

Elon University professors, students adjust to Canvas



Account

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Courses

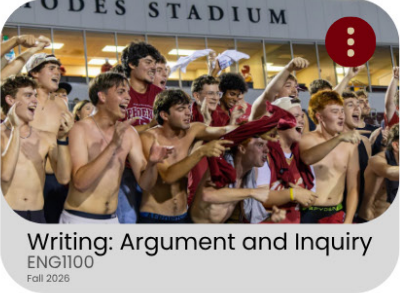
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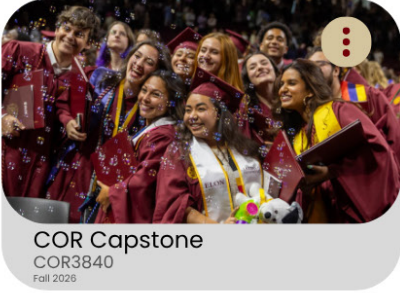
History

Help

Dashboard



Writing: Argument and Inquiry
ENGL100
Fall 2026



COR Capstone
COR3840
Fall 2026



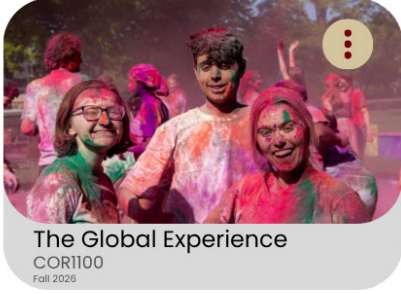
Intro to Statistical Reasoning
STST100
Fall 2026



Elon 1010
ELN1010
Fall 2026



Biology: The Science of Life
BIO1064
Fall 2026



The Global Experience
CORT100
Fall 2026

GRAPHIC BY AMELIA METZ

Teaching and Learning Technologies offers resources to ease transition

Kate Gray
News Editor

As professors and students at Elon University settle into a new semester, they're also adjusting to a new learning management system. Elon is in its first year of using Canvas after switching from its previous platform, Moodle.

This is Elon's first learning management system transition in nearly 15 years, since it moved from Blackboard to Moodle in 2011.

According to Kelly Reimer, senior director of Teaching and Learning Technologies, the switch to Canvas came after a campuswide evaluation of Moodle

that included surveys and open forums.

"In the IT world, we regularly evaluate what systems we use," Reimer said. "It's just a part of our best practices when you work in technology, and so we knew it was time to evaluate what platform we were with and whether that platform was meeting the needs of our faculty."

Survey responses from over 500 students and feedback from faculty and staff revealed the need for a new system. Reimer said Canvas is an industry leader and provided a better user interface and mobile experience than Moodle.

"There's a lot of different features in Canvas that our former platform didn't have, and so I'm excited to hear from faculty about how they're engaging with those tools," Reimer said. "I think faculty are still learning the system, so that's a process of sort of uncovering those things."

To help professors during the transition period, Teaching and Learning Technologies provided workshops in-person and online over late spring and summer. According to Reimer, about 80 faculty members participated in the workshops.

"We've seen a lot of engagement, and we'll continue to offer things throughout the fall and really all the way into the future," Reimer said. "This is just what we do; we continue to offer the support."

Shon Gilliam, a physics laboratory manager, said the tutorials were helpful for setting up the basic structure of a class and adding students, but he is still getting used to the platform.

"I don't really like major changes, so I'm sure it's good. Some people say good things about it," Gilliam said. "I'm just struggling with how to transition the organizational

stuff from one to the other, like what's a page versus a module?"

Moodle featured one primary page broken into collapsible subgroups. A bar along the top listed Course, Participants, Grades and more. In contrast, Canvas has a complete sidebar with Home, Announcements, Syllabus, Modules, Pages, Grades, Assignments and more.

This year marks Gilliam's 19th at Elon, and while he said it is difficult to adjust to Canvas, he trusts he will get used to it.

"I've been using Moodle for years and I wish I could just autopilot do what I did before," Gilliam said. "It's 90% the same, but just enough different to stress me out in the morning."

See CANVAS | pg. 2

From student to senior minister: Elon alum returns to Elon Community Church

The Rev. Jonathan Chapman is returning to church where he first found his calling to ministry

Mia Torres
Producer of ENN On Air

After nearly 15 years serving as a minister in Connecticut, the Rev. Jonathan Chapman received a letter saying Elon Community Church's senior minister planned to retire.

"I burst into tears because I knew what it meant," Chapman said.

Chapman is returning to Elon, this time as the senior minister of Elon Community Church.

For Chapman, the move marks not only a return to the church but to a community that helped shape his path to ministry.

Chapman first arrived at Elon in 2003 as a freshman. He lived in Jordan Center which at the time was across the parking lot from the Elon Community Church. He began attending services and eventually became a member during his junior year.

Chapman said his experience at the church helped pave his path toward ministry.

"All through seminary, I had said, 'well, you know, if Elon ever opened back up, I would definitely apply for it,'" Chapman said.

The church did have an opening around the time Chapman graduated, but he said he was considered too young for the position. Instead, he accepted a ministry position in Connecticut, where he remained for 14 years.

He had not been looking for another

job when he received the letter about the opening, but began the process specifically to apply for the position at Elon Community Church.

The search began after former senior minister Randy Orwig announced his retirement in July 2025. When Orwig left, the church brought interim co-senior ministers Richard and Jill Edens.

The couple had previously served as senior ministers at United Church of Chapel Hill for 38 years.

Richard Edens said the church began its search for a permanent senior minister in January while he and his wife served in their interim roles.



PHOTO COURTESY OF JONATHAN CHAPMAN
The Rev. Jonathan Chapman standing at the pulpit. Chapman is set to become the next senior minister of the Elon Community Church.

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THE PENDULUM

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CHECK OUT ENN'S
DIGITAL COVERAGE



Elon offers tech support amid Canvas transition



GRAPHIC BY AMELIA METZ

CANVAS | from cover

Classics studies professor Brandon Baker said he thinks Canvas looks nicer than Moodle, but also admitted a learning curve.

"If, over time, we experiment with it enough, it might be a very useful tool," Baker said. "But it's definitely a shock going from Moodle, which seemed much more streamlined and simplistic than Canvas."

Baker did not attend the online trainings, but said he was able to figure out most of the functions on his own.

"On the professor side, the sheer amount of options that we see and that the students will see, it takes a minute to be like, 'Okay, what do I actually need out of all this stuff?'" Baker said. "I found most of my time I was switching to Student View, just to know what you guys would see."

Baker also expressed mild concern about the security of Canvas, especially after their nationwide breach in May.

"There's security concerns there, that I'm like, 'Maybe they've got everything figured out,' but that is always like a little kernel that's just sitting there," Baker said.

He said he hasn't seen any problems with Canvas so far. Moodle had numerous crashes in the 2025-2026 school year, including one that caused campuswide outages on the first day of classes.

Students also expressed mixed feelings about the transition to Canvas. Addie Kate Phillips transferred last semester from a school that used Canvas.

"I like Canvas; I'm used to using it because we used it at my old school before I transferred," Phillips said. "So it's been a welcome change for me."

However, senior Janae Willock said the shift felt pointless.

"I hate it," Willock said. "It just feels unnecessary. Moodle was working just fine."

Teaching and Learning Technologies has dedicated a webpage to ease the transition, with an overview of how to use Canvas, commonly asked questions and how to contact the technology service desk and 24/7 Canvas help.

"We created the Canvas Transition Hub, and so that has been sort of the go-to place for people to receive information, to read updates," Reimer said. "We have a very active FAQ section for both students and faculty and staff, and so that's been a great resource for people."

We wanted to put the resources out in front of people and be transparent about the work and how people could get engaged."

TLT is also offering in-person assistance for students at a booth in Belk Library through Sept. 4. Student consultant Ilenay Davila said students have mostly sought help with familiarizing themselves with the layout of Canvas.

"It has been more of a struggle for professors and teachers getting their coursework to Canvas and things like that, but for students, I think they're able to pick it up more quickly," Davila said.

Davila encouraged students to use TLT as a resource not only for Canvas tutorials and assistance, but also for Adobe software, printing and other technological needs.

According to the Canvas Transition Hub, students will lose Moodle access in October and faculty and staff will lose it in December. Until then, TLT urges students to download any files they want to keep from Moodle, and verify their email addresses in Canvas to receive all necessary information.

Miles Hayford contributed to the reporting of this story.

2 businesses open in downtown Burlington, explore new opportunities

City of Burlington invests in infrastructure projects

Abigail Hines

Managing Editor of elonnewsnetwork.com

Two businesses opened in downtown Burlington as the city continues to invest in infrastructure updates and repairs. Recovering Clay Pottery Studio and The Vault Bar shared an Aug. 15 grand opening.

Downtown development

The city of Burlington allocated \$10 million to replace the water and sewer lines across 16 blocks. This two-year project is expected to be completed May 2027.

Downtown manager Maggie Hogan said it's been a challenge to balance the progress on construction and how it interferes with local businesses.

"We have to make even more of an effort to bring foot traffic in, to have events, to have excitement going on downtown," Hogan said. "I think it's easy to be fatigued by what's going on, but we want to make sure that we're also turning it into a positive thing."

The changes to downtown, including sidewalk improvements, are designed to help support the growth the city is seeing as new stores move in, according to Hogan.

"We're building downtown infrastructure up so that it can support growth and new businesses coming in," Hogan said. "Some of the things that we're doing, they're not super glamorous, like utility work, not super glamorous, but so important so that our infrastructure is strong and supportive of the future of Burlington."

Recovering Clay Pottery Studio

When the COVID-19 pandemic shut down the classes Briggette Slivinski was teaching at the Elmira Community Center, her customers were looking for a way to finish their pottery projects.

Slivinski transformed the shed in her backyard in Graham into a makeshift studio that could host about five people. The shed was doubled in size to accommodate their growing number of customers in 2022, going from 600 square feet to 1,200 square feet. Last year, they began searching for a storefront to



ABIGAIL HINES | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Co-owner of The Vault Bar Chelsea Davis (left) grabs supplies out of the vault that inspired the name of the bar Aug. 30. Jenni Gillaspie (right), shows off a customer's pitcher created from slabs of clay Aug. 28.

expand even more.

Their new home in Burlington is 6,200 square feet. Although they've grown in size, studio assistant Jenni Gillaspie said they've tried to maintain the same close-knit feel they created when working in Slivinski's shed.

"For us here at Recovering Clay, it's not so much about 'Do we fill our spots in the studio,' as it is that we want to build community and build a place where people can come and belong and feel welcome, because having community is literally life-saving," Gillaspie said.

The studio offers classes for beginner and experienced potters. Entry-level classes provide a hands-on guide to throwing and shaping clay. More trained potters can rent spaces in the upstairs portion of the store, using their own wheel and storage shelf.

Gillaspie said she found this studio to be a "third space," and she hopes she helps others feel the same way about the studio.

"I'm a stay-at-home mom, essentially, but I come here, and I work part-time, and so I get to see people," Gillaspie said. "I get to kind of flex my creative muscle a little bit, and it's just a joy to serve people and be able to show them love and openness."

The first floor of the store contains 12 pottery wheels, six kilns and stations for clay molding by hand.

The Vault Bar

Co-owner of The Vault Bar Chelsea Davis said she had been thinking about owning a bar for about ten years. When she and

Darian Rader found their current space in downtown Burlington, their vision came to life in unexpected ways.

"Probably about two years ago, I started really looking for a space that could fit the vision that I had," Davis said. "While this was not the first vision I had in mind, we really embraced this vision, and now we can't picture it the other way, I don't think."

The Vault Bar, named after the building's history as a bank, still has remnants of the past — and not just in its name. The building's original vault is still in place, inspiring the name Davis and Rader came up with.

Davis said they were going for an eclectic sports bar vibe where patrons could sit in a moody space and enjoy watching games.

As the business develops, Rader said she anticipates a lot of change will happen organically.

"There are a lot of things that come to you as unexpected blessings and just things that kind of come your way as you go," Rader said. "So I think we have some general things in mind that we like to accomplish, but there are also a lot of things that we just can't wait to see what happens or what comes of it."

Rader and Davis said they look forward to interacting with new and old local businesses and being a part of a growing community.

"It has been really cool to talk to them, to see what their goals have been and how they've changed over time, if they've already been here," Rader said. "But then also to the new people that are coming in, just hearing them talk about the excitement and the stir of what's coming into downtown."



VENUS SOTO CASTANEDA | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Elon Athletics' new mascot debuts on Aug. 25 during College Coffee at Alumni Gym. After the reveal, junior Ethan Perry said he liked the new mascot. "It really resembles our school —like the fire and ashes," Perry said. "So I love his shoes. It reminds me of how we could be torn down to the bottom and rise up from the ashes, and now our mascot did, too."



ETHAN WU | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

A group of attendees talk about clothes next to senior Julian Borrelli's pop-up thrift shop called Jump Man City Thrifts during the Black Student Union Welcome B(!)ack Cookout at Phi Beta Kappa Commons on Aug. 29. Vice President of Special Events Juliette Elise Hill said this event is a space for inclusivity and collectiveness among the Black community. "It's mainly just a time to welcome all the new first-years across Elon's campus," Hill said. "It's also a time for the Black community to come and see each other once again after being away for so long."



ALEXANDER SIEGEL | PHOTO EDITOR

Elon University senior outside hitter Cameron Lanier attempts to spike the ball during their match against Duke University on Aug. 23 at Schar Center.



EVAN COOPER | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

A group of attendees eat together at one of the tables provided during the Black Student Union Welcome B(!)ack Cookout at Phi Beta Kappa Commons on Aug. 29.



EVAN COOPER | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Senior running back Jimmyll Williams powers forward through two defenders on Elon's opening drive in their 42-7 win over Glenville State. Williams rushed for 77 yards and two touchdowns, his first multi-touchdown game with the Phoenix.

Elon University president shares Elon-Quee



Elon University President Connie Book sits down with Elon News Network Executive Director Charlotte Pfabe on Aug. 28 to discuss university changes and the Boldly Elon Strategic Plan.

KATE GRAY | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHY

Merger could take up to two years to become official, Slattery Center planned to open its doors in 2027

Charlotte Pfabe
Executive Director of Elon News Network

Elon University President Connie Book sat down with Elon News Network to discuss the Elon-Queens merger, the Boldly Elon initiatives and campus expansions.
This interview was edited for clarity.

We're just coming back from a summer of transition with the university. Tell me a little bit about all the things that happened this summer and how we're going into the fall with those?

This summer was a historic summer, so I serve as a trustee for our accreditor. So the accreditation review that was required associated with our merger with Queens University. Because I'm a trustee, I was at the meeting to actually hear the decision. And so I had to recuse myself because it involved the university. But as I was standing in the back of the room watching the vote take place, it was really exciting for me. And just the unanimous support of everyone about the merger means a lot. So that happened on June 11. When the accreditor says you're good to go, then that triggers a federal process. So once we got the nod from our accreditor, we had ten days to take it to the federal government to begin the federal process. We met that window. They required us to provide financial audited statements of our two institutions and what they look like together within 30 days. So we were very busy this summer getting that filing together. So we filed that on July 30th. Now for the federal merger to be finalized, it does have to

be approved by the Department of Ed. This part of the process doesn't have a timeline. We're not able to say exactly when it will come in. But if you look at mergers where Northeastern has had a change of control and merged and taken over operations for Marymount and Villanova with Cabrini, they're usually running about 18 to 24 months.

Tell me what success looks like in five years, if this merger goes through?

I think we're already feeling some of the impact of success. We've announced that our law school will start a full-time program on the Queens campus beginning fall of '27. We also have been talking several years about our really exciting physician assistant program. We had a very good site-visit in May from the accreditor for physician assistant, and we'll hear that decision in October. So we're all anticipating a January start to that program. We're already seeing some of the opportunities we wanted to unfold for Elon. We have this beautiful 700 acres here in Alamance County, and now we have this wonderful 20 acres, this dynamic urban environment that our students can pursue graduate studies and some internship and semester Study USA programs like the one we run in sport. I imagine more of these coming. The business school has developed a co-op year, a three plus a co-op, and that co-op would be in Charlotte. So we're imagining students would live at Queens and complete a co-op in their senior year. To me, this gives Elon students the best of both options: a beautiful residential setting here in Alamance County, but they can also think about that semester in a dynamic city, one of the world's fastest growing cities and a wonderful place to be. So many Elon alums in Charlotte and now Queens alumni joining us in a really exciting proposition.

The deadline for the Boldly Elon Strategic Plan is 2030. Tell me about what progress looks like today?

In 2030, we have a goal, a really important goal that our endowment is going to reach \$625 million. And so we're doing all the modeling and we are going to exceed that goal, so I'm really excited. Elon's endowment should be about \$640 million by 2030. And we just cleared \$500 million. People can do a lot of things with their wealth, and I'm so grateful when they say, 'Hey, we want to make a difference in someone else's life by providing a scholarship.' So we just crossed the \$500 million. And with Queens, with the merger, we assume the assets of that endowment. Most of our endowment goes to scholarships and their endowments, roughly \$185 million. So I've been saying by 2030, we're going to have a \$1 billion endowment. So I do think when you think about size and scale, we are stronger together. We'll be at 8,500 students together, and we will grow a few graduate students. But we actually think our undergraduate numbers are about right. We need to keep the size we are, but we're trying to make sure our curriculum stays meaningful, not just grow. We're thinking about graduate growth, the accelerated pathways where you come to Elon for three years, then you go to the law school or the PA or PT program, as well as these other graduate programs. I do think there'll be more of those. So the faculty are working on some ideas, we don't have anything necessarily queued up right now, but I do think there'll be more of those. Tell me about the progress on Roberts Academy? We did open in the temporary facility with third and fourth grade. And we did hire two Elon grads. Why not go to the talent that

you know? One of the other elements of this gift is a Center for Engaged Learning and Experiential Education, to train teachers in using the Orton-Gillingham method. That will be open to all teachers, which I love this about the Roberts family, that if you can't go to the school, then let's also work to solve the other issue because it takes, it's a intense certification and it can be expensive. So this way they can afford it. It's within reach. We did spend the summer plotting where should this school be? But we were able to secure some land between the Danieleley Center and the Francis Center. So there's houses on it now, but we are imagining that that's where you'll have spots for first through sixth grade students. We worked with the architect to turn the school sideways, so the pickup line will be in the interior and not on the road. I do think what's nice about it is Elon students who are studying Special Ed will be able to walk to the school. I didn't want it so far away that it wasn't accessible for student teaching and that kind of thing. I think we've landed on a good solution.

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YOUTUBE**



Elon-Queens merger updates, Slattery Center status

Do you have any updates on the progress of the Slattery Center?

We are hoping by mid-October that we are moving the equipment and things in and have at least a partial certificate of occupancy. The thing about that building is there's a lot of equipment. You've got exercise science labs, you've got all the workout equipment, you've got a bouldering wall, a rock climbing, all that kind of stuff, so it requires training to use. So what we're hoping is that we can get all the equipment moved in, and the people and the student workers trained in November and December, so that when we come back in January, it's fully operational.

It's exciting. It's a big project. We've exceeded our fundraising goal. We're very grateful to the Slattery family for saying that this is a building that represented their values and wanted to support our goals around well-being.

The university released its newest version of its artificial intelligence student guide. What do you hope an Elon grad could get out of knowing how to use AI?

It actually was a pretty big summer for AI and Elon. We renamed the business analytics degree analytics and AI. We teach AI across all disciplines. You know, I think the faculty's position has been that you need to be teaching students "This is how our discipline interacts with AI."

I like the fact that we have a group who doesn't embrace AI, intentionally saying "No, I don't want to use that." I actually think that's good for our students to hear the continuum of thought about AI.



Elon News Network sits down with Elon President Connie Book to discuss various campus initiatives.

We also have an AI hub, and it's got a toolbox with 100 tools in it for faculty, staff and students. And, we set up an AI sandbox so people can go practice.

Over 3,000 universities and colleges have downloaded this. I think because it is talking about humanity and human intelligence in the middle of all this artificial intelligence that people are very interested in. And more in this considering these challenges of humanity and integrity and ethics and how do we know that we know something? And this is really the work of hard work of faculty is around assessment, because we used to just ask you to write a paper and or answer this multiple choice. Well, both of those can be delivered with AI. So it's really

more important what question you're asking because the question will let us know if you know it. But the faculty are going to have to redesign how they assess learning. And that's going to take work.

What are you most excited for about this new HealthEU center?

I'm super excited that it has an indoor track on the upper part, and I will be using that indoor track. I'm also excited that we have like a traditional swimming pool with viewing, you know? So we'll see. Well, you know, it's all set up, so we'll definitely enhance our club. But locally we're going to have a lot more community engagement with this Slattery Center. So in

the same way community people can use our library, we are thinking that community people will be able to use the Slattery Center.

It was a summer of transition and now it seems like we are entering a fall of transition. As president, what are you most excited for?

It's going to be a really good year. You know I'm excited about the Slattery Center. We've got very exciting Homecoming plans which I want to talk about it, but I can't – it will be fun and exciting.

As the president, my head space is always like five years ahead trying to think, where do we need to be in five years? If you notice across from the Inn at Elon, there was a house there, and students might have noticed when they came back there was no more house there.

So Elon was able to secure that property across from the Inn at Elon, just across the way, and that's where we're imagining our new Performing Arts Center is going to be. So as soon as the Slattery Center's finished, I'll start working on raising money for the new performing arts center. This will be transformative to our community. Of course, we have really talented performing arts students, and they're going to be so excited about this new aspect.

So in short, there is so much to be excited about. I was excited about the Princeton Review rankings. We look at the 15 categories that we got named in, all good things and students did that. That's a student survey. And I was like, look at our students, so happy and smart and doing great things. It made me really proud to read that list and to know that our students feel that way.

WHAT DO YOU NEED TO KNOW?

18-24

NUMBER OF MONTHS EXPECTED FOR COMPLETION OF ELON-QUEENS MERGER

◆ **Elon-Queens merger submitted for federal approval by the Department of Education, which is expected to take 18-24 months**

ELON ENDOWMENTS PASSED
\$500 million

◆ **Elon secured land between Danieley Center and the Francis Center for permanent location of Roberts Academy**
◆ **Elon University just reached \$500 million in endowments, aims to reach \$625 million by 2030**

January

MONTH WHEN SLATTERY CENTER IS EXPECTED TO OPEN

◆ **A new Performing Arts Center is set to open across from The Inn at Elon, and fundraising for it will begin after the Slattery Center's completion**
◆ **The Slattery Center is expected to be fully operational in January with all equipment moved in by mid-October and workers trained by December**

Alamance County keeps Sunday voting amid statewide changes



Several North Carolina counties are removing Sunday voting from their early voting schedules as the 2026 midterms approach. Alamance County has opted to keep Sunday voting for this election cycle.

ENN FILE PHOTO

Alamance County will keep one Sunday afternoon available for voters during 2026 midterms

Lily Mosbacher
Lifestyle Editor

With less than fifty days until early voting sites open their doors, several North Carolina counties are dropping Sunday voting from their early voting schedules.

The statewide shift comes as North Carolina prepares for the 2026 midterm election, with in-person early voting scheduled from Oct. 15 through Oct. 31.

According to the North Carolina State Board of Elections website, county election boards are required to unanimously decide on their early voting schedule. Otherwise, the state election board steps in to resolve the dispute.

Kevin Harrison, chair of the Alamance County Board of Elections, said the county's board unanimously decided to maintain the schedule used in 2024, including Sunday voting.

While other counties are eliminating

Sunday hours, Alamance County will be open for voters to cast their ballots on Sunday, Oct. 25 from 1 p.m. to 5 p.m.

"We want to have that option for people who tend to take advantage, I guess, of that particular time and day of the week," Harrison said.

The State Board of Elections has approved schedules that eliminate Sunday voting in counties including Anson, Chatham, Columbus and Greene, according to NC Newsline. Unlike Alamance County, these local boards could not agree on an early voting schedule, leading the state board to step in.

The changes in schedules have drawn attention from voting rights advocates.

"Sunday voting is an important voting option, particularly for Black voters," said Mikayla Massey, democracy and economy program manager for the North Carolina Black Alliance, in a statement to Elon News Network.

She said Sunday voting supports traditions such as "Souls to the Polls," in which church

communities organize group trips to voting sites after Sunday services.

Massey also said Sunday voting can provide an option for people whose work or caregiving responsibilities make voting during the week more difficult.

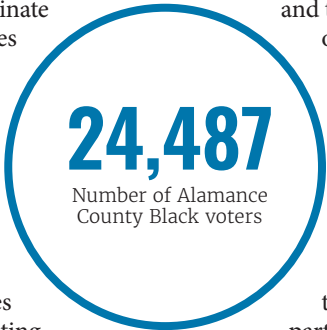
According to U.S. Census data from 2025, over 22% of Alamance County is Black, and the North Carolina State Board of Elections reports 24,487 Black registered voters in the county.

Harrison said Alamance County has considered those voters when deciding to keep its Sunday hours.

"One of the discussions that we always have is trying to make sure that folks who particularly like to vote after doing the church are able to," Harrison said.

The county's Sunday hours are scheduled only in the afternoon because many voters attend church in the morning, Harrison said.

"I know from past discussions that really, the turnout has been in our window that we have," Harrison said. "There has not been, or at least in the past, a huge amount of turnout on Sunday mornings."



Still, Harrison said turnout numbers are not the only thing they take into consideration when deciding whether to offer Sunday voting.

Harrison said county election staff track turnout data and provide information to the board when members make decisions about early voting schedules. Harrison said that the data is what allows their board to come to conclusions about the schedule.

"It's certainly not something that I would want to go away," Harrison said.

The debate over Sunday voting comes as counties across North Carolina make decisions about how to structure the 17-day early voting period.

Harrison said the Alamance County Board of Elections has not had the same disagreement over Sunday voting that has occurred in other counties. He said board members have been in agreement about maintaining the Sunday option throughout the process.

"It really has not been contentious in our board," Harrison said.

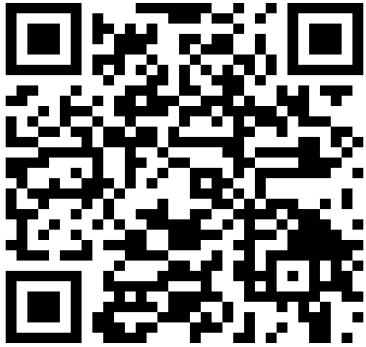
For Alamance County voters, Sunday will remain one of the available opportunities to vote early this fall. Voters can cast ballots at any early voting site in their county during the early voting period.

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New voice joins Elon Community Church as senior minister

CHURCH | from cover

Because Elon Community Church is part of the United Church of Christ, the congregation conducts its own search rather than having a denomination leader appoint a minister.

“All UCC churches are self-governing,” Edens said. “So it means when there is a vacancy, like a minister’s position, the church goes through the process of calling the person.”

The church formed committees to develop a profile of the congregation’s members and begin the search. The position description was distributed nationally through the United Church of Christ. Edens said about 25 people submitted applications.

After interviews the search committee recommended Chapman to the congregation.

Chapman returned to Elon for a candidate weekend, where he met members of the congregation and preached during Sunday worship. The congregation then voted on whether to call him as its next senior minister.

He received 95.8% of the vote.



ALEXANDER SIEGEL | PHOTO EDITOR

Attendees greet each other at the beginning of an Elon Community Church service Aug. 30. The Rev. Jonathan Chapman is set to be the next senior minister of the church.

I THINK WE HAVE A REAL OPPORTUNITY HERE TO HELP CRAFT A NEW NARRATIVE ABOUT WHAT CHURCH IS, WHAT CHURCH SHOULD BE AND WHAT IT CAN BE.

THE REV. JONATHAN CHAPMAN
INCOMING ECC SENIOR MINISTER

For Chapman, returning to Elon feels less like moving somewhere new and more like coming home.

Chapman will begin his new role Dec. 1. He hopes to help the Elon Community Church strengthen its role as a progressive Christian voice in Alamance County while continuing its work in social justice.

He also wants to strengthen the church’s relationship with Elon University and help bridge the divide between the university and surrounding community.

Chapman’s appointment also makes him the first openly gay senior minister of Elon

Community Church. The church has been officially designated as open and affirming for more than 11 years, said Chapman.

Chapman said he hopes his appointment shows LGBTQ+ members of Elon University and Alamance County that they are welcome.

“There’s a place for you here,” Chapman said.

Chapman said the church has an opportunity to create a different model of Christianity for people who may not feel represented.

“I think we have a real opportunity here

to help craft a new narrative about what church is, what church should be and what it can be,” Chapman said.

As he prepares to leave Connecticut and return to Elon, Chapman said he is looking forward to reconnecting with the community where his journey toward ministry began.

For Chapman, returning to Elon marks a chance to reconnect with the community that first shaped his path while beginning a new chapter of ministry.

“It’s coming home and a new beginning all at once,” Chapman said.



ALEXANDER SIEGEL | PHOTO EDITOR

Attendees arrive for a service at the Elon Community Church Aug. 30. Over 95% of the church’s congregation voted to call the Rev. Jonathan Chapman as its next senior minister.

Varsity girls flag football takes root in Alamance County

Inaugural season expected to kick off this September

Kathan Gandhi
Sports Editor

Five teams, one field, and a level of competitiveness that had teammates on the sideline unable to contain their excitement. “There were some competitive environments, and those girls, they were getting after it,” said BJ Condrón, athletic director at Southeast Alamance High School. “There was all the intensity from the sideline, and just all the cheering and energy that they showed was something that I loved.” That’s the memory that stands out for Condrón from the Southeast varsity girls flag football games at Alamance County’s first round-robin tournament last year. Now, he prepares for the first sanctioned season of girls flag football in North Carolina history — a sport that barely existed in Alamance County two years ago.

From two schools to five

The North Carolina High School Athletic Association’s board of directors voted to approve girls flag football as an official high school sport over the summer, capping a rapid rise for the sport over the last two years. According to Eastern Alamance Athletic Director Brad Costa, the push began around the summer of 2024. ADs from the county met with representatives from the Carolina Panthers, who have invested over \$2.5 million into growing the sport statewide over the last four years. By spring 2025, Costa and Condrón realized both schools had enough interest to start growing programs in Alamance County. It was just a matter of finding competition. “We said we’re going to make this happen, even if it’s just us two playing,” Costa said. Costa ended up recruiting teams from beyond the county line, pulling in Northwood High School and Seaforth High School in Pittsboro, plus Jordan-Matthews in Siler City to round out a five-team, unsanctioned league last year. Eastern hosted the first tournament. “It was such a cool atmosphere,” Costa said. “You could see the excitement from the girls, and it was just a really great thing.”

Condrón said the response from athletes at Southeast caught his coaching staff off guard — in a good way. The new fall sport has drawn students who hadn’t necessarily played for the school before. “It put together a group of kids that I don’t think normally

would have been together,” Condrón said. “Offering that to our students was kind of a no-brainer.” Both ADs described a level of competitiveness that surprised them. “You can’t go into it half-hearted, because those girls want to win,” Costa said, calling it his biggest takeaway from the first season. Condrón said he had to make one thing clear to his players early on: this wasn’t “powder puff football.” Once that distinction was set, he said, “those girls, they were getting after it.”

Finding a home on the fall calendar

Approval of the sport didn’t come as a surprise to either athletic director, but the timing carried some uncertainty. Costa said he expected the NCHSAA to formalize the sport as early as last winter, and the delay stemmed largely from figuring out where flag football belonged on the calendar rather than whether it belonged at all. Different regions of the state had already built out programs on different schedules, from fall leagues in Charlotte-Mecklenburg, Wake and Guilford counties to a spring season in Charlotte. For Eastern, Costa argued fall was always the better fit, since spring already carries a full slate of competing girls programs like softball, soccer and track. Former NCHSAA President Stephen Gainey, who recently stepped down from the board, said sanctioning wasn’t a surprise either — the association requires two years of data showing at least 25% of member schools’ participation before a sport qualifies. Girls flag football cleared that bar this year. 154 high schools across North Carolina are committed to fielding girls flag football teams for this upcoming season, according to the Carolina Panthers website. What sanctioning actually changes The upgrade brings a formal governing structure, but also new headaches. Condrón said Southeast could play two games on one field last year. Now, under sanctioned rules, fields can only host one game at a time, complicating scheduling as more schools join a shortened, modified first season. Costa said the seven-and-a-half-week regular season allows

for up to 18 games, with matches beginning in early September and the state playoff window opening in mid-to-late October. Costa expects Eastern’s roster to land around 20 players, while Condrón said Southeast’s turnout could push closer to 25. Considering only seven players can be on the field at a time, both ADs thought the only issue with roster size would be potential cuts. “The problem will be: do we have too many out there, and are we going to have to turn people away?” Condrón said. Three more county schools — Western Alamance, Southern Alamance and Williams — have committed to starting programs, with Cummings also showing interest. But Condrón says all schools are hesitant to try something new and fully invest into the teams. Condrón is hoping that a planned Eastern-Southeast showdown, with the other teams watching and scrimmaging afterward, will nudge the holdouts to commit. Not every school has jumped at the opportunity yet, and Condrón was candid about why. “I think they’re just reluctant to jump in at this time, just because it’s something new,” Condrón said. “We can make excuses, and there are obstacles, of course. But I feel like once you get started and you see the impact it has on some kids, or maybe you see that kid that doesn’t play anything else, but they’re down to play this, and the joy that they have for it, that’s worth it.” A sport built around changing interests Gainey framed the sanctioning of girls flag football and boys volleyball as part of the same story — an athletic association responding to what students actually want to play. “It shows the athletic association’s continued movement towards interests of students as interests change,” Gainey said. “I’m very proud of the board and very proud of all the people who got behind this sport.” Condrón said this new step makes an impact on student-athletes, on and off the field. “We know the benefits of athletics and kids that participate,” Condrón said. “They’re going to come to school more. They’re going to have better grades. They’re staying active, just generally. And so the more opportunities we can give them to do that, the better off things are.”



The Eastern Alamance and Southeast Alamance girls flag football teams square off in a round-robin tournament Oct. 22, 2025. PHOTO COURTESY OF BRAD COSTA



The Eastern Alamance girls flag football team celebrates on the sideline during its round-robin tournament Oct. 22, 2025.

PHOTO COURTESY OF BRAD COSTA