills to be able to approach problems from a programmatic way — the coding background — but still very much within the business discipline in an applied way,” Aiken said. DelGrippo said the addition of the major is a good decision, especially because technology will continue to advance in the finance industry. “Fintech is definitely here to stay — in the way people are investing, especially our age and our generation,” DelGrippo said. “There’s just a lot of potential to cut out the institutions and the advisors.” He said the major will prepare students well for the future of finance.

“It seems like a new way. It just feels very fitting and it feels like it needed to happen because of the way technology’s advancing,” DelGrippo said. “Finance is such an old-fashioned field.”

### FALL FINTECH COURSES

**FIN 4973**

Blockchain and Emerging Financial Technologies

**FIN 4974**

Trading and Markets

**FIN 4975**

Data Analysis in Finance



# ABSS board member resigns early after contention

Patsy Simpson, longest standing board member steps down from her position after rescinding resignation

Michael Leung  
Elon News Network

Patsy Simpson officially resigned from the Alamance-Burlington School System Board of Education, despite a previous announcement that she would not step down until learning how the board would be finding her replacement.

Simpson has expressed her plans to retire since March; however, the board's lack of transparency regarding the selection process of her replacement caused her to rescind her resignation. After a recent surgery, Simpson said she started to feel overwhelmed with all the work she was undertaking and decided that it was time for her to relax and focus on herself.

She initially announced in March that she would resign on May 22. She then declared in early April that she would remain on the board, but changed her mind on April 21. According to Sandy Ellington-Graves, the chairwoman of the ABSS board, Patsy had sent a letter to the board regarding her intentions to resign, which she read during the last meeting on April 24.

"We will miss her knowledge and expertise, but I am confident that the six board members that remain

can serve the community," Graves said.

As the only person of color on the board, she also acted as a voice for students and parents who felt they were not being heard and brought issues and concerns they had to the front of the board. Simpson said she wanted her replacement to be able to serve as a voice for underrepresented students as well.

Members of the community are sad to see her go. Seneca Rogers, a former candidate for a seat on the ABSS Board of Education, said he feels that Simpson has greatly served the board. Last month, in a previous interview with Elon News Network, Simpson said she supported Rogers for the role.

Rogers also said he appreciates how she is willing to go against the norm and make waves while making her opinions known. As a member of Alamance Community, he feels the board could still benefit from Simpson's base of knowledge and experience for the remainder of her term. However, he respects her decision to resign.

"When some people feel like it is time for them to step aside, you give her that understanding and grace to be able to do that in a way they see fit," Rogers said.

Rogers was one of the runners-up for a seat on the ABSS Board of Education during the midterm elections in November. He was the only person of color who ran in the election. He said he hasn't



ERIN HRONCICH | PHOTO EDITOR

The 2022-23 Alamance-Burlington School System Board of Education at the Dec. 5, 2022, board meeting after the newly elected board members were sworn in.

decided whether he will run again as he is focusing on other projects, but is waiting to see what the board is releasing about the application process.

"The reason why I say right now that I'm not 100 percent on my run in 2024 yet is because I want to make sure that I have weighed everything in that process," Rogers said.

The ABSS Board is inviting Simpson to return to Alamance County on May 22 to honor her for her service on the Board of Education.

"We are looking forward to honoring her. She is a friend and a colleague that I will miss," Graves said.

Simpson is still paying attention to the actions of the ABSS Board of Education. She said she will be watching the ABSS Board meetings through the ABSS website as a part of the audience rather than a board member. Simpson said the board does not have the same lens of experience that she has, but has faith that they will develop it over time.

"They'll see me at the three-minute public comment section of the meeting, and I'll have to voice my opinion with them just like any other citizen now," Simpson said.

Simpson said she hopes the remaining board members will be able to prepare for the transition

of students to Southeast Alamance High School, an initiative meant to relieve overcrowding in schools, as well as tackle other issues the ABSS is facing without her presence.

In the meantime, Simpson plans to spend time with her grandchildren, conduct research on her family history and relax and focus on herself. Despite this, Simpson said she is still interested in public education and will continue to pay close attention to the ABSS board past retirement.

"I'll be watching the meetings and following what's going on, and use my voice and my knowledge to speak with them as a citizen as they go public on issues," Simpson said.

# Fire department to receive upgrade on ladder truck

Town of Elon officially purchased new truck and is set to pay for it over time

Naomi Washington & Joanna Dwyer  
Elon News Network

When the town of Elon Fire Department receives an emergency call, the first vehicle sent to the scene is its almost 18-year-old ladder truck. According to Assistant Fire Chief Charles Walker, ladder trucks have a life span of 20 years.

"These trucks are run hard at numerous times throughout a 24-hour shift," Walker said. "So it just comes to a point where preventive maintenance and stuff on it is not enough anymore"

The new truck, set to be delivered in 2025, will cost more than \$2 million to pay for the parts and special compartment customizations, according to Town Manager Richard Roedner. The town of Elon officially purchased the new truck and is set to use a payment plan to pay for it over time. Elon Town Council voted to approve the purchase during the March 27 meeting and has not yet determined where the money will come from within town funds.

"What we plan to do is enter into an installment loan program, as it gets close to the time when the trucks actually become available," Roedner said. "And then we'll pay it off over time as anybody would do with their car or their house or something like that."

Elon's Town Council voted at its last meeting to change the fire tax rate for Elon taxpayers to account for inflation and improvements for the fire station.

The new truck will be shorter in length in order to access more areas around town.

"Some may think, well, what's the big deal with that?" Walker said. "Well, as you drive around our community, when there's more construction going on, there's limited access for us. So a shorter truck means we can get it into tighter places, like on campus or in our community."

Property taxes pay for emergency department expenses, but nonprofit organizations like Elon University do not pay these taxes to the town of Elon. Roedner said there have been conversations about who will be funding the new vehicle, but no concrete responses.

"The other part of it is the question of who should pay for it," Roedner said. "And this

gets a philosophical question. The savings we have has been from our taxpayers in the past — do we make them pay for the new vehicle? Or do we have the taxpayers of the future pay for it who are actually enjoying the benefit of it?" Roedner said.

Roedner said both Elon President Connie Book and Vice President for finance and administration Janet Williams went to the fire department to take a look at the state of the current ladder truck. Williams declined Elon News Network's request for an interview.

So far this year, the Elon Fire Department — and its ladder truck — responded to calls specifically from Elon University almost 150

times and the rest of the community over 450 times.

"We use it on single-story buildings on up to five-story buildings in our district," Walker said. "The versatility of that truck is only limited by us really with it. So, it's a very important piece of our operation here."

According to Roedner, Elon University and Twin Lakes Community agree a new ladder truck is necessary, but no donations have been made.

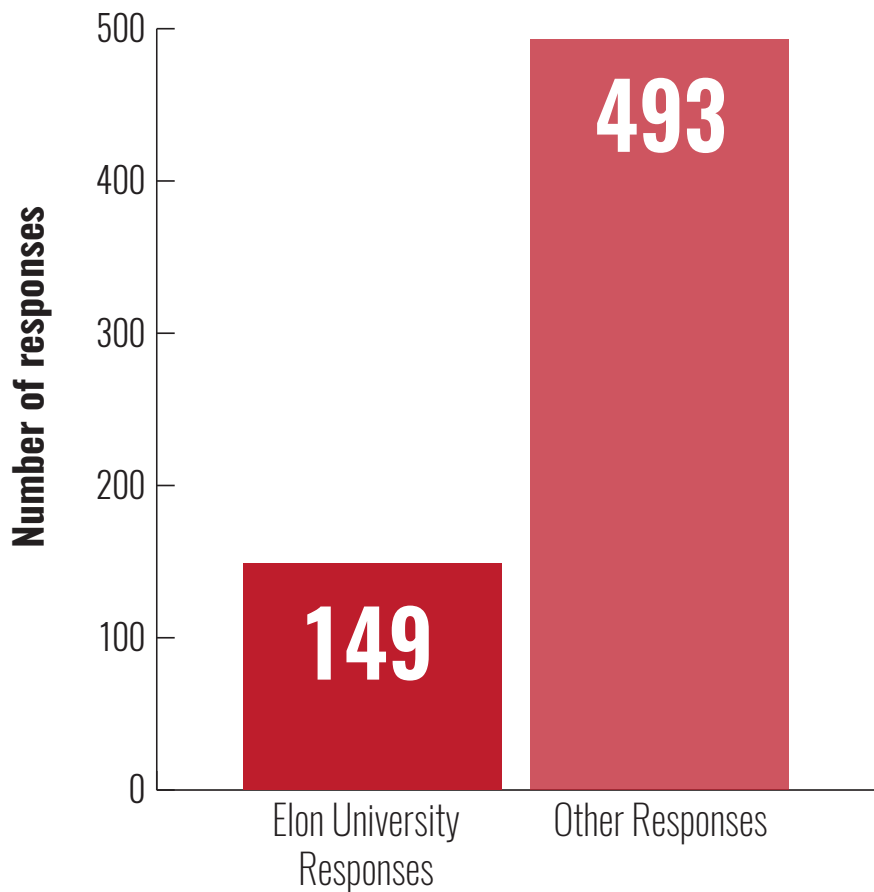
"We would love to have their participation since they're some of the prime users of the new equipment, but it's not something we can force them to do," Roedner said.



JOANNA DWYER | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Members of the Elon Fire Department stand in front of the 18-year-old ladder fire truck April 20. The replacement truck is set to be delivered in 2025.

## ELON FIRE DEPARTMENT NUMBER OF RESPONSES IN 2023



ERIN MARTIN | DESIGNER



# LIFESTYLE

## Bluegrass popularity inceases in North Carolina

North Carolina-based bluegrass acts, Elon student say streaming, younger artists are responsible for rise

**Betsy Schlehuber**  
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Elon sophomore Ryan Sease grew up listening to bluegrass music with his father and fell back in love while listening to Molly Tuttle's cover of "Olympia, WA," by Rancid. Since then, he's listened to her music constantly.

"I once saw her live and that was with Bryan Sutton and a bunch of other people, and then I was obsessed with it," Sease said. "From that point onwards, it was, like, the main thing I listened to."

Over the course of the past year, bluegrass music has grown popular among the Elon community, especially among students like Sease, an age demographic not usually connected to the genre.

According to the Library of Congress, bluegrass music is a "tradition-based modern style of string band music." Instruments frequently used in these four-to-seven person bands include the mandolin, fiddle, acoustic guitar, banjo and steel guitar. Bluegrass music contains elements of country music and folk music, while standing as its own genre through improvisation during live performances.

North Carolina has an extensive history with bluegrass music, serving as the birthplace of Watson among many other bluegrass artists such as Sutton and the late Tony Rice. Sutton has 39,330 monthly listeners on Spotify while Rice has 145,777, although both artists have songs with millions of streams.

The Wide Open Bluegrass Festival is also hosted annually in Raleigh, which has brought more people to the genre, according to Americana artist David Dyer, who is based in the city. Dyer was supposed to serve as the first performance at the town of Elon social district in April but had to cancel due to a work trip.

Dyer also mainly attributes the rise in popularity of the bluegrass and Americana genre to the technological development of streaming.

"I think the best music now is coming out of that genre," Dyer said. "So people are starting to discover that now because they can access it."

Although Sease agrees with Dyer, he primarily listened to bluegrass through the radio before discovering Tuttle. He said his go-to station is WNCW, which is based in Wilkesboro, and just barely reaches his hometown of Greenville, South Carolina.

Bluegrass music originated in the 1600s in the Appalachian Mountains of the United States — North and South Carolina, Tennessee, Kentucky, Virginia and West Virginia — with songs usually detailing daily life in the barren region of rolling hills and farms.

It wasn't until the invention of the phonograph and radio in the early-to-mid 1900s that bluegrass music spread across the country, according to the Bluegrass Heritage Foundation.

Psychedelic bluegrass artist Billy Strings illuminated Winston-Salem with his recent two-night tour stop that attracted North Carolinians from all over the state, including members of the Elon University community. One of these nights was a tribute concert to the late Doc Watson, a traditional bluegrass artist many call an icon, for his 100th birthday.

Merlefest, an annual bluegrass and Americana festival founded by Watson in 1988, is held in Wilkesboro on the campus of Wilkes Community College. This year's event featured artists like The Avett Brothers and AJ Lee and Blue Summit. Several Elon students attended the event, including Sease, despite the torrential downpour at times.

Strings and Tuttle are some of Sease's favorite artists, along with mandolin player Sierra Hull. He said that they are growing

in popularity because of how young they are and how they can connect to young people in a time where popular music has become "impersonal and so inorganic."

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**RYAN SEASE**  
ELON SOPHOMORE

"No one's in this because they want to make money, they're doing it because they love it," Sease said. "Everyone in it is at the top of their game because you can't play bluegrass and be bad because everyone's doing rhythm, everyone's doing solos, everyone is passionate for it."

Sease said bluegrass has always had spikes of popularity throughout the 20th and 21st centuries, whether it was the soundtrack to the 2000 film "O Brother Where Art Thou?" or country artist Darius Rucker's cover of "Wagon Wheel" by Old Crow Medicine Show. But in the 2020s, Sease said Strings is the "new gateway to bluegrass."

"There's a whole generation of kids who grew up whose dads are Dead Heads, and I think that's what's getting people into that sort of thing because he's a lot like the Grateful Dead," Sease said. "People archive his shows every time he plays. People follow him around, I remember

at his concert, I heard people say, 'Oh, we've seen him 16 times.' I was like, 'That's insane, I ain't seen anything 16 times.'"

Julie Brown, the bassist for Randolph County-based bluegrass band, Hindsight Bluegrass, is also a fan of Strings. Brown does a two-hour radio show once a week where she frequently plays his music, and she said people love him because he does everything bluegrass.

"He's not doing just new stuff — not just his stuff — but he's going back and doing the old original bluegrass," Brown said. "And so, it's not just giving people a new twist on bluegrass, it's giving people the original."

Brown also said because Strings is so progressive in his own music, he's able to attract young people to the genre because it's "more in line with what they already like."

Despite Strings blowing up in the bluegrass community, Sease urges anyone else who wants to get into the genre to not just focus on the newer acts, but to dive deeper.

"There's a whole 70 years of stuff built upon it. Go back and listen to whatever artists you like say inspired them because that's some premium stuff," Sease said. "If it's good for them, it's good enough for you."

SCAN THE QR CODE  
TO LISTEN TO SEASE'S  
BLUEGRASS PLAYLIST



ANNE THYFAULT | DESIGNER



Bluegrass band AJ Lee and Blue Summit performed at Merlefest on April 28 in Wilksboro. Merlefest hosts primarily Bluegrass and Americana acts.

COURTESY OF GREY GAUL





ERIN MARTIN | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Elon University defensive back Cole Coleman smiles from the sidelines Oct. 8 in the matchup against Towson University. The Phoenix, ranked No. 14, won 27-10.

Cole Coleman, Skyler Davis get the nod to showcase their skills at the NFL level

**Max Wallace**  
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Before day three of the 2023 NFL draft began, former defensive back Cole Coleman and kicker Skyler Davis — who graduated from Elon in December 2022 — knew that if their names weren't called by the last pick, it wouldn't have been the end of the line for their football careers. When the draft ended without an Elon player called, they were both still able to secure an opportunity to try out for an NFL team.

Coleman and Davis became the 18th and 19th players, respectively, from Elon University to have the opportunity to compete for a spot with an NFL franchise. Both players spent five years with the Phoenix, where Coleman secured 156 career solo tackles — tying him for fifth in Elon history with Brandon Wiggins — and Davis made seven of eight 50-plus yard field goal attempts in 2022 — the best field goal percentage from that distance in Football Championship Subdivision history. For Davis, he said it's a dream to be a part of his alma mater's history.

"Elon has done so much for me to get me here," Davis said. "It's just awesome to be a part of history."

Each player was in contact with NFL teams prior to the conclusion of the draft on Saturday, April 29. The Indianapolis Colts offered Coleman

a three-year, \$2.695 million contract with a \$5,000 signing bonus, but he decided to turn it down.

"At around eight o'clock in the morning, my agent had already been on the phone with the Colts," Coleman said. "I wasn't ready to accept that offer because I thought that they could have gone higher to express their interest in me."

As day three progressed, Coleman sat with his phone anxious for a call, but never got one.

"They had eight different picks throughout day three, so it was definitely stressful watching them pick every other guy," Coleman said.

On Saturday night, Coleman and the Colts agreed to the initial three-year deal with a \$7,500 signing bonus. Coleman said he and his family felt secure about the deal because the Colts didn't select a defensive back in the later rounds of the draft.

"When it came down to it, they decided not to pick my position," Coleman said. "That gave me some comfort and security in the fact that they believed in me as a player."

For Davis, his agent had also been in contact with the Tampa Bay Buccaneers days before the draft started. When he saw his phone light up with a notification from his agent on Saturday morning, the tension was lifted off his shoulders.

"I get the text, 'Hey, the Bucs are a done deal,'" Davis said. "I was actually in the basement playing Rocket League."

While Coleman signed a contract with the Colts, Davis was offered the opportunity to compete against other rookies for a practice squad roster spot with Tampa Bay. For all

camp-deal rookies, like Davis, they will compete in a three-day rookie minicamp, with the best moving on to compete with the full team in main camp. Davis said not receiving a full contract has provided further motivation going into camp.

"I need to be locked in every single day, which I think is going to help me in the long run," Davis said.

Even with the new environment, Davis' confidence has stayed sky high.

"It doesn't really matter to me," Davis said. "It's just kicking the ball."

As for Coleman, he will make the trip to Indianapolis to sign his contract and take part in another form of rookie camp later this week before returning to the team in the summer for offseason training activities. Unlike Davis, Coleman knows what it looks like to play at the professional level. His dad, Chris Coleman, spent two seasons in the NFL with the Tennessee Titans as a wide receiver from 2000-01. Cole said his father's guidance has been a true benefit.

"One of the first things I remember is that he taught me how to conduct myself as a professional, whether that be social media or interviews, from a pretty young age," Cole said. "I kind of knew exactly what to aspire to look like as a professional athlete."

Chris also worked as a receiver coach for three years at both Lenoir-Rhyne University, where he helped the Bears win two consecutive South Atlantic Conference championships in 2011 and 2012, and Southern University in Louisiana. Cole said that having a former NFL player and collegiate coach as a father figure has given him a leg up on the competition, but also realizes the importance of making his own waves.

"I've taken advantage of the fact that he was a college coach and was able to learn a lot from him in that way," Cole said. "But at the same time, there's just so many different variables with other guys that even the table in some way shape or form."

After spending the last five years with Elon, the two former Phoenix established themselves as locker room leaders. Redshirt freshman and running back Jalen Hampton said both Davis and Cole's leadership made his transition to Elon easier.

"They're very encouraging guys and really good leaders," Hampton

COLE COLEMAN BY THE NUMBERS

**4.37 SECOND**

40-yard dash ranked first among safeties that competed at the NFL Combine.

**156 TACKLES**

career solo tackles in his five years with the Phoenix. He ranks the top 10 in Elon football history.

**\$2.695 MILLION CONTRACT**

Coleman secured a three-year, \$2.695 million contract including a \$7,500 signing bonus with the Indianapolis Colts.



ERIN MARTIN | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

said. "They lead by example."

Yet, making the jump to the next level, they'll have to be the ones to find their own footing in the new environment. Cole said it will be a unique challenge, but one he is confident in tackling.

"Going into my sophomore year, I was the most experienced defensive back in that room, but I think it will be relatively seamless because I don't have a problem being able to soak in whatever the older guys have to say," Cole said. "It shouldn't be too big of an issue for me to learn from some of the veterans that I already respect for being some of the greatest in the game."

At the same time, Cole brings a lot to the table as a rookie. He ran a 4.37 second 40-yard dash — a time that led all safeties who tried out at the NFL Combine — posted a 39 inch vertical as well as a 10-foot, 6-inch broad jump at North Carolina State's indoor practice facility during his Pro Day March 28. Although his 2022 season was cut to just seven games due to injury, Cole said he hopes to translate his skills and show his knowledge of the game at practice throughout the season.

"I have hyper awareness for the ball and am always looking to make sure that I give my offense a chance as soon as possible," Cole said. "The football IQ is just knowing the nuances and I think a lot of that comes with the experience that I've had playing football."

Similarly, Davis finished first in Elon history in points, with 340, as well as field goals made, 69. He also

posted a Phoenix best five field goals made in one game against Rhode Island in the 2021 season. Davis said the biggest switch to trying out for a team and potentially playing on Sundays will be the added pressure of each kick.

"In college, once you get that scholarship, once you get the opportunity, you are pretty much set," Davis said. "Kicking on Sunday, you're putting food on your plate, feeding your family."

Hampton said both Davis and Cole's work ethics will carry them to the finish line, and has encouraged the rest of the team to keep working hard.

"It would be a random time of day and you'd see Skyler working his kicks or Cole working on his craft," Hampton said. "I took notes to just keep perfecting my craft. Those guys did and it paid off."

Cole echoed Hampton and said he hopes this opens up further recognition for small school players.

"I think FCS guys and small school guys are slept on," Cole said. "To be able to represent and also have a chance to kind of put us on the map is big to me."

Both athletes will work all summer during training camp to earn a spot on the final 53 man roster when the regular season rolls around Sept. 7.

As the two get ready for the next chapter of their careers, Davis said he is turning the page with his head held high.

"It's fun being the new kid at school," Davis said.



JACOB KISAMORE | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

SKYLER DAVIS BY THE NUMBERS

**7/8 50+ FG**

on 50+ yard field goals in 2022. Best field goal percentage in FCS history from that distance.

**340 PTS**

total points scored in his career. The most scored in Elon football history.

**69 FG**

total field goals made in five year career. The most field goals made in Elon football history.