

New NC math curriculum provides more flexibility, raises concerns about STEM readiness

New standards introduce more statistics class, allow students to choose math electives

Miles Hayford
Managing Editor of The Pendulum

Meagan Yackel, a parent of a William High School junior, said she has seen firsthand the struggles students are facing learning math in North Carolina schools right now.

“I don’t think my son should have passed ninth grade given his grades the entire year, but sure enough, they passed him. I think that the kids are honestly just left behind,” Yackel said. “I feel like everybody’s on a different playing field right now.”

North Carolina’s math test scores have grown in recent years. The state had a 68.9% proficiency rate in the Math 3 high school class in the 2025-26 school year, a jump from a 53.4% rate in 2021-22, according to data from the state department of public instruction. But many students are still struggling in math, and the state is working to change this.

In early October, the State Board of Education approved new math standards set to start in 2028. Among the changes, Math 3 would not be a required class anymore and Math 4 would be removed altogether. Students would be able to choose two math electives, giving them more freedom to take classes related to their plans for after high school.

According to Elon University mathematics professor Aaron Trocki, who works with the school of education to train the next generation of math teachers, these new standards were needed as the old standards hadn’t been updated since 2017. Trocki said he welcomes the changes.

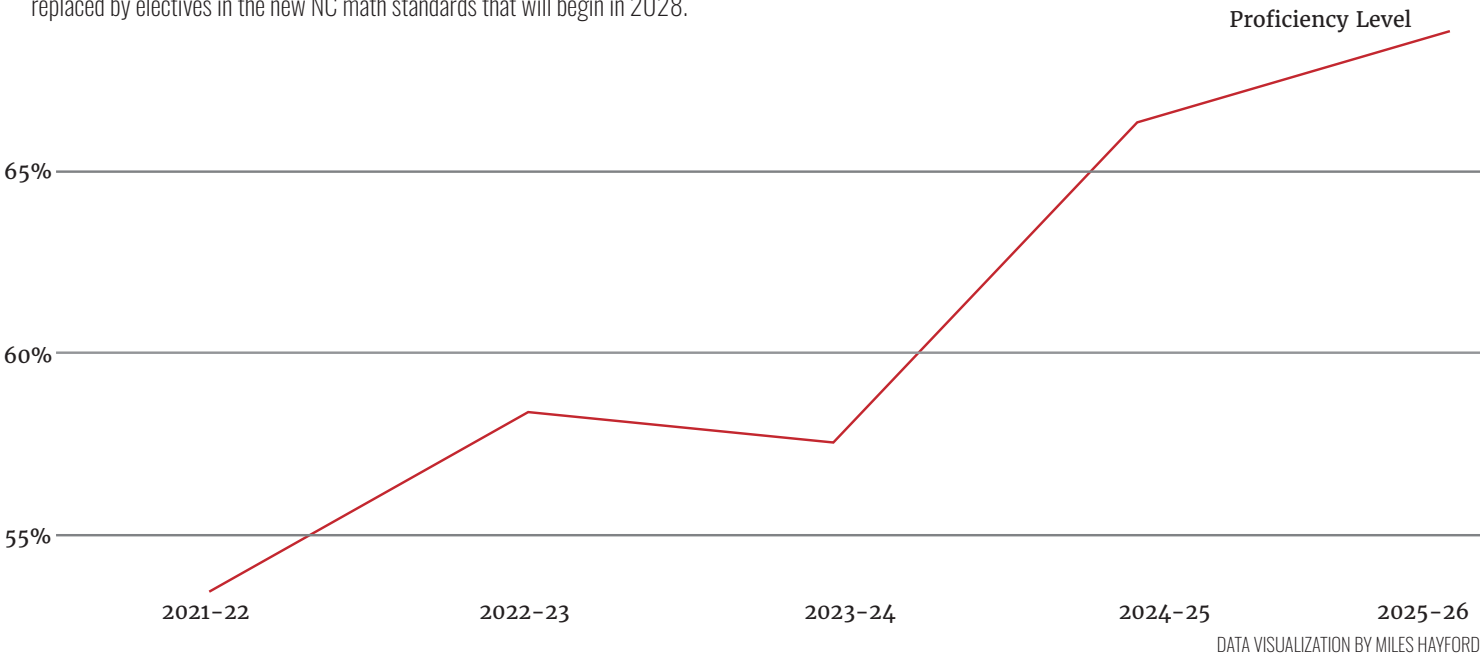
“Having courses in their third and fourth year that have a lot more real-world context in them could be a much more engaging experience for students,” Trocki said.

Among the elective classes that students can take will be new classes focusing on applied statistics and data science. Elon University professor Heather Barker, who teaches math education classes, said offering more statistics-based classes is needed.

“People are starting to realize that, ‘Okay, we need to really make sure that students can

North Carolina experiences growth in math test proficiency levels

North Carolina has grown by around 15 points since 2021 in their math test proficiency levels for Math 3. Math 3 is a high school class that will soon be able to be replaced by electives in the new NC math standards that will begin in 2028.



work with data, maybe a little bit more than calculus, in some of the other fields,” Barker said. “Especially when we think about health fields, like students going into nursing or medicine or physical therapy, they probably need more statistics courses so they can understand studies behind those fields.”

Barker said she hopes adding more real-world context into math classes will make students more excited about staying in math and seeing how they will use it in the future.

Trocki said that Elon has seen this focus on data science coming. Elon revised its math teacher licensure major requirements a few years ago to require a statistics class.

Melissa Enoch, a parent of two Alamance-Burlington School System high schoolers, said this freedom to choose which pathway to go down may not necessarily be a good thing.

“Kids don’t really know what it is that they want to do in high school anyway,” Enoch said. “So, for them to say, ‘Okay, go this path or that path,’ it’s just going to put more pressure on the parents trying to figure it out.”

To combat this, Trocki said advisers in high school will need to be trained to give the

right guidance and support to students.

More statistics and data-focused classes could also leave calculus behind. Trocki said that he expects the number of North Carolina students entering college with an AP Calculus credit to drop.

“Calculus is often a gateway for students into a STEM career or a STEM college experience, and so we don’t want to unnecessarily limit the number of students who can get into an AP Calculus class, for example,” Trocki said.

Chair of the department of engineering at Elon, Jonathan Su, said that these new standards could limit students’ options in the STEM fields.

“Math builds on itself so much that it’s often difficult to go back and learn the math that you may have missed when you’re younger,” Su said. “If your algebra background is poor, you may be able to struggle through one level of calculus, but then you start running into trouble at later levels of calculus.”

As students prepare for these new standards, so will teachers. Trocki said the new math standards will change the way Elon teaches math education students at Elon, and

said it could provide a challenge for current teachers who didn’t receive the preparation to teach statistics classes.

“You would expect that a high school teacher has enough background in mathematics to relearn, or possibly learn some of it for the first time, the statistics associated in the high school curriculum,” Trocki said. “But it’ll be a challenge for some high school math teachers.”

Professional development opportunities will be vital to give support to these teachers, Trocki said. Trocki said he hopes the new standards motivate teachers who see the shortcomings of the current curriculum.

The new standards are part of the larger conversation around education in the state, as North Carolina ranks dead last in public school funding and teacher pay has become a major topic of discussion throughout campaigning in the midterm elections.

“Hopefully, we’d see maybe better morale from our faculty and administration to support teachers in teaching to these new standards,” Trocki said. “Whether or not we get funding to match this change, I would say, remains to be seen.”

Elon professor conducts research in Elon Forest

Students are researching the amount of carbon stored within the forest

Alexander Siegel
Photo Editor

Of the 640 acres of land owned by Elon University, 56 of those comprise the Elon Forest. Designated as the Elon Forest in 2010, it is located to the north of University Drive.

The forest is used by many professors, both as an instructional space and for research. One of these professors is David Vandermast, associate professor of biology. Vandermast has split the 56 acres into 10 separate ecological research plots dating back to 2001.

According to the Elon Forest’s website, the forest was created with the intention to be used

as a teaching resource and to help safeguard the local ecosystem.

The forest is home to several thousand species, including plants and animals. The forest includes 50% of trees being more than an estimated 200 years old, with an additional 40% being considered a “pine forest.”

Vandermast also serves as the chair of the Elon Forest Advisory Committee, and is in charge of marking boundaries within the forest.

“They’re monumented with iron bars, and so I go out and I reestablish them with flags,” Vandermast said. “All of the trees have aluminum tags on them, and the tags have numbers. So because of that, we can actually go look to see how much trees have grown. We can do nice demographic studies in the forest.”



ALEXANDER SIEGEL | PHOTO EDITOR

The Elon Forest sign as pictured Oct. 26.

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Elon News Network fact checks political ads

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Model trains unite Gibsonville community

PAGE 7 LIFESTYLE



Football captain reflects on childhood adversity

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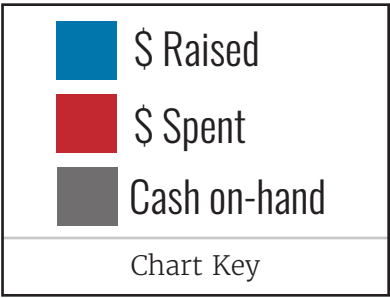
CORRECTIONS

In the Oct. 14 edition of The Pendulum, the candidate profiles under the headline of "Campaigning for North Carolina Superior Court District 17 Seat 1" were labeled incorrectly. Craig Turner is running for Seat 2 not Seat. 1.

Campaign finances prove key in final stretch of the midterm elections

Roy Cooper, Richard Hudson have a significant cash advantage over competitors

All of the information provided comes from the Federal Election Commission. Candidates running for federal office are required to file how much money they have raised and spent during each quarter of the year. The filing of these numbers spanned the entire campaign up until Oct. 14.

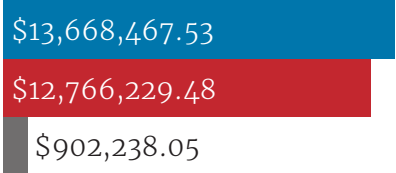


U.S. Senate

Roy Cooper



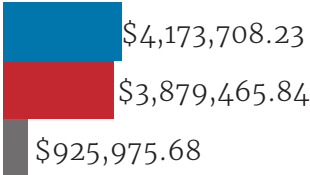
Michael Whatley



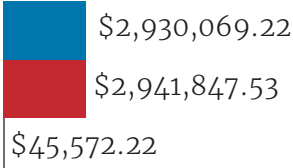
Cooper's filing covers campaign finance contributions from July 25, 2026 to Oct. 14, 2026. Whatley's filing covers from June 30, 2025 to Oct. 14, 2026.

U.S. House of Representatives

Richard Hudson

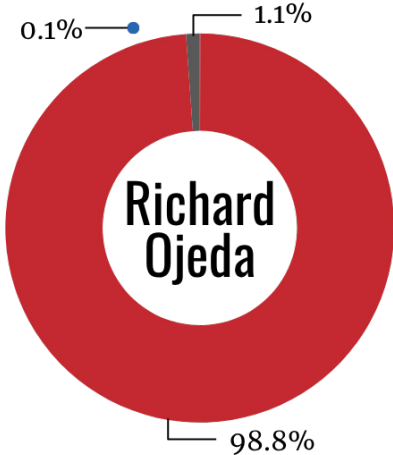
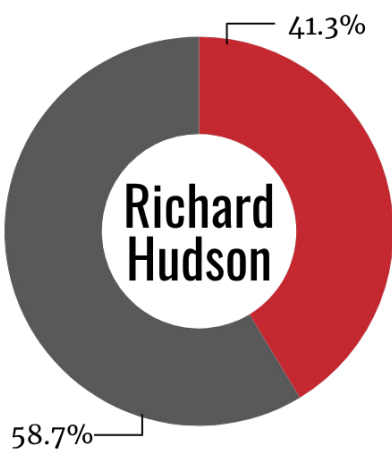
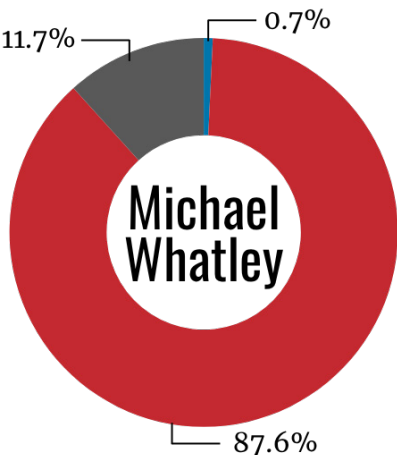
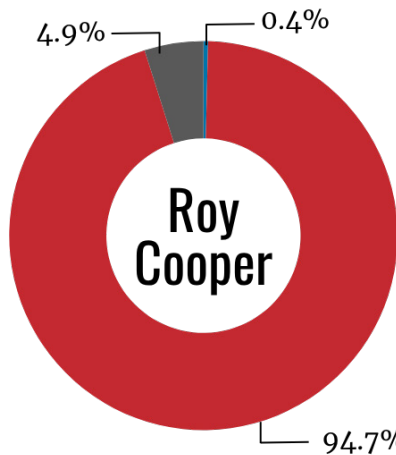


Richard Ojeda



Hudson's filing covers campaign finance contributions from Jan. 1, 2025 to Oct. 14, 2026. Ojeda's filing covers from Jan. 1, 2025 to Oct. 14, 2026.

Where the money comes from



Four people who listed Elon University as their employer donated a total of \$1,475 to Cooper over the course of the campaign. No one who listed Elon University as their employer donated money to the Whatley, Ojeda or Hudson campaigns.



VENUS SOTO CASTANEDA | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER
Alecks Mantell, the Student Union Board's late night chair, talks with attendees at the Paint 101 event Oct. 22 in Winter Garden. "Walking around and seeing what everybody's creating and what everybody's ideas are, because I'm a very creative person, and I love to paint, and I love to meet new people, and I love to talk. So, this is the perfect setting for me," Mantell said.



ADDISON HINSON | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER
An Elon University softball player watches the ball during a preseason game against the University of Mount Olive on Oct. 23 at Hunt Softball Park. This was Elon's fifth preseason game out of eight. The Phoenix took to the field with 12 new players, including five freshmen.



ALEXANDER SIEGEL | PHOTO EDITOR
Elon University senior defender Grace Gelhaus and a player from Hampton University run after the ball during Elon's senior day 4-2 win Oct. 25 at Rudd Field. "I'm grateful for obviously my teammates because the bond I have with them is everlasting," Gelhaus said. "I'm also grateful for the coaching staff because they're not just like coaches because they really care about you."



VENUS SOTO CASTANEDA | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER
Julia Ramirez Escalona paints on her tote bag at the Student Union Board's Paint 101 event Oct. 22 in Winter Garden. "It's really a time to wind down because, honestly, I love painting," Escalona said. "So these events happening like every now and then, it's really nice to come to meet other people."



ALEXANDER SIEGEL | PHOTO EDITOR
Elon University redshirt junior Dominik Renz and Wake Forest University sophomore Ronnie Garcia almost collide after attempting a header during Elon's match at Rudd Field on Oct. 24. The game finished with a 0-0 tie.

A look at the ads shaping the N

Campaign advertisements from both parties have factual issues

Lily Mosbacher, Brinna Hayes, Grace Jackman
Elon News Network

For this story, Elon News Network fact-checked 12 political advertisements created for the United States Senate race in North Carolina. ENN looked at ads funded by both the Roy Cooper and Michael Whatley campaigns. Additionally, ENN looked into ads funded by political action committees from both parties.

The project examined how political ads use facts, statistics and personal anecdotes to shape voter perception.

Kathleen Stansberry, associate professor of strategic communications at Elon University, said political ads can contain accurate information while still misleading viewers through the way information is presented.

“The biggest thing we see, especially with misleading, is it’s rarely straight false,” Stansberry said. “It is typically misleading, so information is shared in such a way that it could be fact-checked as accurate. However, it’s shared in a way that communicates a

message that is not accurate.”

Stansberry said misleading political messaging can affect voters’ ability to make informed decisions, particularly when advertisements rely on fear or present statistics without sufficient context or citation.

“This can be incredibly damaging for a strong democracy,” Stansberry said. “We need to have an informed public to have a strong democratic process.”

With the midterm election right around the corner, this project highlights the importance of examining not only whether an advertisement’s individual claims are accurate but also whether its overall message gives voters an accurate understanding of the candidates and their records.

Stansberry said she recommends voters turn to journalistic reporting, candidate statements and local candidate forums to learn more about the people seeking office.

Advertisements paid for by Cooper campaign



PHOTO CREDIT | ROY COOPER YOUTUBE



PHOTO CREDIT | ROY COOPER YOUTUBE

“No AI. No special effects. Just Michael Whatley in his own words.”

Michael Whatley is shown in this ad saying “grocery prices are down, gasoline prices are down, housing prices are down, inflation is down.” Roy Cooper responds in the ad, expressing disbelief and referencing his ‘Make Stuff Cost Less’ plan for his Senate campaign.

The ad was released on Sept. 1, 2026, but the Whatley clip was released in July of 2025. When comparing prices and rates near President Donald Trump taking office and six months after, the claim Cooper made loses its credibility.

According to the U.S. Energy Information

Administration, the average price for a gallon of gas was \$3.10 on Jan. 27, 2025. On July 14, 2025, a gallon of gas averaged \$3.13. While not technically down, the statement wasn’t drastically incorrect.

Inflation in January of 2025 was at 3%, and in July of that year, it was at 2.7%, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. In January 2025, grocery prices averaged 3.11 times the level of the 1982-84 average, and 3.13 times the level in July 2025.

As such, Whatley wasn’t outlandish in his words, but not correct either. The ad takes the clip out of context.

“Roy Cooper tackles safety”

Roy Cooper claims in his “Tackles Safety” ad that he put “drug dealers, rapists and murderers in prison” during his time as attorney general. While true, it is also worth noting that North Carolina had over 15,000 untested rape kits backlogged when he was attorney general. This information wasn’t fully uncovered until after Cooper left office as attorney general, and the backlog was cleared in 2024.

However, many circumstances created this situation. Over half of the kits were connected to cases that had already been resolved, unfounded, admitted to, or untested due to requests to not move forward. Many of the kits were not in Cooper’s possession or jurisdiction because they were still sitting at local law enforcement departments. Over 500 law enforcement agencies had 15,160 kits in their possession, according to a 2018 study by the NCDOJ.

In 2019, Cooper signed into law the Survivor Act which increased funding for

tests and requirements to submit kits to the state crime lab or approved facility within 45 days of receiving them.

The ad also claimed that Cooper toughened bail laws when he was governor. In 2023, Roy Cooper signed the Pretrial Integrity Act, House Bill 813. This bill stopped magistrates from setting bail for certain offenses such as, but not limited to, first and second-degree murder, kidnapping and rape.

Cooper’s work against fentanyl was mentioned, too. In 2017, President Donald Trump appointed Cooper as one of five individuals to a panel to fight opioid issues. As governor, Cooper signed into law the STOP Act (2017), which set limits for medical prescriptions, and he launched the North Carolina Opioid and Substance Use Action Plan. He also put a “Death by Distribution” law into place in 2019, which charged dealers of drugs like fentanyl with second-degree murder if the user were to overdose.

CHECK OUT ELON NEWS NETWORK’S FULL COVERAGE OF OTHER U.S. SENATE ADS AT ELONNEWSNETWORK.COM

ROY COOPER

“WHAT’S TRUE”
BY ROY COOPER CAMPAIGN

“INSURANCE COMPANIES HAVE
GOTTEN AWAY WITH FAR TOO
MUCH”
BY ROY COOPER CAMPAIGN

MICHAEL WHATLEY

“WHATLEY FOR SENATE”
BY MICHAEL WHATLEY CAMPAIGN

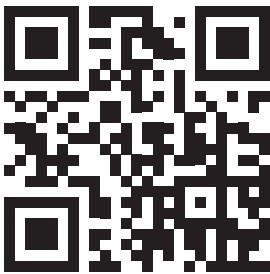
DRIVERS LICENSE ISSUED TO
NONCITIZENS AD
BY MICHAEL WHATLEY CAMPAIGN

POLITICAL ACTION
COMMITTEE

“WE CAN’T AFFORD ROY COOPER”
BY AFP ACTION

LOBBYING FOR OIL AND NATURAL
GAS COMPANIES AD
BY WINSENATE

WATCH THE ADS HERE



North Carolina U.S. Senate race

Advertisements paid for by Whatley campaign



PHOTO CREDIT | MICHAEL WHATLEY INSTAGRAM

Crime, public safety ad

This ad claims that former North Carolina Gov. Roy Cooper released 4,200 criminals from prisons in North Carolina, including dangerous offenders. The ad then claims that 2,200 of the criminals released have been rearrested and that 25 of them later committed murder. The ad frames it as Cooper agreed to release the criminals. According to Politifact, 3,500 inmates were released during the COVID-19 pandemic after Cooper agreed to a 2021 civil rights lawsuit settlement. In terms of Michael Whatley’s claim of 25 of the criminals committing murders after

release, the New York Post reported that in early 2026, 18 of the people released from prison early were later charged with killing someone. However, a WRAL News analysis found that the majority of them were already out of prison before the settlement was signed or were out due to their sentences scheduled to expire. Overall, the ad’s claims about Cooper’s responsibility for the pandemic-era prisoners, rearrests and subsequent murders require further verification and evidence before they can be confirmed.



PHOTO CREDIT | MICHAEL WHATLEY INSTAGRAM

Iryna Zarutska ad

This ad claims that Cooper’s cashless bail policies led to Iryna Zarutska’s murder by DeCarlos Brown Jr. in Charlotte, North Carolina. The ad states that Brown Jr. had been arrested 14 times and was released under Cooper’s policies. According to a release from the Office of Public Affairs on September 9, 2025, the Charlotte Mecklenburg Police Department identified Brown as the suspect for Zarutska’s fatal stabbing on the Lynx Blue Line light rail in Charlotte. Zarutska had sustained fatal stab wounds. However, the claim that Cooper was responsible requires more evidence. Politifact reported that Brown had been arrested at least 14 times, but most of those arrests occurred between 2011 and 2014, when Cooper was attorney general and not governor. Cooper served as governor from 2017-2025. Brown was released from prison in September 2020 after serving a sentence for a 2014 armed robbery conviction. Furthermore, Politifact stated that the report of the Task Force for Racial Equity in Criminal Justice didn’t release its recommendations until after Brown had been released from prison.

The report calls for introducing cashless bail, where defendants are released from jail while awaiting trial based on factors like public safety rather than their ability to pay a cash bond. The task force report’s recommendations were unbinding. There is no evidence that the report played a role in Brown’s release from jail in January 2025 while awaiting trial for charges of misusing the 911 emergency dispatch system. Misusing the 911 system is a Class 1 misdemeanor with a penalty of a maximum 120 days in jail, so even if Brown had been given the maximum sentence in January, the sentence would have ended before Aug. 22, the day that Brown allegedly stabbed Zarutska. Brown is now in federal custody as he has been ruled mentally incompetent to stand trial. The ad does have factual information about Brown’s arrest history and Zarutska’s death, but its claim that Cooper was directly responsible is not supported by evidence. It leaves out important dates and there is no distinction between Cooper’s task force’s report recommendations and decisions by judicial officials.

Advertisements paid for by Political Action Committee

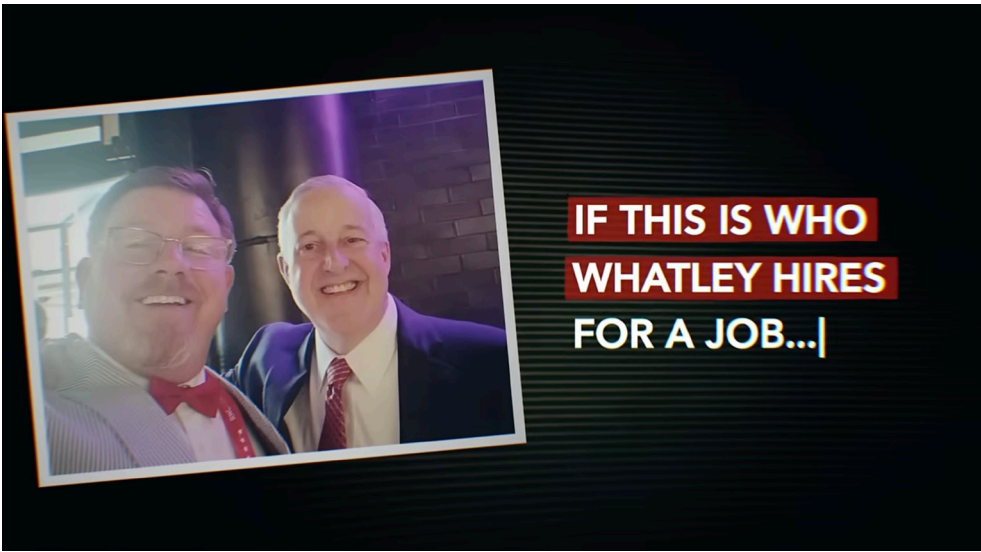


PHOTO CREDIT | WINSENATE NORTH CAROLINA YOUTUBE

Harvey West ad

A political advertisement from WinSenate, a democratically backed political action committee, claims Michael Whatley hired a convicted sex offender to lead committees in the North Carolina Republican Party while serving as state party chairman from 2019-2024. The ad refers to Harvey L. West Jr., who pleaded guilty in 2000 to five counts of taking indecent liberties with a child, including offenses involving a person younger than 16, according to WRAL and Politifact. West was released from prison in 2006 and was required to register as a sex offender. West served as chairman of the Republican Party’s 1st Congressional District Committee from 2019 until March 2026. However, North Carolina Republican Party spokesman Matt

Mercer told PolitiFact that West was elected to the position by the district’s executive committee after the previous chair resigned, then reelected by committee members beginning in 2020. The Asheville Watchdog reporter initially reported the link between Whatley and Lee in March 2026. West also served on the party’s Plan of Organization Committee, which establishes and interprets party rules. West told PolitiFact that Whatley appointed him to that committee in 2021 and 2024. The state party did not dispute West’s account, but said he had served on the committee before Whatley became chairman and generally remained in the role until he stepped down.

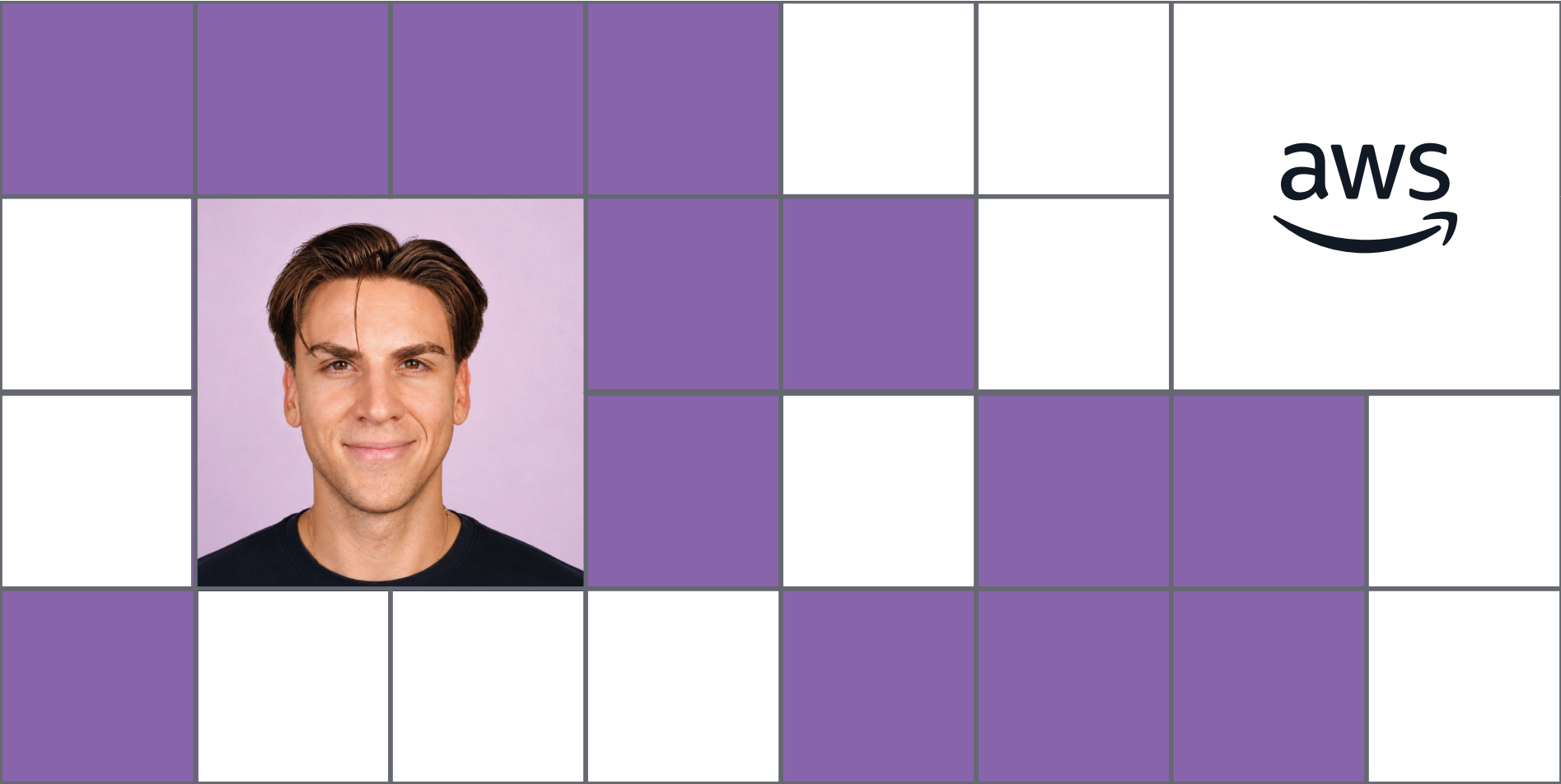


PHOTO CREDIT | SENATE LEADERSHIP FUND YOUTUBE

“Logan’s story”

The Senate Leadership Fund, a Republican backed political action committee, released an advertisement August 20, interviewing Stephen Federico, father of Logan Federico. In the ad, he discusses the loss of his daughter. Logan was allegedly killed by Alexander Dickey in May of 2025 in her home in Columbia, South Carolina. Dickey does have a criminal record in South Carolina. However, Dickey does not have a North Carolina criminal record. The ad does not explicitly voice support for Republican Senate candidate Michael Whatley.

Instead, it emphasizes Democratic candidate Roy Cooper’s release of prisoners in 2021. That claim is in reference to the case NC NAACP Vs. Cooper, which ended in a settlement that required the release of 3,500 prisoners due to hazardous safety conditions during the COVID-19 pandemic, according to the North Carolina Department of Public Safety. While the ad draws connections between the Federico murder and the release of prisoners, there is no actual connection, as Dickey was not one of the prisoners released as a result of NC NAACP vs. Cooper.



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Gibsonville Garden Railroad keeps community on track

Nonprofit celebrates 10 years of bringing joy to Gibsonville

Lilly Molina
Elon News Network

Neil Bromilow yells “Roll 8!” to a colleague as he finishes linking one train car to another. His colleague turns the switch on the conductor’s board, and the train on track 8 begins to move forward.

Track 8 is one of 23 located in downtown Gibsonville. Every Saturday from 9 a.m. to noon, people of all ages show up at the Gibsonville Garden Railroad with their model trains, but to Bromilow, the organization’s president, it’s so much more than that.

“It’s always different every week,” Bromilow says. “You can’t say you’ve seen it.”

Building a railroad one track at a time

On Fridays, he and fellow member Steve Ellis come to the track to prepare for a busy Saturday morning.

Bromilow and Ellis spot a worn-down track, separate it from the rest, and scrub all the dirt and grit from the brass.

“There is about 3,000 feet of track out there at the Gibsonville Garden Railroad,” Bromilow says as he holds the damaged rail in his hands. “And that 3,000 feet of track, some of it’s been here since 1996.”

With little effort, he snaps the brittle ties in half.

“So if I do the math, that’s 30 years ago. So if you’d been laying out in the sun for 30 years, you might start feeling like that too.”

He replaces the old tracks with UV-rated new ones, but he isn’t done just yet. The next step is to connect the replaced railroad with the rest using “little gizmos” so that electricity can flow.

He works on the track now, but up until 2016, he wasn’t even allowed to step foot onto the property.

Bromilow acquired the railroad from Bobby Summers, who was a conductor on a freight train before owning a train hobby store and GGRR, which at the time only had five tracks.

“It was his railroad,” he shakes his finger. “Don’t touch my railroad.”

Now Bromilow, Ellis and others have volunteered at GGRR since he listed it as a nonprofit. There are about 100 members, and about 25 to 31 people show up regularly



LILLY MOLINA | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Parents and their children play with motorized model trains at one of the Gibsonville Garden Railroad’s set stations.

from April to November. He said on average around 150 to 200 visitors stop in a weekend.

“At the end of a season, which is about 34 runs roughly, about 9,000 people have come to Gibsonville to see the railroad,” Bromilow said.

Local resident Connor McDade said he brings his toddler to GGRR when the weather is nice.

“We love to be here and get some entertainment in a beautiful, neat space downtown,” McDade said. “And get to enjoy things with a lot of other train lovers.”

He said the first time he and his family came out to downtown Gibsonville, they spent about an hour just at GGRR alone. His toddler loved it so much that at times McDade pulls up GGRR’s YouTube videos for his kid to enjoy.

“It’s just neat to see all the folks who clearly are just passionate about what they’re doing here,” he said.

Bromilow said GGRR is the largest free public outdoor garden railroad in North Carolina. The entire track is inspired by North Carolina, with miniature exhibits of notable landmarks such as The Land of Oz theme park located near the North Carolina-Tennessee border.

“The bottom line is people just come to watch,” he said.

All aboard!

Lina Paramo comes to watch, not for the trains, but rather her son.

“I am happy because my son is very shy,” she said. “It is hard for him to interact with other kids, especially after the pandemic. But since we have been living here for the past two years, it’s incredible how he’s communicated.”

Paramo said that she heard her son Manuel tell Bromilow how GGRR is his favorite place in the world.

Though she lives here in Alamance County, Manuel moved with his father to Indiana. However, every three weeks he travels 10 hours to Gibsonville to volunteer with GGRR.

“Just three weeks ago he came down and was talking with all of the volunteers here and told them that this was his favorite place on the entire planet,” Paramo said. “And I thanked every single one of them for being so special with him.”

Bromilow said anyone is allowed on board the GGRR express.

“The train is going to be multigenerational, and it’s not discriminatory in any way,” Bromilow said.

Local resident Courtney Weaver brought her father to GGRR, who came down to visit her from Pennsylvania. She said her grandfather was into model trains, so her own father grew up around that. She said she enjoyed that GGRR felt like a multigenerational experience.

“I grew up with my dad, and then my grandfather did trains also, so it’s kind of nostalgic for me to get to have those memories again and see that,” Weaver said.

No ticket required

Bromilow says acquiring recruits is easy; they just have to follow three rules.

“Rule number one is don’t step on the track, because when you step on the track, it bends the brass.”

He then lifts his second finger and says, “Rule number two is don’t step on the track.”

He says the trick question is what is rule number three, which is to not step on the track.

“Congratulations!” Bromilow smiles. “You’re now a member.”

Ellis became a member of GGRR in 2017 by default because he said he made the “mistake of pointing out a problem” he saw on the track. Bromilow made him come in and fix it.

Now Ellis is in charge of the technical side of GGRR, making sure that the controls and electronics of the operation are working properly. He built some reversing circuits for the trolleys, built a camera on the nose of a train, built a track for kids to interact with and more.

“I do more of that than actually run trains,” he said.

He said seeing people come to GGRR and interact with the trains is a “hoot.”

“It’s fun to watch them, little kids,” Ellis said. “I had to learn all the names of all the Thomas trains.”

He said he is naturally an introvert, but GGRR forced him outside his shell. Now his favorite part is talking to people that come to visit and hear what their story is.

“We have people that come from all over,” Ellis said. “I’m amazed that we’ve had people come from New Jersey and from upstate New York, so there are people. It’s a draw.”

Full steam ahead

GGRR is celebrating its 10th anniversary as a nonprofit. But at an elderly age, Bromilow knows he can’t run the nonprofit forever.

“I’ve got it in my final papers; it says when I go, I’m taking it all with me,” Bromilow said.

“We will put you buried with it,” Ellis laughs.

“We’re going to stack all the rails up and send me on the ship,” Bromilow jokes.

The real succession plan includes Ellis, who is a few years younger than Bromilow, but in the long run it’s to find someone younger and eager to take over. However, Bromilow knows that GGRR isn’t going to fade.

He said the organization has no debt or any member dues.

“I think the railroad will go on forever and there’s no reason why it won’t,” Bromilow said.

For now, he tells tourists and locals to come down on Saturday mornings to see GGRR. Every Saturday is different, with people bringing out different trains to run on the tracks.



LILLY MOLINA | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Gibsonville Garden Railroad president Neil Bromilow, right, explains the history of the organization to some visitors.

Elon Forest offers researching opportunities

FOREST | from cover

His students are currently researching the amount of carbon stored within the forest, and a student researcher will begin resampling in the spring.

“There’s no requirement that if someone wants to take a class out there that they have to ask permission. Any student can go, any class can go,” Vandermast said.

The Elon Forest is primarily used by biodiversity and dendrology classes, along with population biology, according to Vandermast.

Prior to the university purchasing the land, it was used as farmland. Because of this, most of

the growth was planted after this. However, the portion located behind the “Elon Forest” sign along University Drive is a forest of continuity, meaning that it is an old growth patch, never plowed or cut down by the farmer, according to Vandermast.

Vandermast said that there are no walking paths or trails in the forest, but the Elon Forest is open to the public, although the website states the opposite.

“Anyone can go back there, which is good and bad because sometimes people do stuff they shouldn’t do back there.”

Despite this, town of Elon Sustainability Committee Chair Brian Kennedy, said that he does not believe that the public is aware of this.



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DAVID VANDERMAST
ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR OF BIOLOGY

Vandermast said that anyone wanting to collect data in the forest, or remove any environmental component should contact a member of the Elon Forest Advisory Committee.

“If it’s going to be anything that’s extractive, taking something off the forest, then they should fill out a proposal for what they’re going to do.”

Kennedy said that he is not aware of any zoning policies or buffer zones pertaining to the land surrounding the Elon Forest that would protect it from commercial or residential development.

The Elon Forest is currently the largest intact forest within the town limits.

Star linebacker tackles life one challenge at a time

How Brodie Carroll was able to 'become the guy'

Addison Hinson
Elon News Network

The first thing you notice when the Elon football defense takes the field is the towering linebacker with long, blond hair.

The linebacker is Brodie Carroll, a redshirt junior and one of the team's captains, who transferred from Division II Shepherd University to play for the Phoenix in 2025.

Even though he's a team captain and has received multiple FCS All-American recognitions, and has 'become the guy' on the roster in the eyes of coaches, Carroll was quick to give credit to his teammates on the defensive line.

"They've all worked really hard," Carroll said. "They've made the plays in the trenches to allow me to play free and just go do my thing."

Strong work ethic is a common trait on Elon's defense — Carroll has been playing the last couple of games with a giant cast wrapped around his hand — but an injury like that won't prevent him from taking to the field.

"I've always had to work harder than others to get to the same level," Carroll said. "You can achieve anything if you just put your head down and work as hard as you can. Playing with the cast is just all those hours put in. I don't want to waste any game or opportunity knowing that I could possibly play."

“

IT'S REALLY JUST A SIGN OF HOPE TO SHOW THAT CHILDHOOD CANCER SURVIVORS CAN DO THE SAME THINGS EVERYONE ELSE CAN.

BRODIE CARROLL
ELON FOOTBALL LINEBACKER



PHOTO ILLUSTRATION BY KATHAN GANDHI

Redshirt junior linebacker Brodie Carroll was named a team captain ahead of Elon football's 2026 season. Carroll was named a Phil Steele midseason All-American on Oct. 21.

That fire doesn't just stem from a love and appreciation for football. It comes from a deeper source.

"I think it just goes back to my whole childhood and being a childhood cancer survivor," Carroll said.

That's why he wears his hair long every time he steps onto the field. Carroll lost his hair when he was two years old because of chemotherapy. Carroll said when he was involved with childhood cancer organizations back home, kids have noticed his long hair.

"It's really just a sign of hope to show that childhood cancer survivors can do the same things everyone else can," Carroll said.

While it's clear that he loves both the sport and the team, football is more than just a game to him.

"Sports are a great way to just use your platform for what you believe in, and I think that's just why I'm here is to prove to kids and to others," Carroll said. "I want to show that through my hair and how I play."

Elon football's head coach Tony Trisciani said he recognizes the grit and effort Carroll approaches each game with.

"He's the quarterback of our defense and he's always studying the game," Trisciani

said. "That's the thing, he's going to be prepared and a step ahead."

Carroll is already thinking towards the future, for both this season and the next.

“

HE'S THE QUARTERBACK OF OUR DEFENSE AND HE'S ALWAYS STUDYING THE GAME. THAT'S THE THING, HE'S GOING TO BE PREPARED AND A STEP AHEAD.

TONY TRISCIANI
ELON FOOTBALL HEAD COACH

"We're not where we want to be record-wise, and we have stuff to prove, and I know we can prove those things," Carroll said. "I have one more year left. I just want to play as hard as I can, leave a legacy, win a CAA championship, and I think that's all you can

really ask for."

As one of the captains, Carroll wants to ensure that the team stays focused on their goals and maintains a strong rapport with each other as they take on the rest of the season and try to round off the year with a better record.

"At the end of the day, if you're playing for each other, then you're gonna have a lot more fun and a lot more success," Carroll said.

That comes in the form of going to other sports games, or even hosting team cookouts.

Off the field, Carroll mentioned the importance of taking on life with a positive and kind outlook. Carroll said that he often thinks about the importance of being kind.

"I feel like wherever you're at, you can be nice to someone. You can hold the door. You can say hello," Carroll said. "People are battling a lot of different things, and I feel like kindness and love is truly how you combat evil in this world, and I think that's just how I try and live my life so that others can be uplifted."

While he may be a nightmare to the quarterbacks he faces, Elon's star linebacker has a heart — and hair — of gold.

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