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THE PENDULUM

WAR DRIVES LOCAL BUSINESS TO COLLECT HUMANITARIAN AID FOR UKRAINIANS

Local saleswoman begins donation drive, creates new connections with Ukrainians in North Carolina

Nyah Phengsitthy
Managing Editor | @nyahphengsitthy

THE LOBBY OF A local Honda dealership has seen hundreds of Burlington residents in recent days. Though the location is typically filled with individuals interested in purchasing or repairing a car, many are there for another reason: to drop off strollers, suitcases, sleeping bags and other everyday essentials. The materials brought to the dealership are donations for Ukrainians, with aid ranging from diapers and clothes to flashlights and blankets. The campaign started through a Facebook post by Lisa Eddins, a Honda saleswoman who wanted to do more than just watch the war from her television.

“I can’t not do anything. I have to do something,” Eddins said. “But I’m just a salesperson, so what can I do?”

Since the war began on Feb. 24, the United States has been the largest single-country donor of humanitarian assistance to Ukraine. The Biden Administration announced on March 24 that the United States is prepared to “provide more than \$1 billion in new funding towards humanitarian assistance for those affected by Russia’s war in Ukraine.” Aid such as everyday essentials and needs, but also war supplies, has been sent to Ukraine and surrounding countries taking in Ukrainian refugees, such as Poland, Romania and Moldova.

Cities throughout Ukraine such as Kyiv, Kharkiv and Mariupol have been



NYAH PHENGSTITTHY | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Burlington resident and Honda saleswoman Lisa Eddins packs a backpack at the Burlington Flow Honda on March 24 with materials to send to the Ukrainian Association of North Carolina. The organization will send the donations to European countries that border Ukraine and have invited millions of Ukrainian refugees into their homes.

under attack for weeks, and supply and every day essentials are quickly running out. Though she’s just one person, Eddins said she hopes she can inspire more people in the area to donate and remind them that life can be taken at any moment.

“Every second that we have with our phones, with our TVs, with our pets, with our friends, with our families — can be gone in a second,” Eddins said. “I think it’s so important for people to see that all

of this is temporary.”

Finding stories

In addition to collecting donations since the beginning of March, Eddins has also been connecting with Ukrainian communities in North Carolina.

Eddins, who had no prior connections with any Ukrainians, eventually found the Ukrainians in the Carolinas and the Ukrainian Association of North Carolina.

Both organizations work to bring Ukrainians together in the state and are currently shipping aid items to Poland, which has taken in millions of Ukrainian refugees since the war began. The items Eddins is collecting will be sent to the groups, then shipped across the world.

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Burlington nonprofit, local students create care packages for US soldiers

Community members work with nonprofit, Crosspoint, to put care packages together

Kyra O’Connor
Executive Director | @ko_reports

Four-year-old Lenox Kontoulas walks from one donation box to another selecting items and plopping them into a package that will be shipped to a soldier deployed in nations around Ukraine. Though Lenox does not know the soldier who will get the box, he said he is happy to help — and to have fun — volunteering at The Lamb’s Chapel.

Lenox is one of many volunteers assembling care packages for soldiers recently deployed. Members of Western Alamance High School’s sports teams, ROTC members and community volunteers spent



KYRA O’CONNOR | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Brothers Lenox (front) and Tallon (behind) Kontoulas pack boxes for deployed U.S. soldiers on March 28. The pair were two of the youngest volunteers at Lamb’s Chapel on March 28.

Monday, March 28 packing boxes to be shipped to U.S. soldiers.

U.S. soldiers have been deployed to NATO countries in Europe, including Slovakia, Hungary,

Romania and Bulgaria, to support allies amid Russia’s war in Ukraine.

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Public Policy Think Tank strives for open dialogue on campus

Students will have the ability to publish their own and review others’ policy research

Sophie Rosenthal
Chief Copy Editor | @sophrosenthal

When Dillan Bono-Lunn brought up the idea for the Public Policy Think Tank at a meeting, it was met with unanimous praise. The political science and policy studies professor presented the idea to the policy studies advisory board and credited the proposal to her advisee, junior Amaya Gaines.

Beginning in fall 2022, Public Policy Think Tank will be a student organization and two-credit course. Gaines is the founder of the organization and Bono-Lunn will serve as the faculty adviser and instructor of the class.

Elon’s policy studies department defines public policy as concerned with solving problems through government intervention. A think tank is an interdisciplinary research institute that publishes articles, analysis and studies on a topic. It also often provides commentary or advocacy.

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Financial Literacy Center director Chris Harris gives financial advice



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Elon junior shares foreign DJ experience over Spring Break



SPORTS • PAGE 12

Softball pitchers from the same town become standouts

THE PENDULUM

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

SGA 2022-23 ELECTION RESULTS

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Citizens speak against Aspen Avenue construction

Elon locals demonstrate their dismay over traffic the connecting road could bring

Abigail Hobbs
Elon News Network | @abigailhobbss

At the Board of Aldermen work session on March 28, Aldermen discussed a resolution about the Aspen Avenue development, a new solid waste and recycling contract and a public hearing for a rezoning request. The board has also transitioned to a new schedule and will meet on the second Tuesday and the fourth Monday each month.

Aspen Avenue construction

Alderwoman Stephanie Bourland motioned to make a resolution to close Aspen Avenue. The road is a seven-minute drive from Elon University. The motion also included the ability to stop issuing permits to pave driveways until the board comes to a solution at a special committee meeting on April 4. The motion was seconded by Alderman Randy Orwig and was unanimously passed.

Thirteen of the more than 30 community members who attended the meeting spoke during the public comments portion — specifically for Aspen Avenue where they advocated to close the road for safety of pedestrians and traffic regulation. According to Town Manager Rich Roedner, the road is being developed by the town of Gibsonville to connect a new neighborhood to Brookview Drive in the Ashley Woods neighborhood. This new neighborhood is proposed to have four entrances, including off of Aspen Avenue.

Many citizens, including Elon resident Kelly Young, presented at the board of Aldermen session. Young argued that Brookview Drive is a residential street, not a city street, and the lack of sidewalk makes it dangerous to open it up to more traffic.

"I have a kid as well, but still we both have almost been hit many times because people fly down that street and the police do not come and do anything about it," Young said. "We need to be safe and we don't feel safe in our neighborhood."

Elon resident Jim Hogsett said he is also concerned with the amount of traffic that would be brought into the neighborhood.

"I came to Ashley Woods to have peace and quiet, not that it has to be a perfect neighborhood, but I think we pay enough in taxes ... and the investment



KYRA O'CONNOR | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Homeowner and Elon resident Dana Martin stands in front of the "No Thru Traffic" sign, which is where her family used to have a basketball hoop. Martin and her family have lived in the house just next to the proposed site for construction on Aspen Avenue for 10 years.

we have in our homes, to let us have peace," Hogsett said. "Let us have some peace and quiet and enjoy where we live at home."

Hogsett said he felt that if something dangerous happened, like the Winston Weaver fertilizer plant explosion in Winston-Salem that occurred on Jan. 31 and Feb. 1 and caused an evacuation, an evacuation would be very difficult. Hogsett also attributed difficult evacuation due to the narrow entrance to Brookview Drive.

"I want to tell you, it scares me to death and I think about it every night," Hogsett said. "And then add to it that entrance; it scares me to death in Brookview that it is so narrow."

Roedner pointed out that ethically, the board could face issues by only blocking the permit for development on Aspen Avenue — as developers would be taking the correct steps in getting a permit and shouldn't be forced to wait for a decision to be made if the procedure was done correctly. There were also issues of passing other permits at the same time, but waiting on this specific issue.

The board debated on how to progress the Aspen Avenue issue, discussing legal and ethical ramifications for each option with Roedner. They eventually decided on the motion brought forward by Bourland.

Solid waste, recycling changes

The board also discussed the pending contract for solid waste and recycling. Both the previous solid waste and recycling contracts are set to expire June 30. According to System Public Works Director David Murphy, with this new

contract, recycling and waste would be collected by the same company under a five-year contract with two, two-year extensions.

There would be a price increase of roughly \$100,000 per year for the original five years and would include new trash cans but the same recycle bins. If passed, the company would try to maintain the same schedule and may try to collect recycling and solid waste on the same day.

Public hearing for rezoning

The board held a public hearing for a rezoning request brought forward by Chris Jones representing Self Storage LLC to expand the facility. This was restricted due to the Commercial Zoning Designation by the current Land Development Ordinance. The request will be voted on by the board during the April 12 regular meeting.

Interim planning director

Pamela DeSoto, assistant town manager and planning director, introduced the interim planning director, Carrie Spencer. Spencer will take over as DeSoto transitions into working part-time for the town of Elon and as Roedner continues to search for her replacement.

Looking ahead

The board's next meeting will be a special committee meeting on April 4 to discuss Aspen Avenue. The board of Aldermen's regular meeting is April 12 and will continue to discuss and vote on topics discussed during today's work meeting.



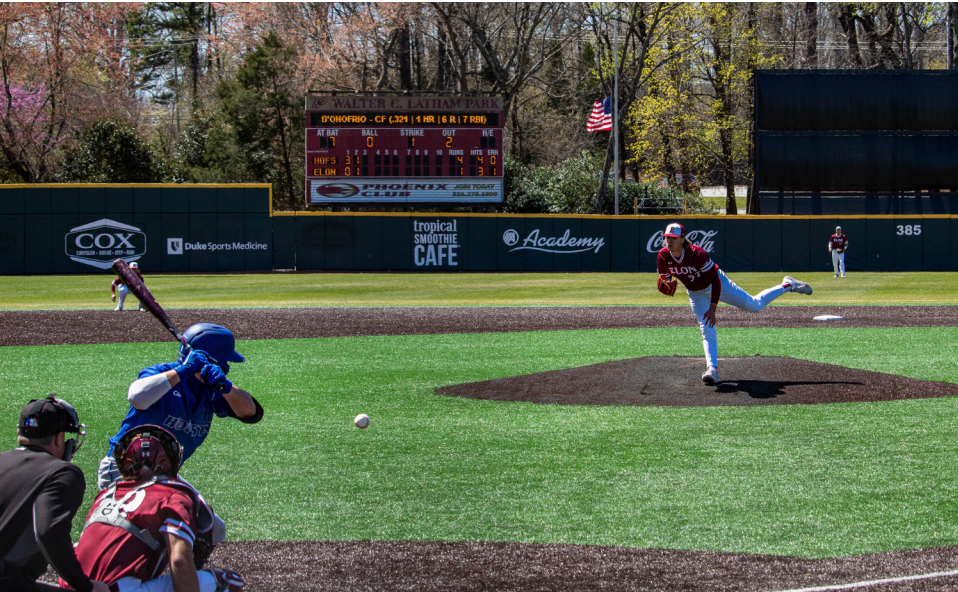
LUKE JOHNSON | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Joyce Wilson and her four-legged partner Lad leave Lake Mary Nell at Elon University after successfully and humanely removing two geese from the water by chasing them on a kayak on March 25. Working for the Geese Police for eight years and five years respectively, it was just another day at the office for Wilson and Lad.



JOSEPH NAVIN | PHOTO EDITOR

Student Government Association student body president candidates (in order from left to right) Chase Solomon, Andrew Lymm and Nadine Jose sit inside of Oak House on March 23 during an executive candidate forum event. Sophomore Vice President of Communication candidate William Wood (far right) was also in attendance.



JOSEPH NAVIN | PHOTO EDITOR

Elon pitcher Cole Reynolds (37) throws the ball during the game against Hofstra on March 27. Elon lost the game 15-5 and also the three-game series to Hofstra.



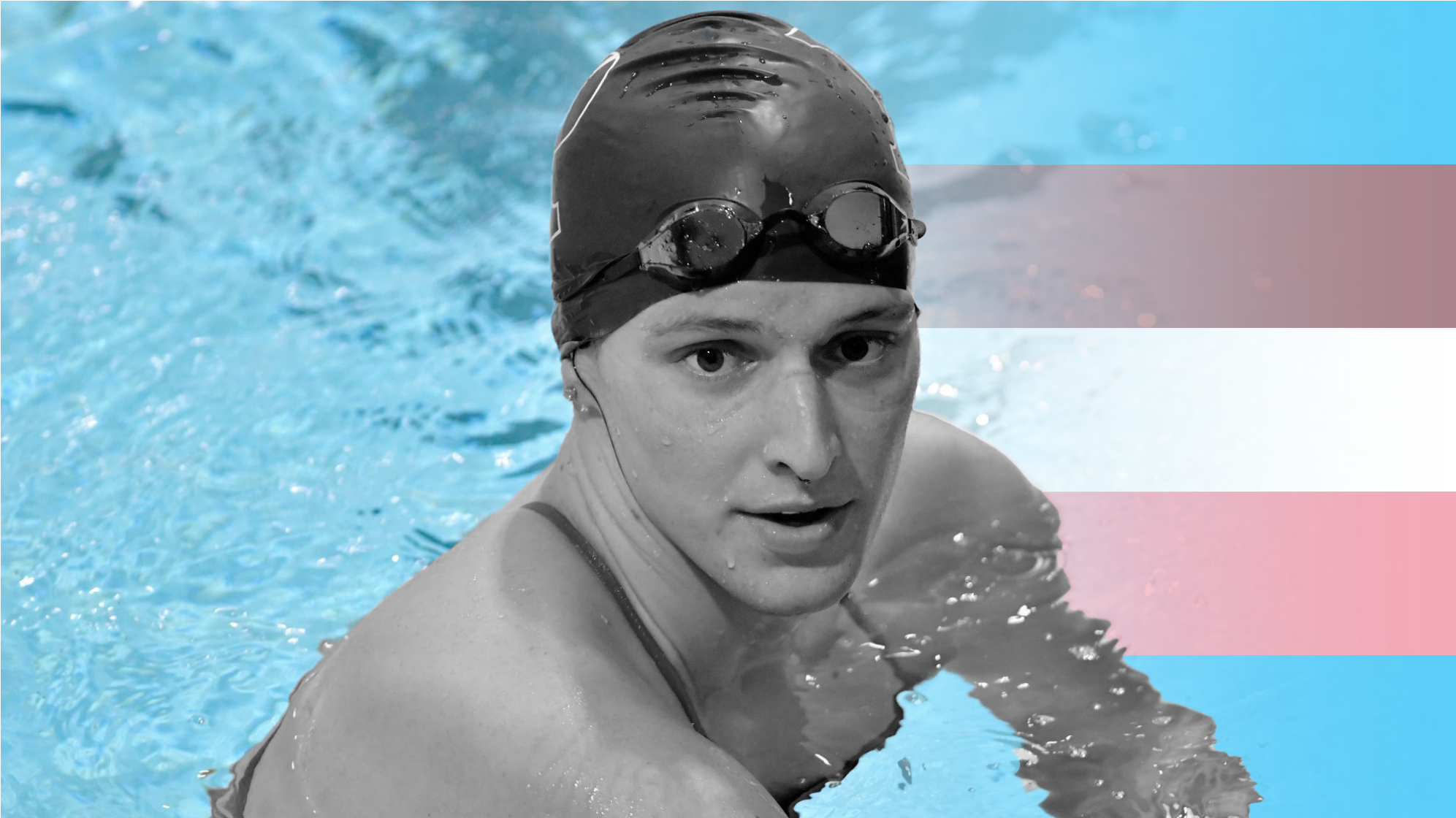
KATHERINE MARTIN | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Freshman attacker Cierra Hopson blows past a Winthrop University defender on March 26. Hopson scored four goals in Elon's 19-9 win.



ERIN MARTIN | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

A student kneads challah dough at the Chabad Elon and Panhellenic Association Mega Challah Bake on March 27. Female students, mostly Jewish and in sororities, made challah — a bread eaten often in Jewish culture.



CAROLINE MITCHELL | DESIGN CHIEF

Lia Thomas becomes new representative for transgender athletes

Bill Squadron, professor of sport management, breaks down response to Thomas' success

Luke Jackson
Elon News Network | @lukebjax

Lia Thomas is a transgender woman and swimmer at the University of Pennsylvania. Her success in her second year competing on a women's team has brought the topic of transgender athletes to the forefront. She recently won the women's 500-yard freestyle at the NCAA Division I championships — the first ever NCAA individual championship won by a transgender athlete.



Bill Squadron

2021-22 season.

Thomas holds several school records for the women's team and won many races this season by a large margin. A petition was circulated in an attempt to ban her from the championships where she won, but the swimming world responded with an open letter to the NCAA signed by 300 former and current NCAA, Team USA and international athletes in support of Thomas.

Elon professor of sport management Bill Squadron broke down and provided sport law and sport management context to the issue. Squadron has over 30 years of experience in the field.

This interview has been edited for clarity.

Why have critics in the swimming world called Lia Thomas

competing in the women's division unfair?

"The concern arises from the underlying issues associated with the participation by transgender women in women's sports. The Lia Thomas situation may be the most high profile right now and getting a lot of attention, but it really flows from the core challenge — which is that there's an issue around the fairness in competition associated with transgender women participating in women's sports. And at the same time, a corresponding issue is whether it is fair or not to allow transgender women to participate in women's sports. And that issue is not a new one.

It goes all the way back to Renee Richards seeking to participate in the U.S. Open as a transgender female after completing hormone and other therapy, and there was a major dispute over whether she would be allowed to compete. It even went to court before it was resolved, so this is not a new issue. It's much more front and center for people because fortunately, the entire area of transgender rights has advanced way beyond what it was decades and decades ago. And we as a society recognize that it's critical to support and respect people who are trying to address their issues of gender."

Many critics have alleged that hormone replacement therapy has given Thomas a competitive advantage swimming in the women's division. Is that possible?

"It wouldn't have given her an advantage. The baseline from which we start is that people who are born biologically male and go through puberty as a male typically have certain physiological advantages — strength, endurance, speed — that we see in the differences in athletic performance between men and women. That's simply the science of what Lia Thomas and others who are transgender females sometimes do, is to undertake hormone therapy, which would mitigate the physiological advantages that would have come from having gone through puberty as a male."

Why are critics upset that Thomas has had success in NCAA women's swimming?

"The challenge that everyone is trying to address, hopefully in a calm, non-political, rational, sensitive way, is that hormone therapy does not necessarily equal the playing field by eliminating all of those physiological advantages. As a result of that, organizations like the International Olympic Committee and the NCAA have struggled with what is the right test. What are the right set of requirements before allowing transgender women to compete without creating an unfair competition? The issue is that there is no clear cut answer that works in all cases as of yet. And so that's why many people are working very hard to try to come up with a solution that's fair to everyone involved."

How is this case important for future transgender athletes that are considering following the same path as Thomas?

"It's important in the sense that it's probably been the most high profile individual case nationally. At the same time, you have a lot of political activity around this issue, which has also created a great deal of discussion about how to best deal with it moving forward. The Thomas case, like in any case, always runs the risk of having a disproportionate impact because it's high profile and in the headlines and often can create an extreme reaction to a single case as opposed to looking at all of the facts and data.

It's very interesting to me, for example, that the governors of Utah and Indiana recently vetoed bills that prohibited transgender women from competing in their states. They cited the small number of cases in which this is really a serious problem in comparison with the message and the discouragement that this kind of prohibition can have on transgender youth. They were trying to balance those issues. So I do think that the Lia Thomas case, because it was in the headlines, invariably has had a disproportionate impact."

Lumen Scholar expands research opportunities with Public Policy Think Tank

POLICY | from cover

“This is a niche that goes unfulfilled,” Bono-Lunn said. “This is a way we can give policy students in particular, but also Elon students across the campus, an opportunity to engage in timely, accessible policy research. So this is just a slam dunk in terms of experiential learning.”

As a part of the think tank, students will produce and review policy-relevant work and publish a variety of research — from policy briefs and memos to blogs and infographics. The think tank will also host events and invite guest speakers. The organization will be entirely run by students and the class will supplement their work. Course credit also offers an incentive for students to join.

For Gaines, the think tank represents more than an expansion of the political science and policy studies department: it’s also a way to further initiatives of diversity, equity and inclusion at Elon.

“If you look at the discipline of political science and public policy, some of the most impacted people are Black and brown folks, people across the gender spectrum, so on and so forth,” Gaines said. “But they’re some of the least represented voices in policy discourse, research and whatnot.”

To remedy this issue, Gaines said she hopes the think tank will be a way for students to step outside of the Elon bubble with their policy research, publishing work that will help students understand government systems, policies and laws that create different conditions for people with different and intersecting identities.

This is something Gaines knows can be effective; she did her own public policy research last year as a 2021 Lumen Scholar. Gaines’ Lumen project, “Policy Solutions Waiting to Be Seen: Applying Intersectionality Policy Process Analysis to State Anti-Poverty Programs,” gave her the opportunity to research and analyze where the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families policy has failed people with intersecting identities as a Black woman herself.

Gaines started thinking about public policy research as a freshman. After submitting a proposal for a project in her Global Experience class, she received specific feedback from her professor on Moodle encouraging her to apply



Junior Amaya Gaines sits with Dillan Bono-Lunn, professor of political science and policy studies, in Gray Pavillion on March 29. Gaines and Bono-Lunn worked together to develop a public policy think tank class that will be offered this upcoming fall where students can publish their own, and review others’ policy research.

for the Lumen Prize.

“I literally couldn’t imagine myself doing such significant research and getting significant funding as an undergrad,” Gaines said. “I knew I wanted to create research that contributed to a discourse about what it means to experience different policy level issues, and how that impacts your lived experience.”

The summer after working on her Lumen project, Gaines started looking into how policy research is published at other universities. Using the University of North Carolina Chapel Hill Roosevelt Institute and the University of Chicago Paul Douglas Institute as examples, two student-run think tanks, she thought, why can’t Elon house a similar institute of its own?

Bono-Lunn and Gaines have worked together for almost two full academic years. Last semester, when Gaines brought up her idea for the think tank, Bono-Lunn told her to write up a blurb on what she wanted to see at Elon so that Bono-Lunn could present it to the advisory board for her. From there, it was a matter of implementing it at Elon.

The initial faculty response to her idea surprised Gaines, not because she didn’t believe in the think tank, but because implementing the idea would have a lasting effect on the department and Elon as a whole. As she’s gone through the process of planning the think tank, Gaines said her main emotion has been excitement.

As the founder, Gaines said that students can join the organization, register for the class or do both. There is no prerequisite for or cap size on the class.

In addition to Gaines’ work, which is particularly visible to her because of their work together, Bono-Lunn said there is already great student policy research on campus that underscores the value of housing a public policy think tank on campus.

“Getting to see her present some of her initial findings and see her and other students in class present their policy research, it’s really striking how there’s so much valuable work, policy relevant work that students at Elon generate,” Bono-Lunn said.

Crosspoint, Western Alamance High School students put together, send care packages

CARE | from cover

Anna Liese Call, who serves as executive director of Crosspoint, organized the care package event. Crosspoint is a nonprofit in Burlington that focuses on teaching kids about military experience and veterans. Call’s original goal was to pack 100 boxes but ended up with 323.

“It’s kind of surreal because we started as such a little organization teaching a class to eight kids eight years ago, and it has just grown exponentially since then,” Call said. “It shows that our community cares so much about our troops that are going to be going to soldiers that are now serving. ... We care so much about our soldiers that are in harm’s way to keep us safe.”

Since soldiers have been deployed, Call said she has gotten calls from parents asking if Crosspoint can send their child a care package. Call said she always tries to send not just one care package to an individual soldier, but many for the entire unit. Each package costs \$21 to send.

For Western Alamance High

School students, all of whom spent their day off from school at the church, constructing care packages is just one way they can show support for those overseas. Thomas Bullard, a high school freshman football player at Western Alamance, was among the football players who came to volunteer alongside their coach and classmates.

“We just wanted to help out the community and let the soldiers know that we’re here for them,” Bullard said.

ROTC members from Western Alamance High School packed boxes as well. Western Alamance students have the opportunity to take an ROTC class at school to participate in the program. According to high school senior ROTC member Chesnee Gilland, members of ROTC find ways to volunteer each month to help serve the community.

High school junior Joey Versace plans on serving in the military after graduation and said packing the boxes is especially important to him.

“I like doing this kind of stuff because I think about if I was

ever there, I’d want to get toys and games,” Versace said. “But they wouldn’t all be for me. I would want to give them to the refugees that need them.”

James Chesnut, a Vietnam war veteran, said watching all of the students pack the care packages meant a lot to him, especially as someone who used to receive them

during his time serving.

“It’s a great feeling to know that somebody, somewhere, cares,” Chesnut said. “A little extra care package goes a long way.”



High school junior Joey Versace packs boxes at The Lamb’s Chapel in Burlington. Versace plans on going into the military after he graduates from Western Alamance High School, which made packing boxes for deployed U.S. soldiers more meaningful to him.

Q&A WITH CHRIS HARRIS: DIRECTOR OF CENTER FOR FINANCIAL LITERACY

Harris talks about ways college students can save money

Erin Martin
Elon News Network | @erinmartin35

The rising cost of living in the United States is causing many to watch their spending and leaving many college students with empty pockets at the gas pumps and in grocery stores.

Chris Harris, an associate professor of finance and the chair of the finance department, shares ways college students can save money. He has a passion for helping individuals understand finances and take advantage of the resources they have. Harris is also the director of the Center for Financial Literacy and has promoted financial literacy around campus years before the official center was established in September 2020.

Harris hosts workshops for different student groups, staff members and organizations across campus. Harris says the goal of the Center for Financial Literacy is “to help people feel informed about financial decision making.”

This interview has been edited for clarity.

Why should students care about inflation and be aware of it?

“Inflation can be a nasty thing to all of us because essentially what will happen is, if you put money in a bank account right now or a savings account ... they might say, ‘Oh, it’s .01%, which is basically zero, nothing, right?’ You’re earning nothing. But at the same time when you hear the inflation is maybe 8% ... Essentially that means that the value of that money when you go to spend it a year later, will be 8% less than it is now.

If you’ve had money in that savings account, you’re hoping that it can be growing and maybe offset some of that inflation, but right now, it’s not. So whatever \$1 will buy you right now, you’re only going to be able to buy maybe 92 cents worth next year. You tried to be responsible. You put it in savings, it’s been sitting there, but it’s almost like you’re losing your ability to buy things.

Inflation can be a really destructive thing because it disrupts people’s ability to plan effectively because if prices of everything are going up, and somebody thought, ‘Well, I’m going to make this purchase, whatever it is, next year,’ especially if it’s a large purchase, a car or even just a computer or whatever it is. ... If you’re trying to set aside money to save, it’s going to end up being a greater amount that’s needed then maybe you initially thought and so it can affect you on the big

things. But it also can affect the little things because anybody who goes to a grocery store or to a restaurant right now, or whatever is learning that lesson.”

What kind of items are seeing the biggest price increase?

“Gas is up a lot, but, interestingly, what a lot of people don’t realize is we’re probably just at the beginning of seeing a lot of inflation on things like food products. An example, the price of wheat is 70% higher than what it was one year ago. So if wheat is a primary ingredient in anything, then the cost of that thing will go up. ... I fully expect the price of bread to be going up considerably.

Throughout the United States, we use really high amounts of fertilizer, and some of the primary fertilizers that are used in the U.S. the price of that right now is up almost 300% in the last year, year and a half. If any farmer is going to make any money, they’re going to have to charge higher prices on their crops because the price of fertilizer is so much more.

The other thing that’s going to be interesting is corn. Corn is one of the products that requires a lot of fertilizer, and so there are a lot of corn farmers who have said, ‘Well 300% increase in fertilizers is too much, so I’m just not going to grow corn this year.’ And so they wanted to plant something else that might require less fertilizer like soybean, and now there’s actually a shortage of soybean seeds because so many people are choosing to do that. ... Long term, like maybe in the fall, we might have a big increase in corn prices because people are going to plant less corn, so the ripple effects of what’s going on here. ...

We’re probably going to see it for maybe a couple years or a few years, especially the longer the conflict goes on in Ukraine. Ukraine and Russia produce about 30% of all the wheat in the world, and a lot of the materials that go into the fertilizer that’s used here in the United States is primarily mined in Russia. We’re probably going to see the longer the conflict goes on, the longer we’re going to see the lingering impacts of higher prices.”

When can we see relief for items we import from Ukraine and Russia?

“In the U.S. we don’t really buy a lot of our wheat from Ukraine or Russia. But the thing that happens is that the countries that normally would get it from them might not be able to get it from them this year. So then they’re going to turn around and say, ‘Well, where else can we get it?’ Maybe even in the United States if we grow enough on our own, we hear the people in another country willing to pay more than that just means the prices go up for everybody, which is what we’re seeing.”

What should students do if they feel overwhelmed?

“The biggest thing to say is, ‘Do I have any control over how I spend my money in these biggest areas,’ because that’s where it will have the most impact. I feel like I’ve

been meeting more students lately who are saying, ‘Yeah, I’m learning how to cook more at home,’ and people are doing that. They’re trying recipes. One of the reasons people start to look at that is because it can be more cost effective. If you’re really feeling like, ‘Man, I just feel like I can’t control the spending,’ or it seems like things are getting really out of hand, a reasonable alternative is to say, ‘Are there some meals I can prepare at home or there’s some things that I can do that maybe will help cost a little bit less?’”

How can students spend money wisely right now?

“I’m a big advocate of shopping smart all the time, actually. Most of us have big financial goals, and that’s how we usually think about our goals. It’s this big thing like, ‘I want to retire early,’ ‘I want to have a paid off home,’ ‘I want to do this’ or whatever, and a lot of the classes and events I do see the responses that students give when they kind of talk about their goals. And these are very common. It’s hard for everybody to stay focused on that big picture thing. So a lot of times it just helps to break it down a little bit smaller and to be able to say, ‘OK, when I’m 19 years old, it’s really hard for me to discipline all my decision making on what’s going to happen when I’m 65.’ So maybe that can’t be my motivator. But maybe what could be the motivator is saying, ‘Can I save \$5,000 this year?’

The idea is that you just want to be able to think in a more critical way; how my decisions that I’m making today or right now are going to impact maybe some of the future things that I want to do.

... One of the most helpful things any student could do is to actually think about, ‘What are my financial goals? What am I trying to accomplish or what am I trying to do?’ And once we determine that, we can just start thinking about our decisions now because all of a sudden it might make us a little more uncomfortable.”

How should students right now change their approach to their finances?

“We hope this doesn’t last forever, and we want it to be as short as possible. If I was commuting, I would absolutely be looking at, is there someone I can carpool with? Can we split days so we’re each only paying for gas half the time or something? I absolutely would be looking to see if that is a possibility. Or is there a shuttle you can use to get around?”

When prices are a little lower and we’re not being forced to have to make proactive plans — it’s easier to ignore that. But as the budget starts to come a little tighter and a little bit of pressure every time you fill up gas and people start to go, ‘Oh my goodness, it’s \$60 to fill up gas,’ those thoughts creep in. Then it’s a good time to eat food that you can prepare at home.

You’d be surprised how much small adjustments to whatever somebody’s daily thing is can make over a period of time. ... I don’t think life is meant for us to deprive ourselves of all these things, so I don’t think that personal finance is depriving ourselves. It’s finding ways to get what we want.”



CAROLINE MITCHELL | DESIGN CHIEF

THE ELON UNIVERSITY SPEAKER SERIES
The Power of Relationships 2021-22 SEASON

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH
WUNC
NORTH CAROLINA PUBLIC RADIO

BAIRD LECTURE

Leland Melvin

Engineer, educator, former NASA astronaut and former wide receiver

"Chasing Space: An Astronaut's Story of Grit, Grace and Second Chances"

THURSDAY, MARCH 31, 2022 | 7 P.M.
Alumni Gym, Koury Athletic Center



ELON UNIVERSITY

FROM BURLINGTON TO POLAND: DONATIONS, AID MAKE ITS WAY TO UKRAINIANS

DONATIONS | from cover

Working with Eddins is Donna Goldstein, co-president of the Ukrainian Association of North Carolina. Goldstein was one of the first Ukrainians Eddins met, which exposed her to a localized story about the war. Goldstein, who currently has family in Ukraine, said the war has made it hard for her to reconcile with her emotions, even after a month into the fighting.

“When I saw the bombs falling, when I saw the footage on TV of Russian tanks pouring across the Ukrainian border, I was just in complete disbelief. I was in shock,” Goldstein said.

Though her family is located in the western part of Ukraine, she said she contacts them every day.

Since its inception in 2005, the Ukrainian Association of North Carolina has been a group of supporters and gatherings, but now it’s needed more than ever. Goldstein said the association has seen the membership grow since the invasion.

“This is a place for us to cry on each other’s shoulders,” Goldstein said. “You can see how shattered Ukrainian-Americans are because they have family. They’re worried about their family, and they just see their country being destroyed.”

Reflecting on History

Through connecting with more local Ukrainians, Eddins eventually found Galyna Karpenski, an elementary school music teacher at Triad Math and Science in Greensboro. The two were connected because of the donation drive in Burlington, but now they’ve found a way to raise additional funds for animals in Ukraine through Karpenski’s nonprofit, Fine Whines and Lickers. Karpenski said she has enjoyed working with Eddins.

“She’s just not going to sit back and watch, she felt that she had to do something about it. So she reached out to us and we spoke,” Karpenski said. “She has been amazing advocating for Ukraine in Burlington.”

Though Karpenski said she is happy to see hundreds of essential living items be shipped to Poland, other emotions of fear, stress and disbelief fill her mind every day as she tries to keep up with the war. Karpenski has family still living in Ukraine — her father who recently evacuated to another part of the country and her aunt in Mykolayiv. Like many other Ukrainian-Americans, Karpenski lives a double life, trying to keep up with the war through the news and family, while maintaining work and everyday life. Karpenski said she has an app that tracks which towns have been



Lisa Eddins (left) and Missy Robbins (right) at Flow Honda of Burlington hold a box filled with donation items ready to be sent to Poland. Eddins started the donation drive at the beginning of March, with the Honda lobby filled with boxes, strollers, blankets and other essential living items. The donation drive will continue into April.

BY THE NUMBERS

2M

plus Ukrainian refugees have been placed in Poland as of March 18, according to the UN Refugee Agency. The Ukrainians of the Carolinas and the Ukrainian Association of North Carolina will send donations to the European country.

“

IT’S VERY DIFFICULT TO WATCH. IT’S VERY PAINFUL TO WATCH. I THINK THE ONLY GLIMMER OF HOPE THAT I SEE IN THIS ENTIRE CONFLAGRATION IS THAT UKRAINIAN IDENTITY HAS BEEN CLEARLY CEMENTED.

DONNA GOLDSTEIN
CO-PRESIDENT OF UKRAINIAN ASSOCIATION OF NORTH CAROLINA



Eddins adds suitcases to the rest of the donation pile. Any monetary donations goes to truck drivers transporting the donations and for purchasing tactical supplies such as helmets and walkie talkies for soldiers.

bombed or need to evacuate so that she can update her family.

“It’s horrible for us to know that our family are not safe,” Karpenski said. “But I cannot even begin to imagine how horrible it is for people living in Ukraine through those bomb air raids.”

Watching everything unravel from the United States, Karpenski said the current state of Ukraine can be compared the Nazi invasion of Poland in World War II. She said she’s concerned with how far Russia will go.

“It took way too long for the United States and other countries to jump in and actually do something about it, took too long, too many lives,” Karpenski said. “The same thing is happening in Ukraine right now.”

And although she said she is aware of the aid the United States has provided to Ukraine and other surrounding European countries, she hopes people here will not turn away from this historic situation.

“If we just choose to look away, we’re going to have a history that will just repeat itself,” Karpenski said.

Though the war is physically separating people, Karpenski said it has symbolically pulled more Ukrainians together — especially when it comes to recognizing their identity.

Goldstein has felt this way since the 2014 Maidan Revolution — a series of deadly protests in Ukraine that led to the removal of the country’s pro-Russian president.

“I think what we saw in 2014, and what is really galvanizing here now in 2022, is

the complete flourishing of the Ukrainian identity, separate from an independent of Russia,” Goldstein said. “It’s very difficult to watch. It’s very painful to watch. I think the only glimmer of hope that I see in this entire conflagration is that Ukrainian identity has been clearly cemented.”

According to Eddins, the donation drive will continue into April while she works with other Burlington residents to find more ways to aid Ukraine. While shipments are constantly being sent to Poland, it will be a while until assistance from the United States will end.

“It doesn’t just stop here. It’s whatever the need be,” Eddins said. “If these organizations say we’re going to keep doing this, then I’m going to keep doing it.”

IF YOU GO

Flow Honda Burlington Donation Drive

Where: 2920 S Church St,
Burlington, NC 27215

When: Monday-Saturday:
9:30 a.m. - 7 p.m.
Sunday: Closed

Items needed: Flashlights, clothes, sleeping bags, food, blankets, strollers, toiletries, shoes, umbrellas, suitcases, etc.



Galyna Karpenski, an elementary school music teacher at Triad Math and Science in Greensboro, holds up a drawing created by her student of Ukraine’s national flower, the sunflower. Karpenski met Eddings through her efforts of the donation drive and the Ukrainian Association of North Carolina.

ELON UNIVERSITY SWITCHES SAFETY APPS, UPGRADES E-ALERT SYSTEM

Emergency campus safety program Rave Mobile Safety is replacing LiveSafe and E-Alert

Ellis Chandler
Elon News Network | @ellis_chandler

Elon University has switched emergency campus safety applications, moving from the LiveSafe app and E-Alert system to Rave Mobile Safety, in an effort to communicate information more efficiently.

The goal of the new app is to consolidate the public safety functions under one vendor and use a more technologically-advanced program.

“It’s got a few more bells and whistles and things that help keep students safe,” Campus Safety and Police Chief Joe LeMire said.

It launched on March 28 and LeMire said this is because they were waiting on both Elon’s main campus and law school to return from spring break. This launch date gives Campus Safety and Police the rest of the semester to get members of the community signed up, work out any bugs or issues with the technology and promote the new program to prospective students. The program was also one LeMire used when he worked at the University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh and University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee.

“It was an area that I was very familiar with technology wise,” LeMire said.

The new vendor is also approximately \$2,500 cheaper than the old vendor.

LiveSafe and the OmniAlert E-Alert system cost almost \$16,000 before, and Rave Mobile Safety costs just under \$14,000, according to LeMire.

With the new app, Rave Guardian, students can discreetly contact Campus Safety and Police while also choosing to provide their GPS location, receive targeted mobile notifications and wellness checks, as well as access phone numbers for local first responders and campus services.

There’s also a place to submit anonymous tips and resources related to counseling, sexual assault and harassment. It provides two-way communication so users can message safety officials through text or email.

Rave Guardian has a 24-hour dispatch, so if the dispatch were to be overrun with phone calls during an emergency, LeMire and other officers could call a number and still get the message out.

“That phone call that comes into Campus Safety and Police here almost operates a little bit like a 911 call,” LeMire said. “Because on our side, it’ll give us the profile of the person calling and give us a GPS location. It gives us a number of pieces of information that other vendors don’t provide.”

Rave Mobile Safety is used by schools like Duke University, University of Maryland and New York University, as well as by five of the eight Ivy League universities. The company was founded in 2004 and is based out of Framingham, Massachusetts.

The change in emergency security mobile apps also comes with a change to

the E-Alert system. All students, faculty and staff have been automatically added to the new system, which LeMire said is more of an opt-out system. Over 93% of students, faculty and staff have a new phone number in the system, but he said he wants to see that number reach 100%.

“We’re trying to push it because I saw overnight now I think we’ve had probably about 60 people download the Guardian app,” LeMire said. “So the app is only as good as the people that download it.”

Students can update their contact information in their OnTrack user file. Having a current phone number and email address in the system allows Campus Safety and Police to reach people if necessary.

Once students are in the system, they can confirm current information and add other emails or cell phone contacts. Students’ personal information will not be released, and their information will only be used to send them notifications they’ve opted into. Those available groups are weather alerts, emergency notifications including weather alerts and Study USA program location-specific alerts.

Previously, the LiveSafe mobile app and the E-Alert system were separate entities. This was because emergency alert systems were developed before safety app systems were, according to LeMire. Adopted in 2015, LiveSafe allowed community members to anonymously share information through text, photos or videos. App users could also receive messages broadcast by Campus Safety and Police and use the SafeWalk feature that

allowed others to “virtually escort” them by tracking their location on a map.

A similar feature is available on the Rave Guardian app. A virtual timer on the app allows someone to choose their starting location and destination and set a timer for approximately how long it should take them to get there. That information is shared with a guardian of choice and can even be a figure off-campus like a parent. Campus Safety and Police can also be an official or unofficial guardian, but they are only notified at the end if your timer expires. Users get one minute after the timer expires to check in with their guardian, add more time or disengage the timer.

“We’re only notified when we get to a point of, ‘Hey, you’re not disengaging from your time or maybe there’s something wrong we need to check on,’” LeMire said.








The previous E-Alert system texted and emailed students important information about emergencies, class cancellations and severe weather updates. It was used as the primary source for emergency updates.


The new system builds upon the old one — still sending text messages and emails to students, but also now calling too. It also incorporates the Rave Guardian mobile app and supports two-way communication between its users and safety resources.







Campus Safety and Police is offering training to members of the Elon community who would like to familiarize themselves with the new software. Those interested can contact campuspolice@elon.edu or LeMire at 336-278-5555.

RAVE

MOBILE SAFETY

-  **Emergency Communication:** A call button that will directly dial Elon Campus Safety and Police. Once you call, officials can automatically see your profile and current location.
-  **Two-way communication:** Allows users to message safety officials via text and email.
-  **Guardians and Safety Timers:** Add friends, family or public safety officials as “Guardians.” Guardians can track your location using a GPS map. In the situation you do not make it to your destination and deactivate the timer, your Guardians will be automatically notified.
-  **Anonymous Tip Reporting:** Submit tips anonymously.
-  **Notifications:** Receive targeted mobile notifications and wellness checks.
-  **Push Notifications:** The push notification feature allows you to get messages even if you don’t have cellular service.
-  **Resource Information:** Provides important resource information to the campus community including counseling, sexual assault and harassment resources. There is access to one-touch phone numbers of local first responders and also services on campus.



-  **Report Tips:** Submit tips related to safety concerns and attach a photo, video, or audio file. There is the option to send anonymously.
-  **Emergency Options:** There is two-way communication directly to Campus Safety and Police. In an emergency situation, officials can access your location.
-  **The SafeWalk feature** allows students to invite others to “virtually escort” them by monitoring their location on a map.
-  App users can receive **broadcast notifications** sent by the Elon University Police .
-  **Safety Map:** Use the Safety Map to see where you are in relation to organization buildings or safety places.
-  **Resource Information:** Quickly access organization resources including phone numbers.

LIFESTYLE

MIXING IN MEXICO

An Elon junior shares his experience on DJing in another country

Samantha Sussman
Lifestyle Editor | @samanthasusma

When junior Alex Magan landed a job with Pollen — a company that plans spring break trips — he hoped it would take him one step closer to his dreams of DJing in another country. This past Spring Break, his dreams became a reality in Cancun, Mexico.

“I obviously look forward to more stuff like that and the opportunity ... it’s a dream that I’ve had for a while, and now it’s finally coming,” Magan said. “It feels like the fire has been kindled.”

Magan’s employer hosts Campus Vacations, coordinated trips to tropical destinations around the world, with representatives that sell the trips to students all over the United States. Recently, the company began inviting student DJs to open before headliners. Mallorie Ihnat, Pollen’s senior team lead, said these students create an inviting atmosphere at the events.

According to Magan, Ihnat hiring him gave him the opportunity to open for artists Two Friends, Lost Kings and Jauz at top venues in Cancun.

“I was speechless ... I’ve been doing this for about five years — producing, DJing, making music — things like that, and this is something you dream of,” Magan said. “Everyone always tells you in the music business, you need to have talent, you need to know people, you need to have connections and then you need to have luck. And this was luck.”

Ihnat said Pollen’s goal is to give people unforgettable experiences, and according to Ihnat, Magan did exactly that when he was in Cancun.

“Alex absolutely thrived up there. All of my coworkers and everyone kept coming up to me being like, ‘Wow, he is such a contagious personality, he is having so much fun living out his dream,’” Ihnat said.

From drumming to DJing

Magan grew up playing the drums in bands, but as he and his bandmates got older, Magan said it became harder to find times to meet.

The rest of his band had the opportunity to go solo, but Magan didn’t think he could succeed as a drummer, which led him to DJing. Magan now goes by the stage name Don Kon.

“Going into high school, I discovered electronic music,” Magan said. “I took up DJing, and then soon to follow, I go, ‘Wow, this is electronic music.’ All these guys are making this music on their own. I picked that up, and I just, I fell in love with it.”

DJing is, at its core, playing song after song for an audience, but Magan said there are some misconceptions about what DJs actually do — they don’t just stand behind the table queueing songs.

Magan said he likes to create something new with music that people will recognize. He creates remixes and mashups of popular songs that the audience can sing along to, but hear a new version of.

Magan said one of his favorite parts about DJing is the crowd. He interacts with them to see what kind of music they enjoy and what he should play less or more of.

“I love the crowd, reacting to the crowd, and I love going to the microphone,” Magan said. “People don’t want you to just be up there standing, they want to see you having as much fun as they are, so they feed off of



Junior Alex Magan DJs at a club in Cancun over Spring Break on a Campus Vacation trip. Magan got the job from his employer Pollen, which hosts Campus Vacations.

that.”
Over winter break, Magan played the “graveyard” shift from about 2 to 5 a.m. at Blue Midtown in New York City. This was a new experience for Magan, since he is under 21 and legally can’t get into most clubs to DJ because of the presence of alcohol.

“

EVERYONE ALWAYS TELLS YOU IN THE MUSIC BUSINESS, YOU NEED TO HAVE TALENT, YOU NEED TO KNOW PEOPLE, YOU NEED TO HAVE CONNECTIONS AND THEN YOU NEED TO HAVE LUCK. AND THIS WAS LUCK.

ALEX MAGAN
JUNIOR

“I just got into this other gear. Just pure adrenaline,” Magan said. “Playing live is one of my favorite things. I’m very energetic, very sociable, and producing can stray away from that because a lot of times you’re by yourself in front of your laptop. Playing live is when I get to express all those emotions.”

Magan said Cancun provided him with



Magan went from drumming when he was younger to DJing at clubs in Cancun over Spring Break.

another opportunity to build his resume and open doors for future DJ gigs.

“I was just super inspired because I would look up to [DJ and producer duo] Two Friends, and they get to call that a

job,” Magan said. “And that’s all I want to be doing. I don’t want to be stuck on a desk. I want to be out playing music, having fun, living life — and that’s exactly what they’re doing.”

STUDENTS FACTOR IN RATE MY PROFESSORS



An Elon student uses Rate My Professors to research Elon professor of mathematics and statistics Andrea Metts.

KYRA O'CONNOR | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Students prepare their schedules for the fall 2022 semester utilizing Rate My Professors

Alexandra Borda
Elon News Network

When deciding which upcoming courses sophomore Sofie Campbell will take, she glances at RateMyProfessors.com for quick assistance.

RateMyProfessors.com — a website designed for college students to leave anonymous reviews about professors across America, Canada, the United Kingdom, Ireland, Australia and New Zealand — allows students to rate professors on their overall quality. The rating assesses how the professor teaches course material and how accessible the teacher is inside and outside the classroom.

With Elon University's fall 2022 course registration beginning April 4, many students are using Rate My Professors to determine their schedule next semester.

Campbell discovered Rate My Professors during her freshman year of college, and though she said she doesn't use it often, she said she looks at it when it's time to create her schedule.

"I am more focused on the time slot classes are available in, but if a professor I've heard is really good, then I will try to get them," Campbell said. "But I have also had professors that have had horrible reviews on Rate My Professors, but I really ended up liking them."

Campbell said that despite the few times she has looked at the website before registering for classes, it is still not a credible source.

"Many people write reviews when they get bad grades, just like if you go on Yelp, all you will see are bad reviews for restaurants or hotels," Campbell said. "More often than not, there are more good experiences that don't get written about."

Sophomore Jeremiah Timberlake said Rate My Professors has a strong impact on his registration decisions because it is convenient and estimates what your experience might be with that professor.

"Before every registration period, I always check the reviews and try to gather a couple top choices for professors if I can," Timberlake said. "There are a lot of times though where I can tell that some people's reviews don't reflect how a professor really is."

Timberlake said some reviews are not reflective of the professor's performance because some students post reviews to rant or complain when, in reality, they just didn't agree with the teaching style.

Professor of mathematics and statistics Andrea Metts said she wonders why students are motivated to use Rate My Professors as a reliable source of information. Metts, who has an overall rating of 3.8/5, has read a few of her own ratings, since people rate most often when they have strong feelings.

"Sometimes these are hard to read, but the thing I have to remind myself is the people who take the time to go on here are either really unhappy or happy,"

Metts said.

The website's ratings include categories for "level of difficulty," "would take again" and "textbook use." Students can also see if the course is an "easy A" or predict what other grade they will get based on the ratings.

Sophomore Syd Danziger said they feel that access to Rate My Professors has allowed them to choose the easy route when choosing classes, instead of taking an unfamiliar, more challenging professor.

“ALL THOSE BIASES THAT PEOPLE ALREADY HAVE I AM SURE ALREADY OVERFLOW INTO RATE MY PROFESSORS

SOFIE CAMPBELL
SOPHOMORE

Danziger said the benefits of not challenging yourself in classes include taking moments for yourself because you feel less pressured in classes. However, disadvantages of this include the loss

of building key relationships with professors.

"Rate My Professors sometimes ends up giving me a bias against my teacher in advance," Danziger said. "When they start acting weird or doing something unhelpful that normally is just human, my opinion is immediately skewed."

Campbell said her concern with Rate My Professors is the negative bias created toward professors, which could possibly result in bias against their race, ethnicity, gender or other parts of their identity.

"If you think about the business school, I feel like sometimes students don't take female business professors as seriously in economics, math or science so they might be like, 'Oh they don't know what they are talking about,'" Campbell said. "All those biases that people already have I am sure already overflow into Rate My Professors."

Metts said she encourages students to remember who is behind reviews on Rate My Professors.

"It is fine to take a look at it, but keep in mind that they are heavily weighted by reviews left of unhappy students," Metts said.

Campbell said though she knows other students will look at ratings, she doesn't think they should base registration decisions on Rate My Professors.

"Take everything with a grain of salt. I have never written anything on Rate My Professors, and I have liked all of my professors," Campbell said. "I could have written great things about each professor I did, and some of those professors don't even have good scores."

SPORTS



Junior Hannah Miller runs during the women’s 4k race at the Elon Opener on the Elon University cross country course. Miller finished in 24th place out of 95 runners and Elon finished second in the team event.

JACOB KISAMORE | PHOTOGRAPHER

STUDENT-ATHLETES JUGGLE **ATHLETICS** AND **HONORS** WORK

Nine student-athletes at Elon are active in their sports and the honors fellows program

Caleigh Lawlor
Elon News Network | @caleighlawlor

Junior Hannah Miller spends her days running around, going to practice and being a captain and leader for her teammates. This lifestyle — being a member of Elon’s cross country and track and field team — was not a major influence on her commitment to Elon University. But the honors fellows program was.

“Athletics was not the most important factor of college,” Miller said. “I wouldn’t have been able to come to Elon without the additional funds from the honors scholarship, so I had to make sure I got honors before I could commit for athletics.”

But Miller is not the only honors student balancing a varsity sport. This year, nine out of 166 students in the program are on varsity sports teams. The program is open to everyone who applies to Elon, including student-athletes. The honors fellows program is a \$13,500 a year scholarship that offers its fellows unique experiences with harder courses, a research thesis project, global study opportunities, a cohort of like-minded students and faculty who are invested in their academics.

Miller said she didn’t commit to Elon until April of high school senior year, which was later than she expected.

According to honors program director Lynn Huber, the program aims to accept around 45 students each year.

“If two or three of those are our athletes, yeah, that’s a good percentage,” Huber said.

Huber also works closely with the application process for each fellow, and being an athlete does not affect a person’s ability to get into the program.

“We’re looking for students who are just eager to learn and experience and try new things,” Huber said. “A lot of times, that

leads us to people who are like student athletes or involved in theater, or artistic or involved in Model UN. These things really make candidates stick out because they’re trying new things, as well as being really academically engaged and successful.”

Miller said that she applied to be an honors fellow before she committed to play varsity sports for Elon.

“

WHEN I’M AT PRACTICE, I’M LUCKY TO BE AT PRACTICE. WHEN I’M PURSUING MY THESIS, I’M LUCKY TO HAVE A THESIS.

MADISON GEORGE
JUNIOR POLE VAULTER

“I was not entirely sure I wanted to do [Division I] athletics in college, I just happened to be applying to all [Division I] schools,” Miller said. “So I went ahead and did the recruiting process.”

Each honors fellow must complete a research thesis by the end of their senior year on a topic they choose related to their major. Students involved in the program are not required to begin working on research until their junior year; however, the program now requires courses and colloquial events the fellows must attend freshman and sophomore year. After sophomore year, fellows must have their research project approved. Senior year is then used to conduct research.

Junior pole vaulter Madison George found a way to help women in the sports industry through her research project, which focuses on an issue she is passionate

about: having readily accessible women’s sports-specific shoe sizes. She said that she was frustrated that the only available shoes for her sport were not easily accessible to her.

“I had never had pole vault spikes before; I’d just use sprint spikes, and the only pair that I could find in my size was in the UK,” George said. “And then I started thinking, why are pole vault spikes not even made women sizes, because they’re all unisex. ... Most sports specific shoes don’t come in women’s sizes, like soccer cleats don’t even come in women’s sizes in the major brands.”

She said balancing both can be a lot, but she sees it as an opportunity to do the things she is passionate about.

“When I’m at practice, I’m lucky to be at practice. When I’m pursuing my thesis, I’m lucky to have a thesis. So it’s not me having this huge workload, it’s not me having to do all this stuff. This is what I want to be

doing,” George said. “I’m very connected to my thesis project. And so it’s not just a class, it’s my own. It’s my own hobby. Yeah, it takes up a lot of time. But anything is accomplishable if you’re able to sit down and focus on it.”

Huber said that student-athletes who are also honors fellows tend to have the ability to manage their time and balance everything.

“Being a student athlete and an honors fellow also suggests somebody has an ability they have some sort of balance,” Huber said.

For Miller, balancing her sport and honors responsibilities can be taxing at times, but she said time management is her key to juggling both.

“It’s just about making sure you plan out your time,” Miller said. “I think athletics honestly helps with that, because I have a very tight schedule and routine in my life, and I’m someone who likes that.”



Junior pole vaulter Madison George stands in front of the Fulbright Honor Wall. George’s project is on sports-specific shoes not having readily accessible women’s sizes.

CALEIGH LAWLOR | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Virginia natives become softball standouts

Two softball pitchers from hometown of Suffolk share another connection at North Carolina schools

Jacob Kisamore
Sports Director | @jacobkisamore

Taylor Cherry and Reese Byrd have competed competitively against each other in softball since they were four years old. The players are natives of Suffolk, Virginia — a town of just over 90,000 people on the state’s coast — where they attended high schools separated by just over seven miles.

The two are now freshmen softball pitchers at North Carolina colleges — Cherry at Elon University and Byrd at the University of North Carolina Greensboro — creating a connection beyond their hometown.

On March 6, Cherry threw the third perfect game in Elon softball history during the team’s 1-0 victory over East Carolina University. Seven days later and 19 miles away, Byrd threw a five-inning, no-hitter in an 8-0 home win over Delaware State University — the 13th no-hitter in UNC Greensboro’s history.

Byrd texted Cherry after she learned of her perfect game and told Cherry that her accomplishment inspired her to achieve her no-hitter.

“Her doing that kind of motivated me to throw better because it’s always been this friendly competition between us,” Byrd said.

Chasing perfection

After Cherry struck out the final batter on March 6 against East Carolina University, her teammates rushed out to the pitching circle as the crowd celebrated the historic achievement.

“I got chills,” Cherry said. “All the girls running up to me and congratulating me brought tears to my eyes.”

By allowing no hits or walks, Cherry threw the third perfect game in program history — the second done so by a freshman. It was only her seventh college start.

While Cherry knew she was close to a historic accomplishment during her perfect game, she said her teammates made an effort not to jinx it.

“I knew around the fifth inning, I was

like, ‘I can actually do this,’” Cherry said. “Nobody said anything until the end of the game.”

Cherry struck out 10 of the 21 batters but said she relied on her teammates to make plays in the field to secure the other 11 outs.

“It’s definitely a blessing for sure,” Cherry said. “I couldn’t have done it without the teammates and coaches and my family, of course.”

Elon head coach Kathy Bocock has been a part of all three perfect games in the program’s history. For her, being a part of a perfect game is special and she was happy to see Cherry accomplish the feat so early on in her college career.

“

I GOT CHILLS. ALL THE GIRLS RUNNING UP TO ME AND CONGRATULATING ME BROUGHT TEARS TO MY EYES.

TAYLOR CHERRY
ELON SOFTBALL PITCHER

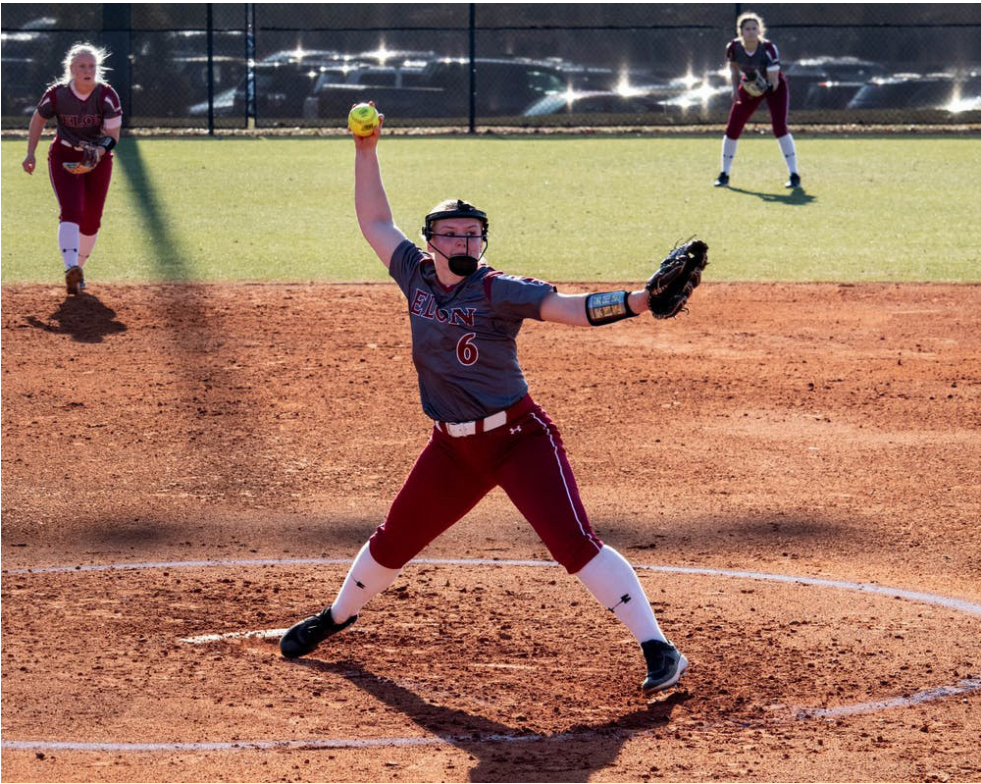
“She wants to make a difference in this Elon softball program and help this team,” Bocock said. “She’s very confident.”

While Cherry realized in the moment she was in the midst of a perfect game, Byrd had no idea she had thrown a no-hitter until her teammates ran up to her after the game.

“Toward the end of the game, I was just kind of focusing on not letting them score,” Byrd said. “A few of them told me after the game, they were like, ‘I knew it was happening. I knew it in the fifth inning, but I was like, ‘Nobody say anything, don’t jinx this.’”

Byrd said not knowing she was working toward a no-hitter helped her remain calm, especially as the game drew closer to an end.

“If I would have known, I would’ve been a little more tight,” Byrd said. “It for sure



JOSEPH NAVIN | PHOTO EDITOR

Elon freshman pitcher Taylor Cherry throws the softball during a game on Feb. 11. Elon won 5-2 against Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis.

helped me. And I’m glad none of them told me during.”

Building Virginia’s softball culture

Gabe Rogers coached Cherry at Nansemond River High School, a public school of over 1,500 students. Cherry was a member of Nansemond River’s 2021 state championship team, the first time the school had ever earned a state title. Rogers said he received a text from Cherry’s father after she threw her perfect game.

“It’s one of those things that you’re surprised when you hear it, but when you know the kid, you’re not really that surprised that she had that capability to do it,” Rogers said. “We always knew we had a special player when she was with us.”

Byrd played high school softball at Nansemond Suffolk Academy, a private school with just over half the enrollment of Nansemond River High School. Their schools were in different divisions, so Byrd and Cherry rarely played against each other in games, but Rogers said Byrd always impressed him when their teams scrimmaged against each other.

“She’s very skilled, she’s very talented,” Rogers said. “My players are always excited to be able to play against the best in our area, and she was one of the best.”

According to Rogers, Virginia typically does not send as many softball players to Division I schools compared to some of the traditional recruiting hotbeds, such as California, Florida and Georgia. However, he said Virginia is beginning to produce higher quality players, and the Suffolk region specifically has become more competitive in recent years.

“The level of softball is starting to get a little bit better,” Rogers said. “It’s always nice when players from this area come in and perform like they did and can kind of show everybody else, ‘Hey, we’ve got some quality ball players in the state of Virginia as well.’”

Byrd hopes that by playing softball at an out-of-state Division I school, she will inspire other players from the area. She believes she and Cherry can succeed in showing how strong Suffolk softball programs are.

“I feel like we’re definitely repping Virginia,” Byrd said.



COURTESY OF TROY SAYLES

Reese Byrd throws a pitch for the University of North Carolina Greensboro game against Delaware State University on March 13. Byrd threw a no-hitter in UNCG’s 8-0 win.