

Elon University is mentioned in 12 Epstein-related files from the Department of Justice. Files show that Epstein paid for a former student's tuition at Elon.

Files reveal Jeffrey Epstein paid tuition for former Elon University student

Emails, checks show payments for 2009 Fall Term

Elon News Network

Files released by the Department of Justice revealed that financier and convicted sex offender Jeffrey Epstein paid tuition for a student attending Elon University in fall 2009. Documents show that Epstein paid

\$12,744 toward Fall Term tuition for a student identified as “Thomas,” the son of Jeanne Brennan Wiebracht, the former campaign accountant for then-U.S. Virgin Islands Gov. John de Jongh. Wiebracht did not respond to Elon News Network's request for comment. Epstein was arrested on July 6, 2019, on federal sex trafficking charges. A little more than a month later, Epstein was found dead in his cell in a New York City prison. Investigators concluded that he killed himself.

The DOJ added more than 3 million Epstein-related files to its website Jan. 30, including unredacted files with victim names and nude photos. Lawyers representing the victims of Epstein called for a judge to force the takedown of unredacted files in a letter from Sunday. The DOJ said it removed the unredacted documents in a letter released Feb. 2.

See FILES | pg. 4

ABSS moves forward with rezoning plan

Partnership with SchoolCAMP to transition, use all buildings

Anjolina Fantaroni
Elon News Network

The Alamance-Burlington School System has a six-step plan for its district-wide rezoning, developed in collaboration with SchoolCAMP, a professional consulting firm affiliated with North Carolina State University's Institute for Transportation Research and Education. The plan, currently in its second phase, is expected to be complete by spring 2026. It includes a land use study, community engagement, zonal mapping, a board vote, family notification and implementation. The rezoning will then take effect in the 2026-27 academic year. By using community feedback and careful analysis, the rezoning plan is intended to balance enrollment and access, efficient transportation and long-term stability, according to the ABSS School Capacity & Student Assignment page. In the second step, zonal mapping, new district maps will be developed. Families will be notified about new student assignments in April and May 2026. During the community engagement phase, the district surveyed the community to gather feedback about the rezoning. ABSS Chief Communications Officer Emily-Lynn Adkins said the survey received over 3,000 responses. “That just means that folks are engaging,” Adkins said. “In that survey, I think there were over 900 qualitative remarks. So that meant that over 900 people took the time to write comments. They didn't just answer the



ABSS Superintendent Aaron Fleming speaks at a Community Voice Session at Williams High School on Jan. 22.

survey questions easily. They actually wrote in comments that we will be able to take and use going forward.” The rezoning plan is intended to balance enrollment across the district, according to Adkins. “We have schools that are overcrowded and schools that are, for a better word, undercrowded,” Adkins said. The rezoning plan comes amid the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction and State Board of Education's goal to make

North Carolina's public schools the best in the nation by 2030. With help from State Superintendent of Public Instruction Maurice “Mo” Green, the plan has measurable goals and timelines for implementation of educator compensation, student achievement, mental health support, infrastructure modernization and community engagement, according to the DPI.

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A bus outside of Audrey W. Garrett Elementary School on Feb. 2.

ANJOLINA FANTARONI | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Elon tuition to increase by 5.42%

Total cost of attendance estimated to be \$68,903 for 2026-27 academic year, an increase of \$3,240

Anjolina Fantaroni
Elon News Network

Elon University's tuition and fees will increase by \$2,645 for the 2026-27 academic year, which is a 5.42% increase from current tuition and fees. Elon's total cost of attendance for incoming students — which includes tuition, fees, food and housing costs — will increase by 4.93% for the 2026-27 academic year, an increase of about \$3,240. Currently, Elon's total cost of attendance is \$65,663. Next year, the total cost of attendance will be \$68,903 according to Elon's admissions website. In an email to university families, Elon President Connie Book wrote that the increase supports Elon's commitment to preparing students for lives of purpose, leadership and service by expanding academic programs and facilities, advancing student well-being, enhancing support for alumni and developing and retaining exceptional faculty and staff. “These investments reflect our belief that affordability and quality must go hand in hand,” Book wrote in the email. “They ensure that Elon continues to offer an educational experience defined by exceptional teaching, close faculty-student relationships, innovative programs and a vibrant campus life that supports students academically, socially and professionally.”

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Graham's new mayor begins campaign projects

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THE PENDULUM

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ANJOLINA FANTARONI

Executive Director of Elon News Network

SARAH T. MOORE

Managing Editor of The Pendulum

FIONA MCALLISTER

Broadcast News Director

KATRINA HOLTZ

Photo Editor

MILES HAYFORD

News Editor

TRISTA PANAGAKOS

Politics Editor

KATHAN GANDHI

Sports Editor

NOLAN WILLIAMS

Audience Engagement Manager

MACKENZIE CRUZ

Producer of ENN On Air

MEGAN WALSH

Special Events Coordinator

JJ Duckworth, Abby Gravely, Monika Jurevicius, Alex Nettles and Amelia Metz contributed to the copy editing of this edition. Amelia Metz, Charlotte Pfabe and Savannah Hameed contributed to the design of this edition.

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

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

Contact
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CORRECTIONS

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



CHARLOTTE PFABE | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

A student sits by the Historic Neighborhood firepit Feb. 2. In-person class meetings were canceled for undergraduate students Feb. 2 and Feb. 3.



CHARLOTTE PFABE | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

An Elon University snow plow drives past the Ernest A. Koury Sr. Business Center on Feb. 1 after over six inches snow blanketed Elon's campus. Vice President of Student Life Jon Dooley sent out emails announcing that in-person class meetings would be cancelled Feb. 2 and Feb. 3 and many university offices would be closed or have alternate hours.



CHARLOTTE PFABE | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Students walk along East Haggard Avenue on Feb. 2.



CHARLOTTE PFABE | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Alamance Building covered in snow Feb. 1. Both Fonville Fountain, outside of Alamance, and Chandler Fountain, outside of Koury Business Center, were turned off throughout the weekend.



MILES HAYFORD | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

A student walk past Clohan Dining Hall in the snow Jan. 31.



CHARLOTTE PFABE | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Workers clear snow from the sidewalks Feb. 2.



MILES HAYFORD | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Snow accumulates near Kivette Hall in Colonnades Neighborhood on Jan. 31. It snowed throughout the day, and students were encouraged to stay off the roads. "Even if you're from the North/Midwest and think you've got this, the road treatment here is different. Just walk instead," Vice President of Student Life Jon Dooley wrote in an email sent to undergraduate students Jan. 31.

Elon sees 2 snowstorms in 1 week

Mackenzie Cruz

Elon News Network

Just seven days after the snowstorm that swept across the United States, another hit North Carolina. Elon University's campus accumulated over 6.5 inches of snow Jan. 31. The National Weather Service issued a winter storm warning that was in effect from 4 p.m. Jan. 30 to 7 a.m. Feb. 1.

Offices closed early at 3 p.m. Jan. 30, and in-person class meetings were canceled for Feb. 2 and 3. Those snow days made a four-day weekend for many students, staff and faculty. This amount of snow is unexpected for central North Carolina, and facilities management continues working to clear roads and parking lots of snow and ice.

In an email Feb. 3, Vice President for Student Life Jon Dooley said Elon University will resume regular operations Feb. 4, including in-person class schedules. Elon is expecting rain, mixing with some light snow, starting the afternoon of Feb. 4, and continuing into the night. About one to three inches is forecasted.



KATRINA HOLTZ | PHOTO EDITOR
A monk distributes peace bracelets to guests while stopped for lunch at the J. Smith Young YMCA in Lexington, North Carolina, on Jan. 18. North Carolina marked the seventh state a group of over two dozen Buddhist monks visited on their 23-hundred-mile “walk for peace” from Fort Worth, Texas, to Washington, D.C.



ANJOLINA FANTARONI | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER
Elon seniors Aidan Jimenez and Delaney Guidi walk through Historic Neighborhood on Jan. 25. Elon experienced winter weather including snow and ice that lead to university offices closing and the Alamance-Burlington School System having remote work days.



ETHAN WU | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER
Incoming members of Gamma Nu chapter of Phi Mu take photos together during Bid Day on Jan. 28 at Loy Center. Panhellenic Primary Recruitment, which takes place between Winter and Spring Terms, had a different schedule than anticipated as the Panhellenic Council rescheduled events around the weather.



MILES HAYFORDI | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER
Graduate student Chandler Cuthrell scores in the team’s win over Campbell on Jan. 10. Elon beat Campbell 83-82 after not leading on the scoreboard until the final minute. Read more about Cuthrell on page 11.



ALEXANDER SIEGELI | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER
Elon University junior guard Randall Pettus II maintains possession of the ball while being guarded by Towson University graduate student guard Tyler Schmidt during a home game Jan. 22. The Phoenix lost the match 72-59.

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DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

ABSS seeks community input for rezoning



Left, buses parked in the Audrey W. Garrett Elementary School lot Feb. 2. Right, the main entrance of Aubrey W. Garrett Elementary School on Feb. 2.

ANJOLINA FANTARONI | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

ABSS | from cover

ABSS also hosted two Community Voice Sessions, where community members could learn about the rezoning plan and provide feedback directly to district officials. During the Jan. 22 session, SchoolCAMP Senior Research Scholar Mathew Palmer shared three comments from the initial survey describing how overcrowding affects students, families and staff.

“It is neglectful that the Audrey Garrett elementary school is 100+ over capacity, but the council continues to approve 400+ new housing structures (apartments and single family homes, and townhomes) that will continue to overcrowd the same area,” an Alamance County resident wrote in the survey. “Traffic cannot handle the increase, and school drop-off lines are backed up and impacting regular traffic as well as causing stress and safety issues for students and parents.”

“Garrett has entirely too many kids

in that school,” an ABSS parent and staff member wrote in the survey. “There is no reason the 5th graders should be housed with the middle schoolers.”

“We had two classes of 18 students with two teachers in one classroom,” an ABSS teacher wrote in the survey. “The kids’ cubbies were in the hallway.”

Bus routes were a major topic during the community session on Jan. 22. ABSS Superintendent Aaron Fleming said the routes will be adjusted once new zones are finalized.

“It’s my hope that we’ll have more reliable bus transportation services, because our students will be going to a school a little closer to them, potentially,” Fleming said at the community session. “In some cases, it may not be that they’re closer to the school, but maybe we can have less bus routes because we have more of an optimized school attendance zones, and so I’m hoping it will be easier.”

Burlington resident and ABSS parent Nicole Jones said she has witnessed district transitions throughout the years.

“Nowadays, there’s hardly any teachers, there’s hardly any bus drivers, but the population is increasing,” Jones said. “Let’s say, even if we did get a new school or whatever, who’s going to be in it to teach the kids?”

Jones said her daughter’s bus currently has three students sharing a seat.

“If they turn the corner, it’s just a lot of issues,” Jones said. “I don’t think rezoning is going to help them all, of course, but I think it’s a start.”

Fleming said the district is exploring how they can utilize all the buildings while not busing students across the county.

“We still want to make sure they’re going to a school that’s as close to their home as possible, and so that’s the biggest thing, is to make sure our students aren’t spending all day on a school bus, or that their parents aren’t having to drive them all over the community,” Fleming said.

Burlington resident Courtney McQueen has three students in ABSS: one in elementary, middle and high school. She said she is concerned about the timeline

of the changes and how to prepare her students for when that comes.

“Fourth grade, seventh grade, eleventh grade, because I think they have the hardest when they have to change schools, and they’re almost at the end of their particular school,” McQueen said.

Fleming said that although there are no final decisions for transitions, the idea is that students who are in the upper grades of their school level will probably be allowed to stay at their home school.

“I think that’s the most fair thing to do,” Fleming said. “Probably the negative to that is if they do stay in their home school or in their old home school, if they live out of zone, we may not be able to provide transportation, but we would give them an opportunity to attend that school.”

IF YOU GO

Community Voice Session
6 p.m. Feb. 9
Southeast Alamance High School
3400 S NC 119 Hwy
Haw River, NC 27258

First-year parking lot causes safety concerns

Students walking from new lot to dorms say they feel unsafe at night

Fiona McAllister
Elon News Network

Less than a month after the new first-year parking lot opened by the Francis Center, freshman are raising concerns about their safety walking to and from the lot.

Elon freshman Andy Bowman works at the Publix grocery store in Burlington, around a ten minute drive from campus. Bowman said that as a manager, he usually gets off of work at 11:15 p.m. After his shift is over, Bowman drives back to campus and then walks from the first-year parking lot back to his dorm in Colonnades — totaling a 30-minute walk. Bowman said that he usually gets back to his dorm at 12:30 p.m.

“It’s just a matter of safety as well, walking in the dark all the way back doesn’t feel the safest,” Bowman said.

Bowman said he contacted Elon Campus Safety and Police to see if he could get his first-year parking pass switched to a Colonnades pass. He called Elon police and asked for alternative solutions.

“I’m leaving campus every single day and I’m doing that walk, and I’m getting back late,” Bowman said. “The lady offered the

Elon shuttle, which does not run by the time I get back.”

The Elon Express now stops at the first-year parking lot, but only runs from Monday to Friday from 7 a.m. to 11 p.m.

Chief of Campus Safety and Police Joe LeMire said that Elon police offer E-rides. Students can call the police department and ask for a ride from the first-year lot back to their dorm, to avoid walking at night.

Like Bowman, freshman Jack Martin said the walk from his dorm to the parking lot takes him 25 minutes.

“It’s like I’m spending probably more time walking to my car than I actually am driving,” Martin said. “So that part is frustrating.”

Martin said that after his club hockey practices, the walk back from the parking lot to his dorm in the East Neighborhood raised concerns for his safety. Martin debated calling a car service back to his dorm. East Neighborhood has its own parking lot, but is unusable to first-year students.

“I’ve certainly seen people that don’t look the friendliest,” Martin said. “Especially at that time of night too — it is a little concerning.”

Martin suggested that students walking back late do not walk alone, or get a bicycle or scooter to get from the lot to their dorms quickly.

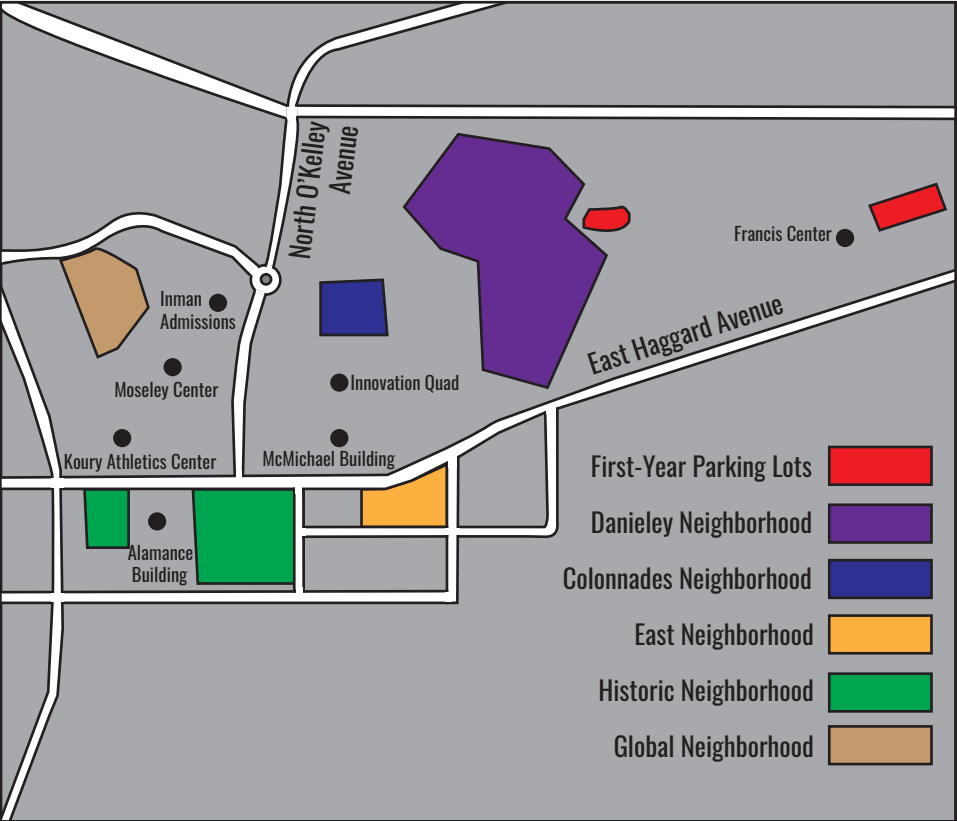


ILLUSTRATION BY MEGAN WALSH

Map of on-campus neighborhoods freshman students often live in. Danieleey — the closest to Gateway parking lot — is about a 0.6 mile walk. Historic Neighborhood is about 1.4 miles away from Gateway, according to walking route estimates from Google Maps.

Cost of college

Elon's total cost of attendance rises to \$68,903 for 2026-27

TUITION | from cover

Currently, Elon's total cost of attendance is \$65,663. Next year, the total cost of attendance will be \$68,903 according to Elon's admissions website.

Dan Bauman, a freelance reporter who covers higher education, said sticker prices — tuition and fees — for many institutions rise every year. He said it's unlikely for institutions to lower tuition.

"At a certain point, it's just reached this sort of like, 'Well, this is just a natural — we've increased it,'" Bauman said.

The last tuition increase — 3.81% for the 2025-26 academic year — went toward faculty and staff pay, as well as student initiatives such as free laundry on campus.

For the 2024-25 academic year, Elon's tuition increased by 4.96%. For 2023-24, Elon had a 5.14% increase in tuition. For 2022-23, Elon's tuition increased by 9%. Previously, tuition had not increased more than 4% for any year since the 2011-12 academic year.

As part of Elon University's Boldly Elon Strategic Plan, Elon's Long Range Planning Committee chose 15 peer institutions that it feels compare with Elon based on criteria such as size, scope and resources. Compared to these peer institutions, Elon's estimated cost of attendance for the current 2026-27 academic year is \$4,283 to \$25,889 less expensive.

However, Elon ranks higher in total cost of attendance for out-of-state, undergraduate students when compared to the other four-year universities in North Carolina. Based on College Tuition Compare's 2025 Most Expensive North Carolina Colleges, Elon ranks fourth in highest cost of attendance for out-of-state students.

Bauman said institutions make themselves as attractive as possible by pairing high costs of tuition with generous scholarship packages to meet a critical

number of students for class. Discount rates are implemented when a college takes in less money than its published tuition rate through scholarships, grants and discounts, according to Higher Ed Data Stories.

"You set the sticker price at whatever you like, right, in order to make it seem like a more, 'Oh, well, you're paying a great deal of money for this, or this is on par with, say, like, what really name brand colleges in the area are,'" Bauman said. "If the sticker price is X, it must mean you're making a very smart investment, right?"

THIS IS ALL PART OF A FINANCIAL AND MARKETING STRATEGY.

DAN BAUMAN
HIGHER EDUCATION REPORTER

According to Elon University's financial audit from the fiscal year ending in May 2024, Elon's total discount rate is about 25%. Meaning, on average, a student's tuition and fees cost about 75% of the listed tuition price.

"This is all part of a financial and marketing strategy," Bauman said. "It really ends up getting into like, 'Well, what is the makeup of your institution, and what are you trying to convey with these numbers?'"

Student Financial Services did not respond to Elon News Network's request for comment.

Elon's Student Government Vice President of Communications Kennedy Steiner declined to comment on the increase.

Sarah T. Moore contributed to the reporting of this story.

Peer Institutions by 2025-26 cost of attendance

Elon University's 15 peer institutions are outlined in the Boldly Elon Strategic Plan. These are schools the long range plan committee feels compare with Elon based on criteria such as size, scope and resources.

Syracuse University (NY)	\$94,792
Fordham University (NY)	\$93,168
Chapman University (CA)	\$91,264
American University (DC)	\$89,658
Southern Methodist University (TX)	\$89,516
Santa Clara University (CA)	\$88,650
Bucknell University (PA)	\$88,136
University of Denver (CO)	\$87,581
Lehigh University (PA)	\$86,100
Furman University (SC)	\$82,258
Gonzaga University (WA)	\$79,798
Marquette University (WI)	\$74,806
William & Mary (VA)	\$73,186
Elon University (NC)	\$65,663
Miami University - Oxford (OH)	\$59,195
Average private, nonprofit*	\$56,628
James Madison University (VA)	\$52,752

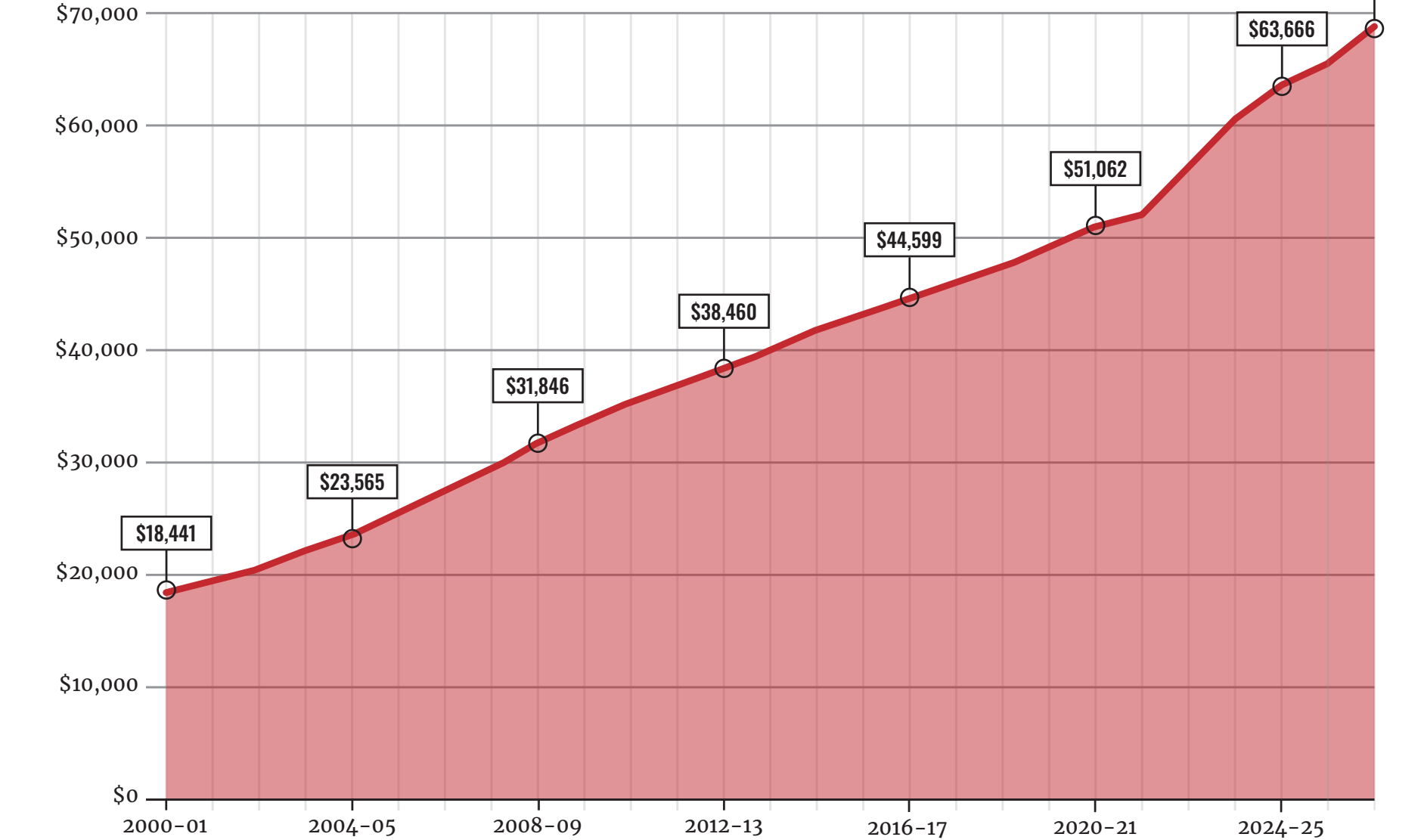
DATA VISUALIZATION BY SARAH T. MOORE

Total cost of attendance estimates for out-of state undergraduate students 2025-26 academic year are from the websites of the respective peer institutions. The Syracuse University total cost of attendance includes health insurance.

*National average cost of attendance per year for 4-year private, nonprofit colleges, according to the Education Data Initiative. The national average for out-of-state students at public colleges is \$45,708

Elon's total cost for undergraduate students has raised 273.64% since 2000

Elon University's combined cost of undergraduate tuition, fees, housing and food — known as the total cost of attendance — from the 2000-01 to 2026-27 academic years.



Elon's total cost of attendance estimates for incoming students, according to Elon University data. Reporter Dan Bauman said inflation is often cited as a reason for tuition increases. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, the cost of Elon's 2000-01 combined tuition, fees, housing and food — \$18,441 — would have the same buying power as \$35,402.13 in December 2025.

DATA VISUALIZATION BY SARAH T. MOORE

City council leads new projects across Graham

Graham’s mayor outlines projects for her ongoing terms

Alice Morrissey
Elon News Network

Now two months into her city council term, Graham’s new mayor Chelsea Dickey has begun leading several projects and initiatives across the city. Dickey was unavailable for an interview but sent a statement to Elon News Network.

“Since my swearing in, my focus has been on listening to and best representing the people of Graham while working toward a more transparent and accessible city government,” Dickey wrote. “I want residents to be able to clearly see, understand, and engage with the work their city is doing.”

Dickey has focused on setting goals for the remainder of her term with support from the council.

In a Facebook post on Jan. 20, she announced the completion of a workshop with fellow council members where they outlined priorities for the upcoming budget cycle. During the workshop the council created their three-year goals including continuing to support parks and recreation initiatives, promoting economic growth in Graham, maintaining infrastructure, improving safety, and strengthening community engagement.

Additional actions discussed during the Jan. 20 workshop included potential funding for construction of a new fire station, funding and initiating revisions to the Unified Development Ordinance, a legally binding document combining zoning, subdivision regulations, and environmental rules into one code to guide land development. They also worked on addressing a backlog of utilities upgrades throughout Graham — including water, sewer and stormwater lines. Dickey said she has also been meeting with economic development partners to better understand and identify needs and opportunities within the community. Dickey also highlighted the installation of rectangular rapid flashing beacons downtown to improve pedestrian safety.

New council members Bobby Chin and Jim Young did not respond to Elon News Network’s requests for comment.

With only two city council meetings held so far under the new administration, the council has already begun working



CHELSEA DICKY



ILLUSTRATION BY ALICE MORRISSEY

Graham’s city council meets once a month at City Hall on 201 South Main Street, Graham, North Carolina.

toward these goals. Items on the Jan. 13 meeting agenda included the Sesquicentennial Park project, a memorial bench in Graham Regional Park and approval of a contract extension for a water replacement project. As of Feb. 1, official minutes from the meetings held under Dickey’s administration have not yet been made public, she has continued to promote transparency through a YouTube initiative launched in 2025, which allows council meetings to be filmed and livestreamed for residents unable to attend in person.

Elon senior Noelle Vaught, who moved frequently as a child, said she considers herself a Graham local after living there for eight years. Vaught said she supports Dickey and voted for her in November because of Dickey’s Democratic affiliation.

Vaught said in her opinion bringing new people into government to create change is beneficial for the community and added that she is optimistic about what the new council will accomplish.

“I’m always happy to see a little bit of a shake up,” said Vaught.

She said that her and her family have been pleased so far with how Dickey has managed the town. Vaught said she is particularly interested in economic development, noting that she and her family enjoy spending time in downtown areas. She said she would like to see

more new businesses in Graham, and for the area to grow with the town. One of the new businesses ushered in under the new administration included Craft Axe Throwing, which recently opened downtown in December. Dickey attended the grand opening and promoted the business in a Facebook post, where she said “it’s the perfect place to catch up with friends.”

With the rough winter weather that swept through North Carolina in the past few days, Graham was put in an official state of emergency on Jan. 23 with threats of icy roads and dangerous conditions. Dickey took to Facebook where she urged Graham citizens to stay safe.

“We’re prepared, we’re working together, and together we’ll get through this. Please continue to look out for your neighbors and your community during this time,” Dickey said in the Facebook post.

Vaught said she believed that actions taken by the city showed they were well prepared for the storm.

“I’d say the city definitely did a good job of keeping the roads clear and safe,” Vaught said, following up with saying her family was able to go out and frequent stores and other locations regardless of the weather conditions.

The next city council meeting will

be 6 p.m. Feb. 10 in city hall and will also be broadcast on the city’s YouTube channel. Dickey told ENN in a written statement that she plans on launching several mayoral advisory committees—including Downtown, Community Safety, Economic Inclusion, and Pastoral Advisory committees, this week, to ensure community voices directly inform decision-making. She said she hopes these will be early steps that “reflect my commitment to collaboration, safety, and building trust between City Hall and the community.”

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Mebane bookstore provides escape for readers

No Bad Books sells women's fiction, fantasy, inclusive books

Miles Hayford
Elon News Network

For just over five months, Mebane resident Taylor Collier has worked to create an inclusive space and community for book lovers inside a small corner in Sweet Grace Market in Mebane. Her new bookstore, No Bad Books, has been open since September selling a variety of books alongside hosting events like book clubs and book release parties.

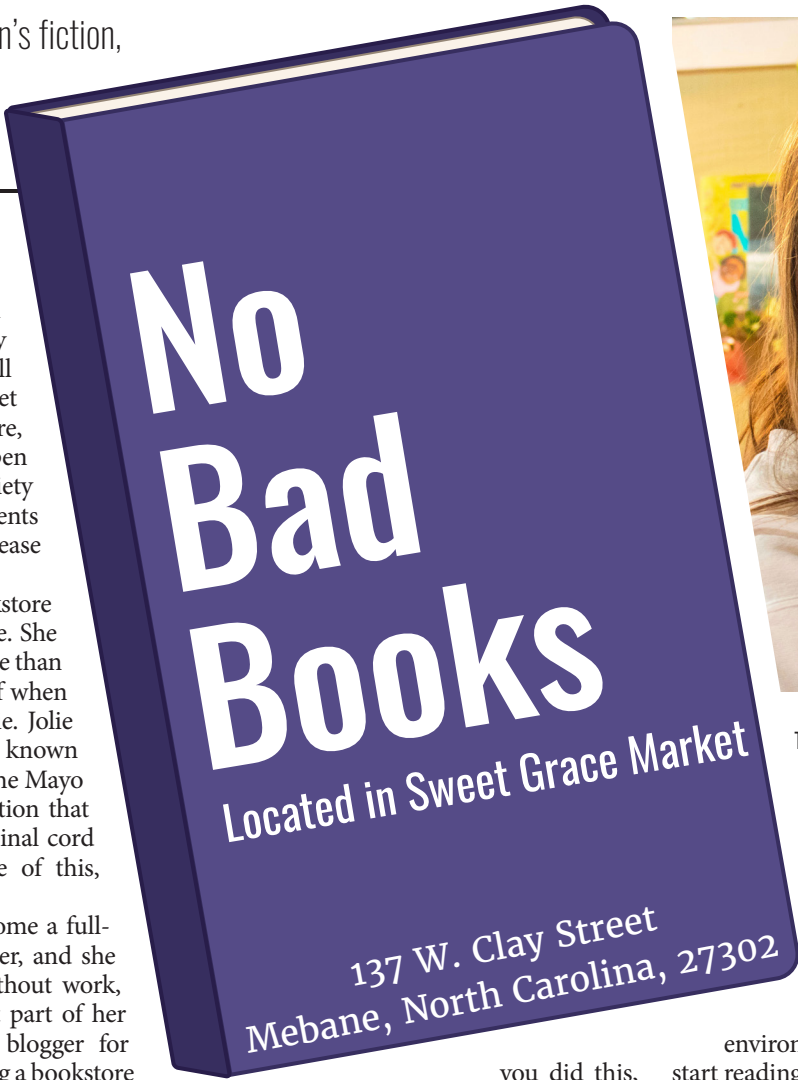
For Collier, owning the bookstore has brought a surge of new life. She treated cancer patients for more than 15 years before taking time off when she had her second child, Jolie. Jolie was born with a birth defect known as spina bifida. According to the Mayo Clinic, spina bifida is a condition that occurs when the spine and spinal cord don't form correctly. Because of this, Jolie uses a walker.

Collier quit her job to become a full-time caregiver for her daughter, and she said she lost her identity. Without work, reading became an important part of her life. Collier, a former book blogger for publishing houses, said opening a bookstore was always something she wanted to do, so she decided to take on the project to find a renewed purpose.

"It's always been my dream to have a bookstore and just share this love of books and reading with other people, specifically, moms, who have kind of lost themselves, and they're trying to find themselves again, and then they find books, and it opens up a whole new world," Collier said.

Alongside selling books, Collier has started a monthly book club inside the bookstore. Collier said that she feels like she has helped build a community in Mebane.

"I've met so many more people just having the book club, and people messaging me and reaching out and saying, 'I'm so glad that



you did this, Mebane needs this, and I'm so appreciative," Collier said.

Collier said the book club is an outlet and something to look forward to for many local moms. For Lindsey House, a stay-at-home mom of three young children, it is a way for her to make connections outside her home life.

"I have three young kids and don't get out a whole lot," House said. "It's just been really nice to have something to get out and go do with other people that's not kid related."

House said that Collier has provided an outlet for her and other book club members to escape and develop friendships.

"She's just creating that third space," House said. "Everyone needs somewhere



MILES HAYFORD | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER
Taylor Collier arranges some fantasy books inside No Bad Books. Fantasy books are one of her major sellers and she has hosted book release parties for certain fantasy books.

you can go outside of your house, where you feel like you can make connections and be with other people."

Collier said she also wants to attract non-readers and create an inviting environment for them to come in and start reading.

Collier sells mostly women's fiction, romance and fantasy, but a big priority in starting No Bad Books was putting an emphasis on inclusive books. She said that her daughter is the only person in her class with a disability, so Collier wants to push inclusive books in her bookstore. One such example is a children's book that lies on the shelves of No Bad Books, which is about a girl who uses a walker.

"If we're going to build a better world and create a more accepting world for our children and people who look different than everybody else, I think it starts with kids," Collier said. "I think that showing them these books and reading them to their kids, they see it in a book, and then it's not as

crazy when they see a kid in the park using a walker."

She said that anytime she sells an inclusive book, it makes her happy.

"It's just one step closer to raising a generation of educated and kind, empathetic people, and that's just so important to me," Collier said. "I want my daughter to live in a world where people don't look at her and see her walker. They see a smart little girl who has a funny personality."

Collier said she wants to keep growing to the point where she can have her own space. She also wants to be able to host authors and book signings. For now, she said she will be patient, growing and nurturing the community she's creating.

"I've lived here for almost 10 years, and I really want to see Mebane grow. We deserve nice, fun things here, and I want to give that. And it's been very rewarding seeing people come in and be like, 'Oh my gosh, this is so cute. I had no idea this was here,'" Collier said. "Maybe I will have enough of support down here that I can open up my own shop. That's my dream."

Comedian Leslie Jones to perform at Elon Day 2026

Tickets are available in Moseley 120

Charlotte Pfabe
Elon News Network

Elon senior Khoreen Johnson already knows where she will be on March 5.

"In the front row is where I plan to be," Johnson said. "One thousand percent with the rest of my friend group. We already talked about it."

She wants to be front and center when comedian and former "Saturday Night Live" cast member Leslie Jones performs as this year's Elon Day comedian.

Elon's Student Union Board announced the selection Feb. 2 in a post on Instagram. Last year, comedian Joe Gatto performed for Elon Day.

Johnson said she didn't expect Elon to choose a comedian she knew, let alone admired for this year's Elon Day.

"It was a complete and total surprise to my entire friend group," Johnson said. "We did not know this was gonna happen. And this was, like, the best surprise, honestly."

In her freshman year, she remembers sitting in the back of the crowd when comedian and former SNL cast member Alex Moffat performed for Elon Day. But this year, she said it means a lot to her that Elon selected a comedian that she can relate to on a more personal level.

"The Black community appreciates this very, very much," Johnson said. "It's important, especially Black women on this campus, since the post dropped, that's all we've been talking about. This matters. And we're very appreciative, even if some people can't show up, even if nobody shows up, like what they did matters. And we're very, very

grateful, and we see them trying to mix and match people into the bigger scene at Elon, and it's very much appreciated."

Jones first joined SNL as a writer in October 2014, partway through the NBC show's 40th season. She quickly became a regular cast member, often appearing alongside Colin Hanks on the show's "Weekend Update" segment. During her time with SNL, Jones earned three Emmy nominations, as well as Writer's Guild Award and NAACP Award nominations. In 2017, she made it to TIME's 100 most influential people list.

While working on SNL, Jones starred in movies such as "Ghostbusters" and "Masterminds," both released in 2016.

Elon junior Brianna Crawford said she watched "Masterminds" a few days before SUB announced the Elon Day comedian. Crawford said she likes Jones because of her bold and unapologetic comedy style.

"I really don't know what to expect, but I do expect to laugh," Crawford said. "So I'm excited. I feel like she's definitely one who's like, gonna ruffle some feathers, but always keep it fun. Always keep it respectful."

Jones finished out her five seasons with SNL in 2019. She then went on to host ABC's reboot of the game show "Supermarket Sweep" for two seasons from 2020-2022.

Jones released her most recent comedy special in October 2025 called "Leslie Jones: Life - Part 2" on Peacock and Prime Video. She released her first comedy special with Netflix called "Leslie Jones: Time Machine in 2020."

Elon senior Femi-John Akinola-Mmanywa said he's thought about trying out stand-up comedy and enjoys Jones's style.

"It's really interesting and very



ETHAN WU | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER
Students line up to attend the SUB Spring Comedian event featuring Joe Gatto on March 6, 2025, outside Koury Center.

entertaining and expressive way. I like how expressive she is with her comedy," Akinola-Mmanywa said.

Jones is currently performing on her comedy tour, "Leslie Jones: Live!"

In 2021, Jones starred in the movie "Coming 2 America," a sequel to the 1988 film "Coming to America," alongside Eddie Murphy, securing an MTV Movie Award and a People's Choice Award nomination.

While Jones has an extensive portfolio, Johnson said what she enjoys most about Jones's work is her openness to publicly speak about mental health, grief, and being proud of who you are and where you come from.

"I like that she takes the opportunity to make it known that she knows that she's not perfect, but she's going to stand for and be

honest with her audience, and that's what I felt was most important and most impactful about her journey, especially towards mainstream media," Johnson said.

Jones's Elon Day performance is at 8:30 p.m. March 5 in the Alumni Gym. Tickets are available starting Feb. 4 in the SUB Office on the first floor of the Moseley Student Center.

Johnson said she plans to be one of the first students to pick up a ticket. As a senior, she said having the chance to see Jones perform will be a great way to round out her Elon experience.

"This goes back to some people's roots, and that's what's important," Johnson said. "It's more than just a day. It's someone's life. And that's what's important for me, for my friends."

Upcoming winter musical tells story of life, love



Senior Helena Padial, middle, rehearses a scene for “Rent” with fellow castmates Jan. 21 in Scott Studios. Padial plays Mimi, a sexworker with AIDS. This is Padial’s second time playing Mimi after portraying her the summer after her sophomore year. Padial said this show has made her last show at Elon a full circle moment. “I’m literally seeing the Elon magic in my own body,” Padial said. “I’m seeing it culminate, because I feel like a completely different performer than I was the first time.”

‘Rent’ will run Feb. 13 to 15 in McCrary Theatre

Karsyn Vann
Elon News Network

Audiences will step into a bohemian lifestyle when the curtain rises in Elon University’s upcoming production of “Rent,” the winter musical of the 2025-26 season.

“Rent” is a rock musical written by Jonathan Larson, chronicling the lives of struggling artists in New York City in the early ’90s during the height of the AIDS epidemic. The show will run in McCrary Theatre from Feb. 13 to Feb. 15.

“Rent,” which opened on Broadway in 1996, is a rock retelling of the Giacomo Puccini opera “La Bohème.” Brent said Puccini’s opera takes place during the tuberculosis pandemic, but to modernize the story, Larson changed the disease to AIDS.

“La Bohème has been around forever, and it’s timeless,” Brent said. “That grand opera story is so powerful and holds up. And when you have that with this new rock sound, it’s the combination of something new and familiar at the same time.”

According to Brent, Larson wrote about what he observed in New York during the AIDS crisis. The characters and experiences they undergo are inspired by his friends and

the people in his East Village community.

Brent said the timelessness of the story has helped “Rent” go down in theater history as one of the classic musicals of the modern era. He said even people who aren’t in the musical theater space know iconic songs such as “Seasons of Love” and “La Vie Bohème.”

“Rent” was also one of the first musicals to showcase people of color and the LGBTQ+ community onstage in leading roles, paving the way for representation in the world of theater. Brent said people across different identities and experiences are highlighted, making the show a celebration of life and love.

“It changed the industry,” Brent said. “It’s a chance for people to play characters that are aligned with their own personal identities, and it’s coming from a place where you’re not having to make something fit.”

The show also celebrates nonconformity, as most of the characters in the show live a bohemian lifestyle, defined by Brent as an unconventional, free-spirited way of living. The characters reject societal norms and instead value authenticity, art and freedom.

“It’s all about living for today,” Brent said. “We all have responsibilities, but that bohemian ideal is very enticing, right?”

Behind the celebrations of love and independence, there are also darker themes of disease, poverty and gentrification.

“It can come off like these kids are just

bratty kids who don’t want to pay their rent, but it’s actually bigger than that,” Brent said. “They’re getting forced out and losing their homes to make way for million-dollar apartments that rich yuppies are going to buy. It’s about fighting for their life, their shelter, for love and fighting for connection.”

No one is fighting for connection more than aspiring filmmaker Mark Cohen, played by senior Andrew France. Mark serves as the narrator of the story, introducing characters and relationships as he’s desperately trying to work on his short film.

France said he admires Mark’s ability to fully invest himself in his work, even if it is unhealthy. France also said him and Mark are similar people who have the same drive and passion.

“He just reminds me to actually do the thing I want to do. Don’t just doomscroll. Don’t just sit around,” France said. “If I say I want to do something, I’ve got to do it. I’ve got to show up for myself.”

France said one of his favorite parts about “Rent” is how developed the characters are and how real they feel. As an actor, he said he appreciates every “nugget” of information, such as how every line is crafted and how everyone’s history is mapped out.

France said the realness and honesty of the characters are what made “Rent” so controversial when it debuted in 1996.

He said it wasn’t common to see out-and-proud gay characters and people with AIDS represented as people and not just stereotypes.

“People who are different from you aren’t these crazy alien monsters,” France said. “We want to show that they are just people living their lives and trying to achieve happiness just like you.”

Sophomore Micah Cabot, who plays aspiring musician Roger Davis, said he hopes this show helps people understand how to be more open and accepting of different identities and perspectives.

“Even if you aren’t fully supportive of the communities represented in this show, when you see it, there’s a way to look at it from a perspective of living as a human being,” Cabot said.

Cabot’s character, Roger, contracted AIDS from his ex-girlfriend and lives each day in fear that if he doesn’t write one great song before he dies, his life will have meant nothing.

“Roger wants to find a true blaze of glory and something that will outlive him,” Cabot said. “It’s ultimately about creating an impact that will last beyond the time when we’re gone, that generations after us can discover and find meaning in.”

“Rent” will run in McCrary Theatre with evening shows at 7:30 p.m. Feb. 13 and 14, as well as matinee shows at 2 p.m. Feb. 14 and 15. Tickets are available on the Elon Performing Arts website.



Cast members of the winter musical “Rent” rehearse a scene in Scott Studios on Jan. 21.



MEGAN WALSH | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER
“Rent” cast members rehearse together in Scott Studios on Jan. 21 for the winter musical opening Feb. 13.

February home games

Thursday, Feb. 5

2 p.m.

Women's Tennis vs. Longwood

Friday, Feb. 6

3 p.m.

Men's Tennis vs. UNC Asheville

Saturday, Feb. 7

Noon

Men's Basketball vs. Drexel

Sunday, Feb. 8

1 p.m.

Women's Basketball vs. William & Mary

Tuesday, Feb. 10

4 p.m.

Softball vs. Charlotte

Thursday, Feb. 12

Noon and 2:30 p.m.

Softball vs. Mount St. Mary's

Friday, Feb. 13

2 p.m.

Women's Tennis vs. Liberty

3 p.m.

Softball vs. Manhattan

4 p.m.

Baseball vs. Delaware

Saturday, Feb. 14

Noon

Softball vs. Dayton

Women's Lacrosse vs. Old Dominion

1 p.m.

Men's Tennis vs. Charlotte

2 p.m.

Baseball vs. Saint Joseph's

Sunday, Feb. 15

Noon

Women's Tennis vs. George Washington

1 p.m.

Baseball vs. Delaware

2:30 p.m.

Softball vs. Dayton

Tuesday, Feb. 17

4 p.m.

Softball vs. Duke

Baseball vs. Presbyterian

Friday, Feb. 20

7 p.m.

Women's Basketball vs. Campbell

Saturday, Feb. 21

1 p.m.

Women's Tennis vs. Gardner-Webb

4:30 p.m.

Women's Tennis vs. Livingstone

7 p.m.

Men's Basketball vs. North Carolina A&T

Sunday, Feb. 22

1 p.m.

Women's Basketball vs. Northeastern

Tuesday, Feb. 24

4 p.m.

Baseball vs. Longwood

Wednesday, Feb. 25

2 p.m.

Women's Tennis vs. North Carolina A&T

4 p.m.

Softball vs. North Carolina

Friday, Feb. 27

3 p.m.

Softball vs. Indiana

4 p.m.

Baseball vs. Fairfield

Men's Tennis vs. Florida Gulf Coast

Saturday, Feb. 28

Noon

Women's Tennis vs. Wofford

2 p.m.

Baseball vs. Fairfield

Home game locations

Basketball

Schar Center

Tennis

Jimmy Powell Tennis Center

Softball

Hunt Softball Park

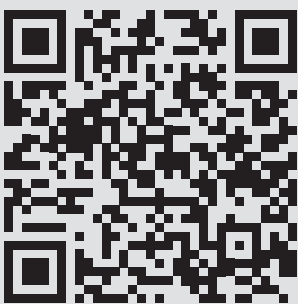
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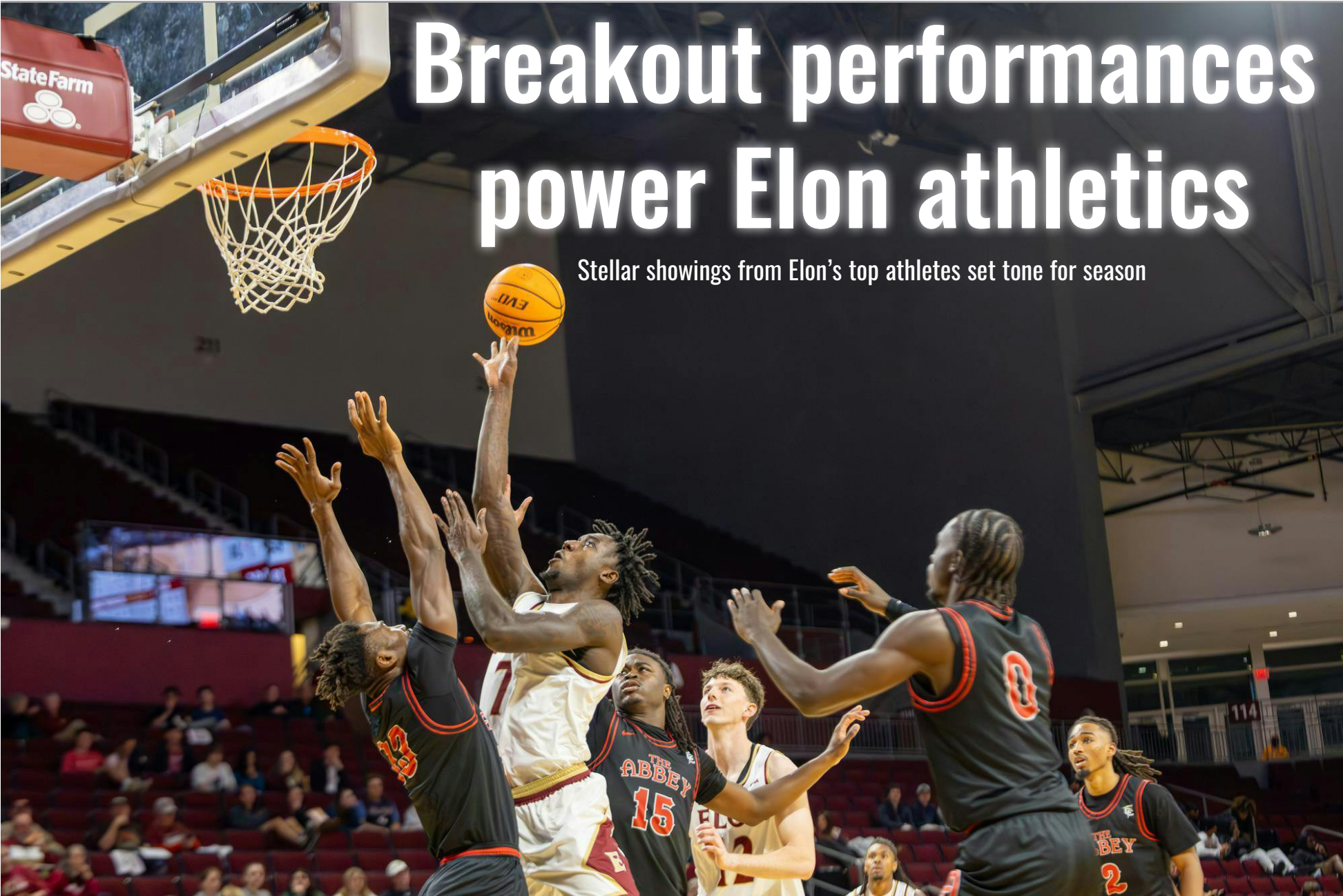
Latham Park

Lacrosse

Rudd Field

**ELON ATHLETICS
TICKETING**





Top scorer of the night, graduate student Chandler Cuthrell, shoots the ball during a game against Belmont Abbey on Nov. 5. Cuthrell scored 21 points.

LILLY MOLINA | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Kathan Gandhi
Elon News Network

Across multiple sports, several Elon athletes are stepping into larger roles and delivering pivotal performances. From breakout scorers on the court to record-setting runs on the track, the Phoenix have found impact players up and down the roster, offering a snapshot of the depth and momentum building across Elon athletics.

In the past two weeks, these four athletes have showcased themselves as predominant parts of their teams and Elon athletics overall.

Freshman guard emerges as key piece for women’s basketball

Freshman Ashanti Fox has wasted no time making her presence known. The 5’7” guard from Vass, North Carolina, was named the Coastal Athletic Association’s Rookie of the Week in back-to-back weeks — quickly establishing herself as one of the Phoenix’s most reliable contributors. Fox scored a career-high 17 points against University of North Carolina, Wilmington, on Jan. 16, showcasing the offensive confidence and poise that have defined her first collegiate season.

Despite coming off the bench, Fox leads Elon in minutes played, a testament to the trust the coaching staff has placed in her. With sophomore Jayda Angel

sidelined due to injury, Fox has stepped into a demanding role as a primary playmaker. Her play has helped stabilize the offense while continuing to produce scoring opportunities for herself and her teammates. Through her first season, Fox is averaging 8.6 points per game, second most by a freshman in the CAA, per ESPN.

What separates Fox is her combination of quickness and shooting touch. She uses shifty ball-handling to create space and is a consistent threat from deep, shooting 35% from 3-point range. As CAA play continues, Fox’s emergence has given Elon a new offensive weapon and a glimpse of a future cornerstone for the program.

No. 7’s breakout season fuels men’s basketball offense

Graduate student Chandler Cuthrell has transformed Elon men’s basketball almost overnight. After transferring from Purdue University Fort Wayne prior to the 2025–26 season, the 6’8” forward arrived with modest career numbers, having averaged just 6.1 points per game before joining the Phoenix. Now, he’s become the centerpiece of Elon’s offense, leading the team with 21 points per game, the third-highest average in the CAA for men’s basketball.

Cuthrell’s impact is most obvious in the paint. He thrives when attacking the basket, using his length and strength to muscle past defenders and finish through

contact. Even when he’s not scoring, his physical presence strains opposing defenses. That pressure shows up in the statistics sheet at the free-throw line, where Cuthrell attempts an average of 7.8 free throws per game, ranking 14th in all of Division I, according to ESPN.

The Phoenix now have a go-to scorer who can control tempo, absorb contact and keep the offense afloat during scoring droughts. As conference play intensifies, Cuthrell’s consistency and physicality will remain central to Elon’s hopes of climbing CAA standings.

Statement win signals big season for men’s tennis sophomore

After earning All-CAA First Team singles honors in 2025, sophomore Rafael Ymer opened his 2026 spring season with a statement win, defeating No. 73-ranked Alexander Frusina of Texas A&M 6–4, 6–4. The performance earned him CAA Men’s Tennis Player of the Week honors and reaffirmed his status as one of the conference’s top competitors.

Originally from Stockholm, Sweden, Ymer brings an aggressive style built on power and precision. Rather than engaging in long, grinding rallies, he looks to dictate points early — using pace and placement to overwhelm opponents. He’s quickly becoming one of the pillars of Elon’s men’s tennis.

Now in his second season with the Phoenix, Ymer is no longer just a breakout talent, he’s a leader at the top of the lineup. As the spring season continues, Ymer’s performances will likely play a major role in determining how far the Phoenix can climb within the CAA and beyond.

Atlanta native resets Elon’s cross country record books

At the Liberty Open, redshirt junior Katie Blount won the 3,000 meters in record-setting fashion. She crossed the line in 9:18.51. It’s the fastest time in Elon’s history and crushes the previous record by more than six seconds. This performance is the latest milestone in what has already been a historic Elon career.

The Atlanta native has been a cornerstone of Elon’s distance programs, most notably during the 2025 cross country season, when she helped lead the Phoenix to a CAA championship and earned CAA Women’s Cross Country Runner of the Year honors. That same year, Blount broke Elon’s women’s records in both the 5K and 6K and placed first at the CAA Championships with the second-best time in conference history.

Blount’s success is defined by consistency as much as speed. As the indoor and outdoor seasons continue, her performances will continue to redefine what’s possible for the program.

Ashanti Fox



Chandler Cuthrell



Rafael Ymer



Katie Blount



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