

THURSDAY, JUNE 27, 2024
ELON, NORTH CAROLINA

TO MASK OR NOT TO MASK

Controversial masking bill returns to North Carolina legislature after veto

Griffin Larson-Erf, Fatima Nadeem & Carter Frank
EJP.NEWS

Gov. Roy Cooper vetoed House Bill 237, which placed regulations on masks, limited protester conduct and changed campaign donation law.

HB237, a sweeping and wide-ranging piece of legislation, stirred controversy in North Carolina with its proposed consequences for wearing masks in public and obstructing traffic during protests, as well as its loosening of rules regarding funding for political campaigns. The bill originally emerged in response to a recent increase in protests on college campuses.

On June 22, Cooper vetoed it, saying in a statement that the legislation, “removes protections and threatens criminal charges for people who want to protect their health by wearing a mask.”

But in a post on X, North Carolina Speaker of the House Tim Moore, a Republican representing Cleveland and Rutherford counties, said the North Carolina House of Representatives, where Republicans hold a super majority, would overturn the governor’s veto.

Other opponents of the bill — including North Carolina House Democrats, the ACLU of North Carolina and the NAACP North Carolina State Conference — have said that it removes a safeguard for many people’s health, especially those with weakened immune systems.

Proponents of the bill, on the other hand, argue that safety-concerned citizens have nothing to fear. The bill does allow



FATIMA NADEEM | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Opponents of HB237 fear the involvement of law enforcement because of the regulations detailed in the bill about wearing masks during protests.

masks “for the purpose of preventing the spread of contagious disease,” as long as they are “medical or surgical grade.”

“We’re trying to find a way to ensure public safety, to protect law-abiding citizens from criminals who would shield their identity and at the same time, protect someone who wants to protect their health,” Moore said in an interview with ABC 11.

But officials from North Carolina’s Department of Health and Human Services voiced concerns about the bill’s possible impacts on public safety. The department said to lawmakers that, as it stands, the bill could make those who require masks more reluctant to use them and more likely to be harassed. Republican State Sen. Buck Newton, who represents Greene, Wayne and Wilson counties and who presented

the bill, told other Senate members that he trusts law enforcement to use “common sense” when checking individuals wearing masks, he said when presenting the bill. A recent amendment to the bill allows masks for health purposes.

But not everyone agreed.

See MASKS | pg. 5

Oak House set to celebrate 10-year anniversary

Business owner Phil Smith prepares for milestone events in the fall semester

Emma Perman, Isabelle Anderson & Jumana Alsaadoon
EJP.NEWS

The Oak House, a craft beer, wine and coffee house in Elon, will celebrate 10 years as a business this fall with gratitude and festive celebrations.

“What we’re celebrating is how good this has been for everybody, not just us,” said Phil Smith, the founder and owner. “I just really want to thank everybody that made this happen, from the university to our founding staff, the people through the years that have helped us do better and the customers that come in here every single day.”

The celebrations will kick off Sept. 5, with a full day of activities dedicated to appreciating the community for its support over the past decade. The anniversary will feature live music and birthday cake, and for former staff members, a chance to reflect on the past.

“I was actually the first ever employee

of the house,” said Peter Walpole, a former employee. “Phil was my boss, I was the student worker.”

The two met when Smith taught an entrepreneurship class at Elon University when Walpole was a sophomore. After Smith decided to change his career from higher education to opening The Oak House, Walpole followed suit in working at the location.

“I would wear my work shirt under my regular clothes to class every day, just in case they did need an extra set of hands, in case I got called in,” Walpole said.

Despite not working there anymore, Walpole continues to see the restaurant’s impact on the community.

“The Oak House is a rare establishment that represents something that’s sort of a resource and something that the town can be proud of, the school can be proud of and is for everyone,” Walpole said.

Smith highlighted the camaraderie that has defined the Oak House’s success.

“We approach it as a team, not just employees but part of a team,” Smith said. “Ten years of good customers, 10 years of phenomenal staff, 10 years of community support. I just really want it to be about thanking them.”



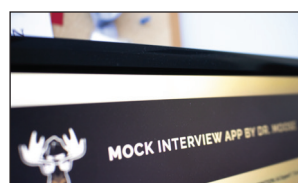
ISABELLE ANDERSON | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

An Oak House employee pours milk into a container to prepare an order for a customer.



Elon student details experience interning at animal hospital

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New director of AI integration strives to use AI ethically

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Sensorized fur used to create robotic service animals

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RESHAPING FAITH



TRACI BETHEA | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Colored doors with different religious icons line the yard outside of Elon Community Church. Gen Z's relationship with faith is changing, according to student research at Elon.

Outside factors, such as social media, societal change and family dynamics, influence Gen Z's take on religion

**Traci Bethea
& Manuela Roncancio-Roldan**
EJP.NEWS

Kiara Cronin, a rising senior majoring in human service studies at Elon University, led and conducted a two-year research project about Gen Z's connection to religion. Cronin said her relationship with the Catholic faith and growing up in a religious household strengthened her beliefs.

"I think the values of the church have shaped who I am as a person," Cronin said.

Especially during the pandemic, Cronin expressed how social media helped encourage her faith. She said the outlets have created communities that can share the same identities or values. Specifically, TikTok served as an outlet to continue expressing and sharing her faith in the time of quarantine.

"It was something to hold onto, especially when I couldn't be with other people," Cronin said.

She said social media is aiding in the deconstruction of traditional faith practices, while welcoming in new ways Gen Z can exercise their faith.

For example, she said online services offer the generation the space to continue exploring their religion virtually as they may feel uncomfortable going to traditional events with past generations, who may not understand their values.

"For those who wish to hold on to their faith they're able to find communities that better represent how they view their own faith," Cronin said.

She said members of Generation Z value authenticity and honor their own identities when choosing to affiliate with a religious practice.

"We don't like to go to institutions that don't align with our values or make us feel

included or seen," Cronin said.

Yet Kirstin Boswell, Elon University's chaplain and dean of multifaith engagement, said, "Our morals, our ethics, our way of being in relationship to each other and to the earth...are all things that rise above religious boundaries."

Cronin said vast access to news and media enable members of Gen Z to discern for themselves what their values are and then find alternative ways of practicing faith that better align with their values.

"We may not like certain things that the institution stands for, so we are not going to follow that because that is not authentic to who we are," Cronin said.

Boswell, though, added that the institutionalized ideals affect Gen Z's approach to religion, further highlighting their authenticity.

"I know many people who profess to be Christian but fully understand Christianity's harmful history of colonialism and supporting slavery and the enslavement of peoples and all sorts of terrible things, but yet find their Christian tradition to be meaningful to them," Boswell said.

A survey from the American National Family Life Association found that 34% of Generation Z, born between 1997 and 2012, are unaffiliated, which is 16% more compared to Baby Boomers, who were born between 1946 and 1964.

Cronin explained how past laws have stemmed from Anglo-Saxon, Christian views and that because of Gen Z's understanding of diversity in society, they are looking to attempt to separate church and state more.

In terms of religious participation, Cronin said many in the generation are identifying as spiritual and believe in something but it is not necessarily tied to a religious group.

"We do care about the metaphysical aspect of religion/spirituality, but we don't necessarily agree with the history of certain institutions," said Cronin. "But we want to believe there is a higher power in some sort."

Cronin and Boswell agree that Gen Z is evolving the face of religion progressively.

"Just in my lifetime, I've seen congrega-



MANUELA RONCANCIO-ROLDAN | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Elon Community Church is a popular religious venue for the local community.

tions that have moved from not accepting female leadership to having more and more women in pulpits," Boswell said. "There's still a long way to go."

But they both believe that Gen Z adjusted or adapted religion in a way more suitable for the current society.

"Adjustment does not necessarily mean altering, but recognizing that the way people gather in community and talk about it is

changing," Cronin said.

Cronin said exposure to a diversity of identities, religions and spiritual practices may encourage members of Generation Z to not feel restrained to one thing or another, which can result in being in the middle with being more accepting of others' choices.

"You have to go through some sort of questioning or deconstruction in order to construct," Cronin said.

'A friend, a confidant, a mentor'

New archive collection at Elon's library reflects on Chaplain Bill Sharpe's legacy

Alana Caldwell
& Adelaide Kuzma
EJP.NEWS

The Rev. Bill Sharpe found his home in helping others. Sprawled through his life, including his time as Elon University's first chaplain and counselor, is a constellation of those he inspired and the works he created. Sharpe died in January 2020 of cancer.

Elon University created an archive of his collections in May of 2024 that include pieces of memorabilia he collected over the years such as photographs of staff members, letters, playbills and newspaper clippings.

"My dad, he was a big collector of things," said his daughter Jan Register, who donated the archival materials.

The collection itself was assembled by an archival student, Jasper Meyers '24.

"I have nothing but gratitude to Jan and her family for allowing me to handle these documents and process them," Jasper said.

Register, the administrative assistant for the Truitt Center for



ALANA CALDWELL | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

The late chaplain's archive is filled with photos and memories.

Religious and Spiritual Life, said in all aspects her father was a revered man, who students and faculty came to for advice. She described him as "a friend, a confidant, a mentor" to faculty and students.

Anna Bennett, Sharpe's granddaughter, called him her childhood hero and described him as an avid lover of stories, learning from others and telling his own. Bennett recalled the stories she and her cousins listened to growing up.

"Ever since we were kids, when all the cousins would get together he would tell us all kinds of different stories," Bennett said.

During his life, he was an actor

and wrote many plans for plays. In the archive are notes on the plays, as well as a playbill for the one performed. In the last year of his life, Bennett produced several of his written works into one play called "The Inside Out." There were four separate skits within the play that explored themes of connection, human conflict, conformity and, most central, the importance of youths' minds in creation of a better world.

Register said her father's impact on the community was far-reaching.

"He was like my hero. I would say he was my strongest mentor," Register said.

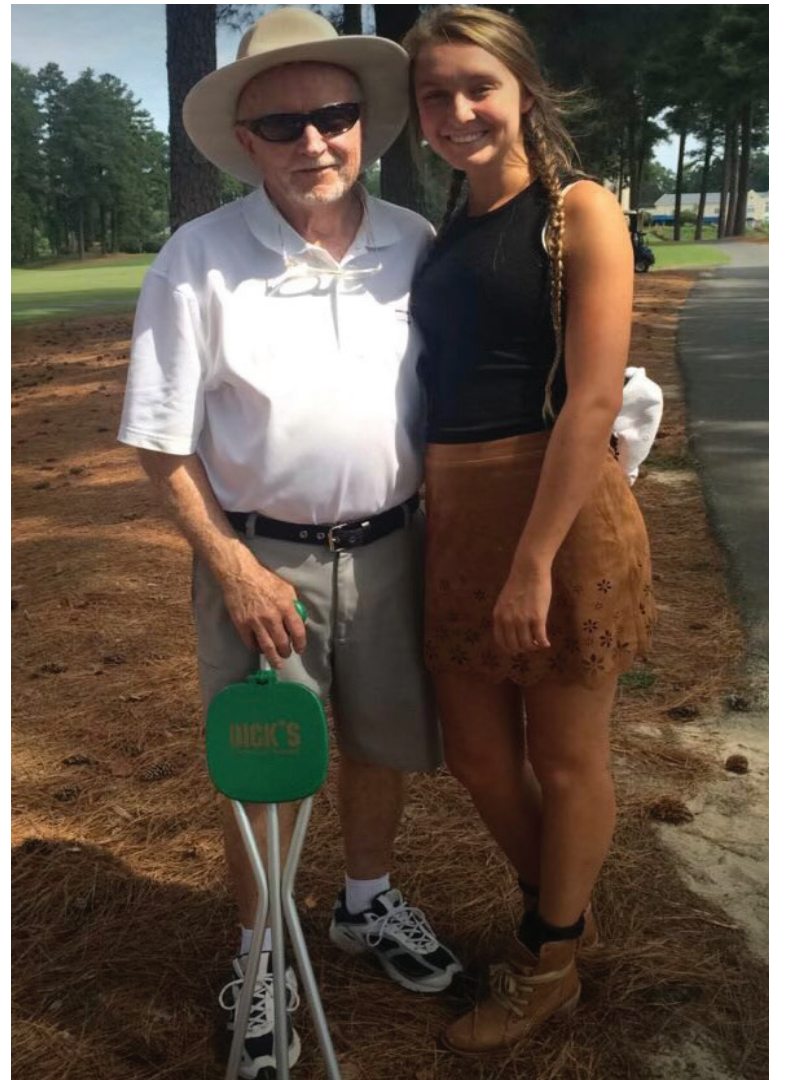
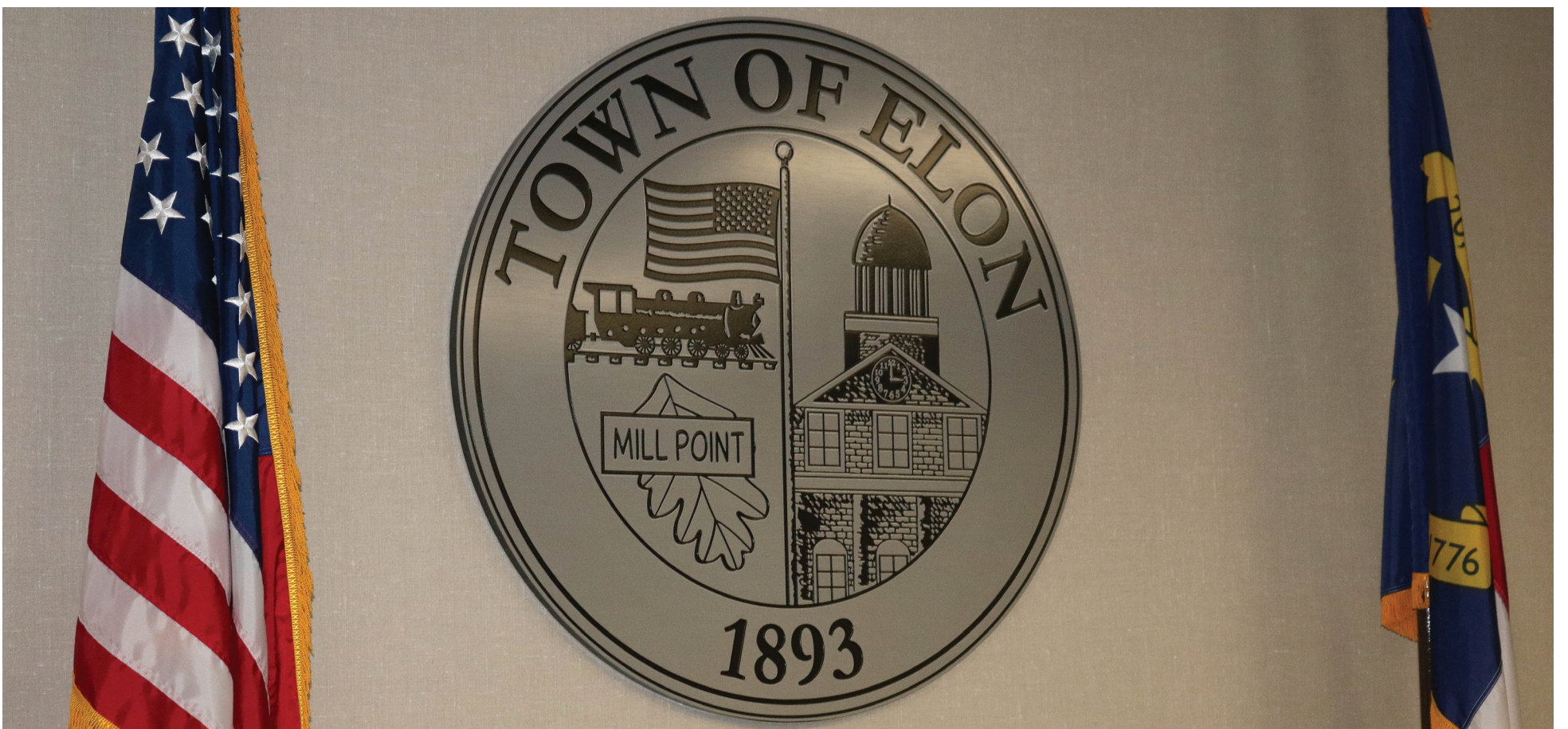


PHOTO COURTESY OF ANNA BENNETT

Former Elon University Chaplain Bill Sharpe, with his granddaughter, Anna Bennett, was the school's first-ever full-time chaplain.

Interning Elon senior pushes for community engagement



STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Elon University student Kai Whiteside is interning with the town of Elon this summer. He felt compelled to work in local government after he successfully lobbied for a skate park in the town.

Arti Jain
EJP.NEWS

An internship for the town of Elon may not be the most obvious choice for Elon University senior Kai Whiteside, who is pursuing an English major with a focus in creative writing.

But that's exactly what he's doing this summer.

Elon town manager Richard Roedner said he hosts interns to give them the opportunity to comprehend local politics, as well as connect with students himself.

"I hope to share what some of

the concerns or the community concerns or community obstacles are out there for students as they leave campus and move into the community," Roedner said. "That kind of dialogue is invaluable and I think we need to have a lot more of that."

Whiteside pursued the internship opportunity because of his previous experience with the town of Elon. In 2022, Whiteside and a group of Elon University students went before the town council to petition for the creation of a skate park. Since, they've received preliminary funding and hope to open

the park in 2026.

Whiteside said the community he found while skating was fundamental to the park's creation.

"I've played different sports, I've done different things, but I've not found that same kind of feeling and involvement outside of skateboarding," Whiteside said. "I'm trying to kind of take the energy within skateboarding and skate parks and push it outside into the world because I think it's something everybody could benefit from."

This same aspect of community building is fundamental in Whiteside's internship projects. He's espe-

cially hoping to implement Instagram takeovers, meant to highlight civil service officers, in the town's Instagram account.

"I think that will create some kind of foundational root within Elon," Whiteside said.

Roedner said he appreciates Whiteside's drive toward community engagement because it's a critical aspect of local government.

"It's an ever-evolving mechanism and we're always a day late and a dollar short," Roedner said. "That's something we're always continually striving for"

Whiteside said he enjoys imple-

menting community engagement aspects into local government because of the large role it plays in citizens' lives.

"Tomorrow, I can't run for the Senate or do any major change in America," Whiteside said. "But I can start somewhere small, and that's Elon. I can try and push for a skate park, or I can try and push for better sidewalks. These ideas end up amounting to something ginormous because it ends up inviting other people to jump into the same cause, and I think more hands and more minds are better than the one."

All That Jas owner reflects on boutique's opportunities

Dayvey Gordon, Arihant Nuka
& Andrew Hancock
EJP.NEWS

In August 2022, Caitlin Brooks left behind a career in criminal law to buy All That Jas, a small boutique in Elon, to devote more time to her family and her hometown community.

The business was born in 2003 as Jump

and Shout and sold dance and cheer apparel, which has transformed to now sell customizable Elon University merchandise and accessories.

Brooks bought All That Jas because she decided to move back to the community where she was raised. She had no retail background, so she had to learn how to own a small business in a small town.

One of the main obstacles she encountered

was the summer when business slowed down because Elon University students left campus.

"We don't re-open our inventory during the summer," Brooks said. "We're kind of slim usually and then we stock back up in August."

Brooks and her staff instead use this time to work on the shop's website and pay attention to what needs to be restocked.

One way Brooks tries to separate her company from competition is by fostering a personal connection with her customers and employees. Small businesses such as All That Jas rely on community engagement and customer service.

"I'd love nothing more than to have the ability to be able to make the donations, but we would love for you to buy your shirts from us," Brooks said. "We have to have community support to be able to do that."

Still, Brooks said she and her staff value feedback from customers, and they continue to improve the store by making sure employees confer with customers to ensure their satisfaction.

Although customers often turn to the quick and easy process of an Amazon purchase, they don't realize the strain this places on small businesses.

And that financial strain is another obstacle Brooks must constantly avoid. With costs such as rent and utilities staying the same regardless of sales fluctuations, Brooks



ARIHANT NUKA | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Custom Elon designed clothing hangs neatly for sale at All That Jas on North Williamson Avenue. The store also sells sorority merchandise including apparel and accessories.



ANDREW HANCOCK | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

All that Jas is located on North Williamson Avenue right across the street from Elon University.

has to be strategic with her financial planning. Brooks said she gives her staff time off over the summer when business is slow, restocks minimally, and lessens the shop's operational hours.

But when business is booming, Brooks' challenge is balancing her business with her personal life. Being a mother of two young children, she cherishes the flexibility of operating her own business. Such balance allows her to be present with her children while dedicating the necessary time needed to manage All that Jas.

"One of the reasons I took this job and shifted from practicing criminal law is I wanted to be able to pick my kids up from school a couple of days a week," she said.

Brooks does sometimes have to work long hours, and late nights are common, but her ability to have her schedule allows her to be a mom.

"The rough days are really hard because it all falls on you, but just keep going and know that tomorrow is going to be a better day, and it will," she said. "It just comes in waves."

Future veterinarians experience the benefits of internships



ISABELLE ANDERSON | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Toasty the corgi waits for pick up in a kennel after a checkup.



ISABELLE ANDERSON | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

A veterinarian wraps a dog's injured leg.

Vet hospital partners with Campus Alamance internship program for second year

Isabelle Anderson, Katelyn Ranheim
& Jumana Alsaadoon
EJP.NEWS

The Campus Alamance internship program welcomed another set of interns for eight weeks this summer. The Elon Oaks Veterinary partnership helps the interns build community and learn more about the veterinary career path.

Elon student Benjamin Munoz is gaining experience through this internship that he said will benefit his future career goals.

"I definitely want to be a vet when I'm older. This is a good start to get my foot in the door. It's definitely nice that the doctors are so good at explaining stuff because I'm learning so much just by watching surgery," Munoz said.

According to the National Association of Colleges and Employers research, ap-

proximately 70% of employers offer their interns full-time jobs, and for Munoz, building this professional network through the internship is an appreciated bonus.

"I hope to work here in the future. And I'm getting to know my co-workers very well too," Munoz said. "It'd be like, a nice connection like this is a great way to make my professional connections and what I try to do in the future."

The Campus Alamance program gives students the opportunity to apply skills that they have gained at Elon and work with the community through various community partners.

The Alamance internship spans for eight weeks, providing a unique set of benefits and drawbacks for those in the program.

"There's a lot to learn in a small amount of time," Munoz said. "Especially working in a clinic, there's so much stuff that you have to pick up on."



THERE'S A LOT TO LEARN IN A SMALL AMOUNT OF TIME.

BENJAMIN MUNOZ
VETERINARY INTERN

Munoz also discussed the importance of a hands-on experience in an internship.

"I don't like really sitting around doing nothing," Munoz said. "So it's nice because I get to go from appointment to appointment, shadow doctors, see surgery and learn a lot of things at the same time."

Practice manager and registered veterinary technician Allison Hall helps structure the eight weeks for the Elon students with tasks the students need to fulfill in order to learn the basics of veterinary medicine.

"It's getting some of that basic knowledge about how to handle the animals kind of how the workflow and a general practice veterinarian works," Hall said.

The Elon Oaks Veterinary also held internship programs outside of The Campus Alamance program, allowing even more students to work directly with the veterinary hospital.

A previous Elon University student, Claire Hess, interned at the Elon Oaks Veterinary Hospital for three months before pursuing vet school.

"It was really fun, I started on the mornings, so I would see the surgeries, which was really interesting to me because not a lot of people get to know exactly what goes on when their pets go in for, like a standard procedure and stuff," Hess said.

The opportunity to participate in this internship allowed Hess to take part in emergency cases and eventually influenced her to pursue an appointment-based position.

Being hands-on throughout the internship pushed Hess to pursue veterinary school. She will be going to Harcum College in Pennsylvania to get a veterinary technical degree.

Munoz is hoping to benefit in many ways after he is finished with the eight-week internship period.

"I'm learning how to apply those things that I learned in class in a real life setting," Munoz said. "So it was going to help me in the future as well."

Governor vetoes controversial masking bill

MASKS | from pg. 1

"I voted against this bill because it wasn't just a mask, it was the fact that you're trying to silence our voices," said Rep. Renée Price during a press conference regarding the bill. She also said that the bill will affect the younger generations the most. Price, a Democrat, represents the counties of Caswell and Orange.

In Price's estimation, HB 237 would pose a significant danger to the flow of money into the state, if adopted.

"I even got emails from people from outside of North Carolina saying that they were going to boycott North Carolina because of this law, which therefore would have meant detriment to our economy because we rely on tourism," Price said.

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I VOTED AGAINST THIS BILL BECAUSE IT WASN'T JUST A MASK. IT WAS THE FACT THAT YOU'RE TRYING TO SILENCE OUR VOICES.

REP. RENÉE PRICE
NC HOUSE REPRESENTATIVE

"They have young people that are concerned and expressing your views and older people that are trying to quash your voice. That is a problem."



GRIFFIN LARSON-ERF | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Rep. Renée Price speaks at a press conference about HB 237 and her concerns about its possible implications.

Meanwhile, a college student protester who requested anonymity due to fear of retaliation said the bill is "a violation of freedom of speech, as it removes the ability for citizens of the United States to freely express themselves in their own country."

Specifically, HB 237 mandates fines or potential imprisonment for people who block the passage of cars on a public road in the course of a protest or for hampering an emergency vehicle.

"As college students, it is not a crime to

want to protect one's quality of life and future," the student protester said.

An additional section of the bill affects campaign finance laws by weakening restrictions on political contributions, allowing unlimited donations and the possibility of anonymous donors.

Republicans said the provision is in response to past legislation that allegedly allowed Democrats to raise more money than them, and that these new provisions only create balance, according to the John Locke

Foundation.

But Cooper didn't see it that way.

"This legislation creates a gaping loophole for secret, unlimited campaign money," he said in his veto statement. "While voters are kept in the dark, this scheme allows anonymous out-of-state billionaires to flood North Carolina with campaign contributions to rescue extreme right-wing candidates that Republicans now fear will lose."

Greensboro civil rights museum's impact hopes to inspire global recognition

Jumana Alsaadoon, Arti Jain & Fatima Nadeem

EJP.NEWS

Alternating blue and orange stools sit in an L-shaped formation, facing a collaged wall of newspaper clippings, menu items and kitchen sinks. This diner set-up is the cornerstone of the International Civil

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THAT'S WHY THIS MUSEUM IS SO IMPORTANT. IT IS HERE TO REMIND US OF WHERE WE COME FROM, WHERE WE'RE GOING, AND WE HAVE TO KEEP TELLING THE STORY.

JEANNE DULIN
MUSEUM DOCENT

Rights Center & Museum (ICRCM), which houses artifacts and replicas from the F.W. Woolworth Building, the site of the Greensboro sit-in protests.

Immersed in history, visitors learn about the struggle, setbacks and successes of the Civil Rights movement through guided tours featuring archival footage, popular freedom hymns and memorial sites. William Harris, the museum's principal scholar, said he appreciates that the ICRCM hones in on contributions of female activists in the Greensboro sit-in, as he believes that many civil rights museums overlook the impact of women from Bennett College and other HBCU institutions.

Museum visitors Susan Meadors and Martha Hutson said that this emphasis largely impacted their decision to tour the ICRCM.

"I liked hearing about the women of the movement," Hutson said. "These kinds of places that educate and take us back to those experiences and the courage of those folks, it's really important."

Originally from Mississippi, the women were also drawn to the ICRCM because of its commemoration of Fannie Lou Hammer, a civil rights activist from their hometown who, they said, is a "mother of the movement."

They also said they valued the museum's efforts to tell a story that not only reflects on the past but inspires the future. Dillon Tyler, tour coordinator of the ICRCM, noted a specific instance when students from Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Florida arrived to see the museum as part of their nationwide tour to advocate for gun safety after losing 17 of their peers in a school shooting.

Tyler offered to lead the tour and revealed that he was a victim of a school shooting himself. He said that he hopes to inspire students to fight for change.

"I don't think there was a dry eye in the room by the end of it," Tyler said. "It was such a powerful moment. In fact, one of the students just came up and gave me a hug afterward."

Jeanne Dulin, one of ICRCM's many docents, said the museum represents an important landmark in the fight for civil rights.

"The museum means to me how important it is for us to continue the struggle because we're not there yet," Dulin said. "That's why this museum is so important. It is

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THESE KINDS OF PLACES THAT EDUCATE US AND TAKE US BACK TO THOSE EXPERIENCES AND THE COURAGE OF THOSE FOLKS, IT'S REALLY IMPORTANT.

MARTHA HUTSON
MUSEUM VISITOR

here to remind us of where we've come from, where we're going, and we have to keep telling the story."

Harris said that the museum hopes to

continue expanding its reach, specifically through the distinction of a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

"We feel very confident that we're in good shape for that," Harris said. "We've spent years, four years, preparing for that nomination and for its consideration. We went through two phases of consideration for that. It's quite extensive, quite rigorous, and we're very happy we succeeded."

The designation is important to the ICRCM, Harris said, because of what it means to be a UNESCO World Heritage Site: an area considered of "outstanding universal value to humanity," according to the UNESCO World Heritage Centre.

"Our goal there is to come to terms with our name, which is 'international,' and to deal with civil rights matters and human rights matters across the world, and to come up with ideas that are relevant beyond the United States," Harris said.



FATIMA NADEEM | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

The front of the ICRCM stays true to history by maintaining the design of F.W. Woolworth's Co., the location of the Greensboro sit-ins.

University expert explains the nature of integrating AI

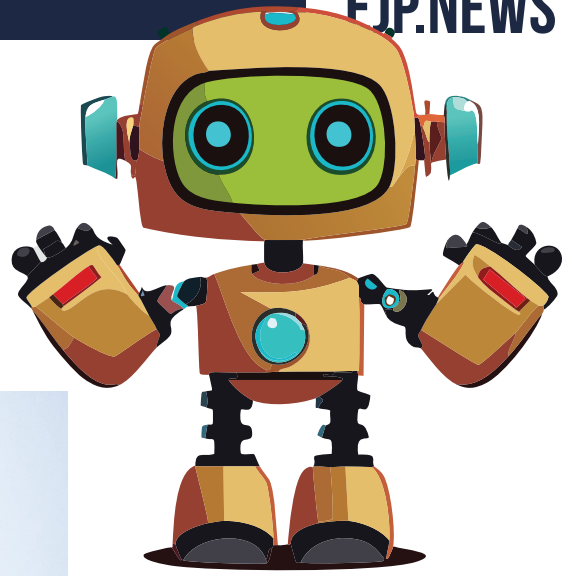


IMAGE CREATED USING GENERATIVE ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE IN ADOBE ILLUSTRATOR



LILY MOSBACHER | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Mock Interview App by Dr. Moose is an AI platform created by assistant professor Mustafa Akben for his students.

Lily Mosbacher, Griffin Larson-Erf & Adelaide Kuzma

EJP.NEWS

Mustafa Akben, assistant professor of management and newly-appointed director of AI integration at Elon University, is keenly aware of the ever-changing nature of artificial intelligence. And it's because of the technology that he has found new ways to incorporate AI into his classroom.

As the New York Times reported, most of the newfound hype around AI comes in the wake of OpenAI's 2022 mass release of ChatGPT, which garnered far greater public attention than previous chatbot and AI releases.

The platform marks the latest in a long line of attempts at enabling computers to think like humans — a process that, according to The Independent, began all the way back in 1956, when computer scientist John McCarthy convened a gathering of intellectuals at Dartmouth

THE BIRTH OF AI

University to study the possibility. It was McCarthy who first developed the name "artificial intelligence."

AI began in 1956, when computer scientist John McCarthy convened a gathering of intellectuals at Dartmouth University to study the possibility of machine intelligence.

And AI has become increasingly enticing to universities nationwide: Akben noted Arizona State's recent contract with OpenAI to provide a new format of ChatGPT, specific to the institution.

Akben strives to integrate AI as ethically and as often as possible in his own classrooms. In order to do this, he has developed chatbots for his students to use. One of the chatbots is called Mock Interview App by Dr. Moose, which helps students find their strengths and weaknesses in a job interview simulation.

Preserving one's voice can be incredibly empowering to people who have degenerative conditions affecting their speaking ability. People record themselves talking. They then place the recordings in a database for the communication device to replicate.

Health to create improved, AI-formulated cancer screening plans. Furthermore, "Voice Banking," a new AI-assisted health technology, helps people with degenerative conditions that affect their vocal capabilities' aptitude for various job positions.

One assignment Akben gives to his students: design their own chatbot. "It's much more engaging, better way to present the theories and textbook content," Akben said.

But Akben does not ignore the flaws that the general public often fixates on. Many AI devices are "generating a content very realistic but full of biases," Akben said. "So, there are a couple of things that need to be done, and whatever application you are using, you need to be aware of the limitations of these systems."

AI's recent progress has not gone uncontested. Akben said people who work in creative fields have taken issue, in particular, with the way that AI can mimic the patterns of their work. Such grievances, according to the Associated Press, have even taken the form of a lawsuit against OpenAI filed in 2023 by author Paul Tremblay, comedian Sarah Silverman and others that alleges that ChatGPT has violated the copyright on their work in order to produce its content.

VOICE BANKING

"There are definitely dangers," said Chris Hall, a colorist at Trailblazer Studios. On the other hand, he added, "the people who will be able to use AI, and use it to make themselves more productive, more creative, than the next person, will be the ones who prosper."

Artificial intelligence has seen several positive uses, as well. According to The Wall Street Journal, OpenAI recently partnered with healthcare organization Color Health to create improved, AI-formulated cancer screening plans. Furthermore, "Voice Banking," a new AI-assisted health technology, helps people with degenerative conditions that affect their vocal capabilities.

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I BELIEVE ONE OF THE PROMISING APPLICATIONS OF THIS TECHNOLOGY MIGHT BE A CLIMATE CHANGE BECAUSE IT'S A VERY IMPORTANT IMPENDING DISASTER THAT WE ARE HEADING TOWARDS AT 100% SPEED.

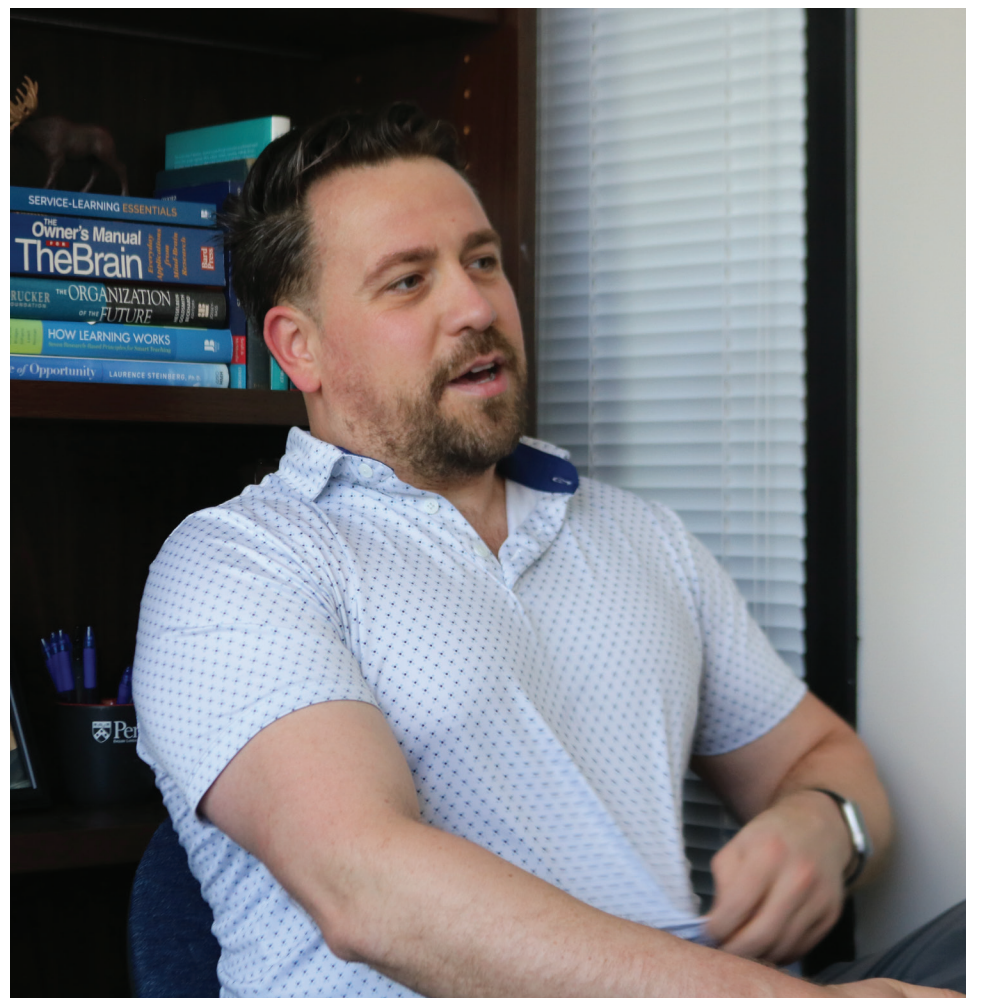
MUSTAFA AKBEN

DIRECTOR OF AI INTEGRATION AT ELON UNIVERSITY

wards at 100% speed," Akben said. Willie Elias, director of audio post and senior sound mixer at Trailblazer Studios, recalled his work on "a project that was completely cleaned with AI." But he often finds it necessary to "identify the weaknesses of the AI," in order to present his best work to clients.

The understanding of effective and ineffective use of AI is precisely what Akben said he strives to develop in his classrooms, by making a safe space for students to experience the technology firsthand and form their own opinions on its ethical implications.

Many think artificial intelligence has the ability to solve pressing world crises. "I believe one of the promising applications of this technology might be a climate change because it's a very important, impending disaster that we are heading to-



LILY MOSBACHER | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Mustafa Akben, assistant professor of management and newly appointed director of AI integration at Elon University, discusses limitations in current AI and its predicted improvements.

Feel the love: Robotic dog with sensorized fur aims to comfort



STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Sensorized fur will be applied to the robotic dog named Q (above) to help it resemble a support animal.

Sensorized fur will be used as an alternative for support animals and medical purposes

Keanu Frazier, Arihanth Nuka & Traci Bethea

EJP.NEWS

An atypical service animal may be making its way into non-animal friendly places within the next few years thanks to Elon researchers, who are working on creating robotic dogs with artificial fur.

Elon University mechanical engineering major and rising senior Zoë Scherpbier and assistant professor of engineering Blake Hament have built the dogs to counter the lack of awareness about service animals.

FHE HEALTH

There has been a 13% rise in mental health disorders over the past 10 years. Support animals help with reducing stress.

The term sensorized fur comes from Scherpbier and is defined as yarn with pressurized points that can react to any physical interactions with the robotic dog.

“So the fur itself is the sensor,” Scherpbier said “We’re comparing those two and then we’re mixing them in a blend and creating its own yarn and weaving them or knitting them together and then detecting cross sections. So the actual yarn itself will be the sensor.”

The robotic dog was designed to ease

people with anxiety and PTSD. “What if I did something that involved something emotional support wise?” Scherpbier said.

The sensation of the imitation fur underneath someone’s fingers aimed to have a calming effect for those who come in contact with it. Scherpbier and Hament strived to remove the eerie aspects of the robotic dog. They hoped to bridge the gap between the robotic and the biologically alive. Additionally, it would ensure a cleaner environment in public spaces because the dogs cannot carry illnesses or use the bathroom.

Another goal of this creation is to offer people information about their heart rate, blood pressure and posture by revealing pressure points, similar to sensitized fabrics’ use in the medical field. The goals are theoretical because the technology has not been tested yet, but Scherpbier said she believed

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WHAT IF I DID SOMETHING THAT INVOLVED SOMETHING EMOTIONAL SUPPORT WISE?

ZOË SCHERPBIER
STUDENT RESEARCHER

the robotic dogs would be limited by water or heat because of the specific fabrics being used in the fur, making it not as convenient as a typical service animal.

Scherpbier said that she used a combination of stainless steel fibers, and either cotton or acrylic fibers. Scherpbier said cotton would be the most aesthetically

pleasing, but the most limited of the three. Through a tedious process called drop spinning, a combination of \$20 yarns turn into imitation fur. Reminiscent of a spinning

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THE ROBOT DOGS ARE NOT AN ATTEMPT TO REPLACE REGULAR SERVICE ANIMALS

ZOË SCHERPBIER
STUDENT RESEARCHER

wheel, Scherpbier intertwined a previously brushed out combination of stainless steel and acrylic/cotton into a weave, meant to encase the dog.

The development of this advanced technology brings an ethical issue into question about the replacement of emotional support animals with robotic ones.

But the accessibility of service animals for groups who need it were strained because of the instability of the current economy. Compared to the \$15,000 cost of service animals, according to supportdogcertification.org, robotic dogs are cheaper, costing around \$10,000, according to Scherpbier. Even so, Scherpbier said “the robot dogs are not an attempt to replace regular service animal dogs.”



Stainless steel fibers being weaved together to create a fur-like material.

STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Conflict spilling over

How outside disputes influence personal well-being

Elon student researcher Nick Dilley is studying how individuals' conflicts affects their co-workers, a concept also present in academic settings

Arti Jain & Katelyn Ranheim
EJP.NEWS

Rising senior Nick Dilley researched the spillover effect, a psychological phenomenon defined by someone's emotions affecting their companions. He found that co-workers were easily able to influence one another's moods.

But the spillover effect isn't exclusive to workplace dynamics that were the focus of Dilley's research — it also affects an undergraduate student's academic life and is crucial to understanding conflict resolution strategies.

Work

Dilley found that negative conflict in an individual's work and family lives resulted in increased stress for their co-workers. He also found that co-workers viewed those individuals as less of a leader after hearing about the conflict. Dilley said he's seen the spillover effect bleed into his own work at an Olive Garden in his hometown of York, Pennsylvania.

"A lot of times people would call off of work or they'd be late or they'd be in a really bad mood just because of things that happened in the family domain, which is exactly what I'm looking at here," Dilley said. "And because of the nature of a restaurant, where I was a waiter, if someone else was dropping behind because of issues with the family and it was affecting the workplace, it then affected other people."

While not involved in Dilley's research study, Reagan Sizemore, a rising sophomore at Elon University, said she often felt her

co-workers' mood influencing her while working as an office assistant for Elon University's dean of student life.

"Any time my bosses were upset, it was just hard on me because I feed off people's moods and I want us to all be goofy," Sizemore said. "We're just goofing, gaffing, we're just having a good time. But people aren't always like that, and that's understandable. But it's hard when I'm trying to save the mood and get back to what we were yesterday."

Academic

Diane Quinn, professor of psychology

at the University of Connecticut, found that the spillover effect also affects academic relationships. She wrote about the concept in a 2023 National Library of Medicine paper.

"Students' and roommates' fall and spring GPAs correlated with each other, even controlling for standardized test scores," Quinn wrote.

As a student who is less academically inclined, Sizemore said, she has felt the spillover effect in her time at Elon University. It's extremely prevalent when she's with one of her friends, an individual who constantly pushes Sizemore to achieve more academically.

"She's very academically inclined and

she is always like, 'Reagan, come on, what's wrong with you, girl? Like, get it together.' And, in a lot of cases, I need that," Sizemore said. "Someone needs to tell me, 'Get out of bed and do your homework. You don't just get to skip it.' But also, sometimes it's like, 'We're not the same.'"

While friendships may lead to conflict, they can also help academic performance. In a 2023 article published in the National Library of Medicine, researchers discovered friendship's ability to lift peers up and create an ambitious atmosphere.

"Friendships in academic settings can significantly impact student performance by fostering a supportive environment that encourages collaboration and knowledge-sharing," the article said.

Conflict resolution strategies

Despite the type of conflict, it can be beneficial to learn settlement strategies so both parties reach a mutual understanding. Specifically, Sizemore said she believes communication greatly affects companions' future relationship.

"I wish I just would have been

more receptive," Sizemore said. "A big problem that I see in my family is that we argue to win, we don't argue to solve. That's what conflict should be, finding a resolution."

Dilley said conflict altogether is unavoidable so the best someone can do is understand the impact their interactions can have on other people.

"Just be conscientious of what you're bringing into this space," Dilley said. "Everyone's got different issues. Everyone has different things that they're dealing with. But how you handle that and how you interact with others during that is what's important."

FUTURE STEPS

Only half of rising senior Nick Dilley's study is complete. He plans to run another study, regarding the spillover effect in working class adults, to understand the differences between college students and adults.

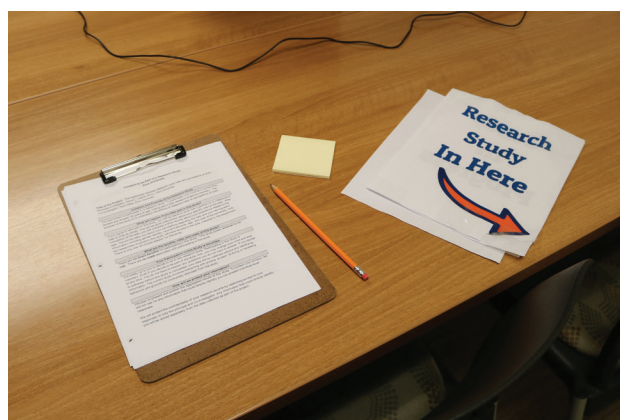


DESIGN BY ARTI JAIN



ARTI JAIN | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

The psychology building at Elon University hosts the lab that Nick Dilley conducts his research in.



KATELYN RANHEIM | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Materials used by rising senior Nick Dilley while conducting a research study regarding student work-related conflicts.



KATELYN RANHEIM | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Nick Dilley studied work-related student conflicts because of how little research there is regarding the topic.

LOVE'S TRUE GESTURES

Student research tests body language, feelings in relationships

Elon University student researchers study non-verbal behaviors in relationships

Keanu Frazier, Izel Perez & Emma Perman
EJP.NEWS

Student researchers at Elon University are delving into the complexities of romantic relationships, focusing on the critical role of authenticity in ensuring long-term success. The team is exploring how body cues can indicate genuine behavior in romantic partners.

According to student researcher Sophie Verrecchia, a rising junior majoring in psychology, body cues can act as ways to determine whether a significant other is being their most authentic self.

“Your body kind of betrays your mind sometimes,” Verrecchia said. “And I think that especially when you’re having these kinds of tricky conversations with your significant other, they might be saying one thing, but the mouth can lie.”

This research comes at a crucial time, with the rise of online dating increasing the potential for inauthentic interactions. A study published in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences found that by 2017 39% of newly formed couples had met through online dating apps.

through online dating apps.

Numerous studies highlight the connection between authenticity and successful relationships. A Pew Research Center survey found that, 71% of online daters think it is common for users to lie to make themselves more desirable.

Another student researcher on the team, Bria Wurst, a rising senior majoring in public health studies, said romantic relationships are about being true to oneself

and the partner.

“When you love somebody, you’re supposed to love them for who they are and not who they portray themselves as,” said Wurst.

The Elon researchers are identifying specific body cues that can help determine authenticity in romantic interactions. The work focuses on the congruence between a person’s words and non-verbal behaviors.

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WHEN YOU LOVE SOMEBODY, YOU’RE SUPPOSED TO LOVE THEM FOR WHO THEY ARE.

BRIA WURST
PUBLIC HEALTH STUDIES MAJOR

“For example, if you’re having a bad day, pretending that you’re having a good day is inauthentic,” Verrecchia said.

This incongruence can be a red flag in relationships, indicating that a partner might not be their true self.

The Elon team hopes to break new ground with its research by providing valuable insights for individuals navigating the complexities of love in the digital age.

“It’s nice to know that we’re filling a gap in the literature,” Verrecchia said. “It makes it hard, but it also makes it cool because this is the first time such a comprehensive study is being done.”

“

YOUR BODY KIND OF BETRAYS YOUR MIND SOMETIMES.

SOPHIE VERRECCHIA
PSYCHOLOGY MAJOR



EMMA PERMAN | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Student researchers at Elon University Bria Wurst, left, and Sophie Verrecchia study people’s body cues and personality traits to determine authenticity in another person.



IZEL PEREZ | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Four sample questions from Sophie Verrecchia and Bria Wurst’s study that prove inauthentic or authentic behavior. One question says, “Tell your partner what you like about them: be honest this time, saying things that you might not say to someone you’ve just met.”

Thank You

EMERGING
JOURNALISTS
PROGRAM

www.elon.edu/ejp

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Elon researchers use nanotechnology to clean environment



STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Justin Clar is working in his lab to solve an issue with one of the instruments. There was a problem with how one of the graphs was showing up.

Chemistry professor, student work toward new methods of cleaning water sources

Carter Frank
EJP.NEWS

Nanotechnology is employed in research with promising results to enhance water quality and transform water treatment technology.

Justin Clar, a chemistry professor at Elon University, has been interested in water treatment since graduate school, working on multiple projects about drinking water before taking a class on how nanotechnology works in the environment.

"I took a class called environmental nanotechnology, where I met two different professors at the University of Florida and had a conversation with them," Clar said. "I kind of developed this project surrounding nanotechnology and the environmental implications of it."

His work on nanotechnology at Elon University actively involves students in undergraduate research. The summer undergraduate research experience, known as SURE, is an eight-week program that focuses solely on research, providing a platform for students to contribute to their field of study.

SURE

The summer undergraduate research experience helps undergraduates participate in research.

A biochemistry junior researcher at Elon University has worked with Justin Clar for a year and on a project for the entire summer. His junior researcher's projects involve making composites composed of multiple nanoparticles, "so that we can deploy these kinds of water treatment options in different places, and we can change the mixture of the types of particles we're putting in these support structures to treat different types of chemicals in different types of environments," Clar said.

Nanotechnology is versatile and better than current water treatment technology because it is more effective at finding particulates. Nano-sized filter membranes have more surface area, which can absorb more particulate matter in water. Then, these filters can separate the particles from the water treated.

Clar and his junior researcher handle nanotechnology. They incorporate the research by creating samples based on what they see in the

environment and testing scenarios to separate those chemicals from the water.

"We do a lot of what's called bucket chemistry, which is we take our absorbance and we take our chemicals, we throw them in a bucket, and we let them mix, and then we separate them, and we measure," Clar said.

This task takes less time, though Clar noted they have not used natural water sources, which differ from lab samples that contain inorganic material created for the researchers' study, such as lead or nitrates. Water from natural sources can have thousands of different particles, which complicates nanotechnology's analytical process.

Clar said the time may be longer but more cost-effective. With less physical material, nanotechnology replacements are lower. Costs will also depend on the type of treatment needed using nanotechnology. Clar has yet to set a timeline for when a large-scale operation could be up and running.

He said nanotechnology had a rough start with how it would interact with the environment.

“

THERE WAS A FEAR EARLY ON ABOUT HOW NANOPARTICLES COULD CAUSE PROBLEMS ENVIRONMENTALLY. I THINK THAT IS VERY FEW IN THE GRAND SCHEME OF THINGS.

JUSTIN CLAR
CHEMISTRY PROFESSOR

"There was a fear early on about how nanoparticles could cause problems environmentally," Clar said. "I think that is very few in the grand scheme of things."

The treatment plants handling water would have an easier time removing certain particles, he said, "but in your water, if you're designing a treatment system to use nanoparticles, it would be designed so that those particles are not leaving the treatment system. What nanotechnology has allowed us to do is create more effective of those same tools."



STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

The chemistry research lab where certain nanoparticles are created for testing.



STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

One of the machines in the research lab mixes a chemical.



A PATH TO SUCCESS

DAYVEY GORDON | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

The Elon Phoenix statue presides over Rhodes Stadium, where a number of walk-on football players showcase their skills.

Walk-on athletes learn to navigate the world of collegiate sports

Lily Mosbacher, Dayvey Gordon & Izel Perez
EJP.NEWS

Jesse Powell is a starting defensive back and linebacker for the Elon Football team, but his pathway was different from his fellow players on the field. Powell was a walk-on athlete who rose the ranks from receiving no scholarship to a full-ride sports and academic scholarship. The journey was difficult but impactful for Powell.

“That’s probably the biggest thing,” Powell said. “Like all of us walk-ons, I think the biggest thing you can see from all of us is that we progressed like personally in some shape or form.”

Fellow teammate Emerson Baker also joined the team as a walk-on. Baker is a backup center on the team who said the hard work to become a walk-on pays off not only now but in the long run.

“If you bet on yourself and you take it one day at a time, you’ll be amazed after

two years,” Baker said, “Walk-on athletes are players who try out for a college team without being recruited or receiving an athletic scholarship. But depending on the level of effort they put in, scholarships can be earned later in their collegiate careers.”

Elon football head coach Tony Trisciani said the success of a collegiate athlete is not a linear process or a simple one, however those who walk on gain value from the experiences they encounter both before and after they make the team.



IF YOU BET ON YOURSELF AND YOU TAKE IT ONE DAY AT A TIME, YOU’LL BE AMAZED AFTER TWO YEARS.

EMERSON BAKER
CENTER

CaptainU, a collegiate sport recruiting platform, reported in 2021 that 49% of Di-

vision I college athletes are walk-ons. Even though walk-ons have the opportunity to make the team, it doesn’t mean it is an easy process.

Trisciani said his expectations for the character and demeanor of his players are the same no matter the amount of money they receive from the bursar’s office.

“We’re looking for their attention to detail, their coachability, their willingness to strain and finish and compete,” Trisciani said.

These traits, although applicable to all football players, are how walk-ons can make themselves stand out. Baker said the lessons he learned as a walk-on player are immensely valuable.

Baker was recruited to play football by multiple Football Championship Subdivision institutions, including Davidson and Presbyterian College, but ultimately Elon University was the only Football Championship Subdivision school to provide him with the opportunity to follow his dream.

Trisciani noted the goals of many walk-on athletes are often very challenging to achieve and require immense support. He added that when he meets with players’ parents, he tries to empathize with the commitment and sacrifice they are making to sup-

port their child.

“It takes the whole family to support the walk-on,” Trisciani said.

Powell discussed how he often used his family support as a form of motivation on the field. He said he wants to succeed in order to inspire his younger family members to be better and do better.

He also said he knows the amount of effort he has to give every day in practice to remain part of the team.

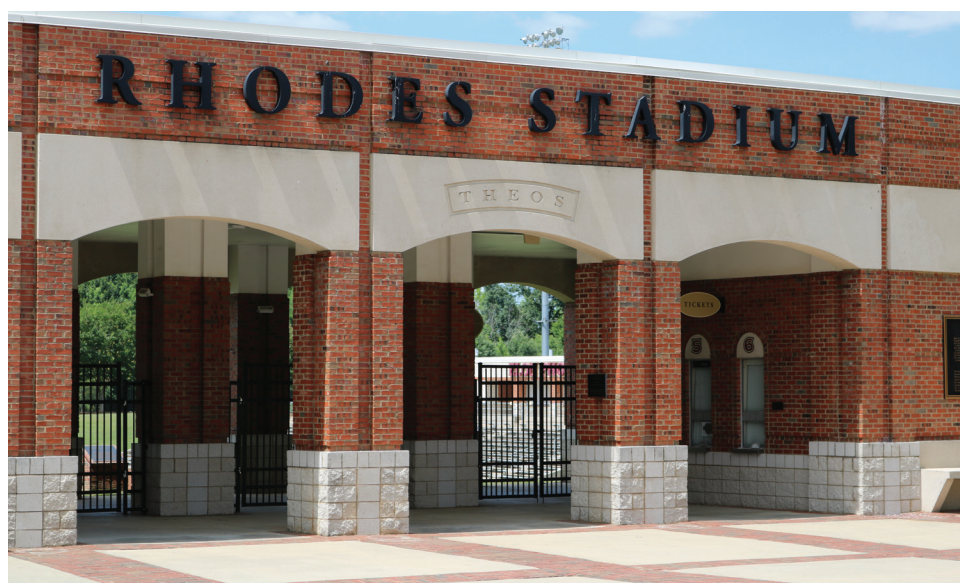
“As a walk-on, I say the biggest thing is when you’re trying to get on a scholarship, you can’t give the coaches no reason not to give you one,” Powell said.

Players said they take what they learn from being a walk-on to heart and apply it on and off the field, specifically in the challenges and struggles they may face, both in college and in the professional setting. They use these strategies of resilience the walk-on process teaches.

“I’ll always look back on this and be grateful for the discipline, motivation and the hard work that it’s taught me to have and that will carry me for the rest of my life,” Baker said.

49%

Percentage of Division I college athletes are walk-ons, according to CaptainU.



DAYVEY GORDON | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Rhodes Stadium is where the Elon Phoenix play their home football games.



DAYVEY GORDON | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Elon football head coach Tony Trisciani explains the ties between family and football.

HOPPING TO SUCCESS



ANDREW HANCOCK | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

The Greensboro Grasshoppers starters warm up for their game on June 22 against the Hudson Valley Renegades.

The Grasshoppers took home the win in extra innings with a walk-off single by third baseman Jack Brennigan

Manuela Roncancio-Roldan & Andrew Hancock
EJP.NEWS

The Greensboro Grasshoppers have powered their way to the top of the South Atlantic League this season. They lead the SAL North in home runs, which is just one reason they're the first-half champions and playoff-bound.

As successful as the Greensboro Grasshoppers have been, players face adversity everyday. They shared the experiences they faced as a professional team from staying consistent to building team chemistry. Right-handed pitcher Derek Diamond explained that baseball players face various obstacles, specifically on the field.

PLAYOFF BOUND

The Greensboro Grasshoppers were first half champions of their division and secured a postseason spot.

a row, and then there's little adversity, like throwing a bad pitch and giving up a home run," Diamond said.



THE PLAYERS COME HERE EVERY SINGLE DAY, WHETHER THEY LOST THE DAY BEFORE OR WON BY A LOT THE DAY BEFORE, THEY'RE READY TO GO TO WORK AND JUST BE CONSISTENT.

BLAKE BUTLER
MANAGER

Players struggle with being seen as people off the field while coping with what they see as failures on the field. Diamond wants

"There's big adversity, like a few bad games in



MANUELA RONCANCIO-ROLDAN | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Greensboro fans cheer as they raise their hands for the T-shirt toss around the middle of the game on June 22.

people to know that he is the same person on the field as he is off the field, trying his best every game.

Pressure from the game can create roadblocks for the players, but reconnecting with their dream of playing professional baseball has helped the players continue to show up and perform. Infielder, Mitch Jebb explained the impact that growing up around baseball had on him and how watching his older brother sparked his interest.

job and enjoy being around each other every single day ... is just so motivating and inspiring," Butler said.

As the team continues throughout the rest of the season, they are focused on staying consistent, trusting and believing in each other.

"Don't fix what's not broken," Diamond said.

Due to their consistency and hard work, they were able to clinch the 2024 Minor League Baseball playoffs after they became the SAL North First-Half Champions.

Butler attributes the team's success to the work the players have put in.

"The players come here every single day, whether they lost the day before or won by a lot the day before, they're ready to go to work and just be consistent," he said.

However, Butler acknowledged that failure is essential to the game of baseball.

"You can fail 70% of the time and still be a Hall of Famer in our game," Butler said.

At the end of the day, there is more to the game than just putting the wood on the ball for the Grasshoppers. Players learn from the challenges presented to them and grow from it not just as players but as everyday people.

"I just sleep most of the time, you know, I am just a normal person," Jebb said.



ANDREW HANCOCK | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

The Greensboro Grasshoppers beat the Hudson Valley Renegades on June 22 with a walk-off single in the 11th inning.



DON'T FIX WHAT'S NOT BROKEN.

DEREK DIAMOND
RIGHT-HANDED PITCHER

"Since you're a kid it's something you've always wanted to do," Jebb said.

Despite spending most of their time on the field playing professionally, the players share a deep love for the game. Manager Blake Butler emphasized how important the team's chemistry is to its success.

"A group of people that really enjoy the