

THURSDAY, JUNE 25, 2026  
ELON, NORTH CAROLINA

## Local consumers, producers bear effects of rising costs, temperatures

North Carolina farmers face uncertainty from drought, inflation

**Laszlo Dworkin, Bao Nguyen and Amirah Williams**  
EJP NEWS

North Carolina is a state built by tobacco and fed by the 8.1 million acres of in-state farmland, but agriculture is more an industry facing an uncertain future.

The future of local agriculture is endangered from rising costs, months without substantial rain and high temperatures. According to the North Carolina State Climate Office, the state is experiencing the “worst statewide drought in more than 18 years.” These conditions have the potential to cripple the coming growth seasons, and according to local farm owner and fisherman George Smith those who will likely bear the brunt are North Carolina’s small farmers.

“The problem is we’re not going to have anything to feed our animals next fall and next winter, and that’s really, really scary,” Smith said.

Market farmers shared their alarm for the unsustainable environment that has come to define agriculture. In the face of these challenges, Smith said there will be no future

for the industry if something does not change. “Production costs are going to have to come down,” Smith said.

To offset shrinking profit margins, many farmers have shifted away from wholesale distribution and moved toward direct-to-consumer sales through local farmers markets. According to local vendors, these alternative markets are feeling the strain. The Elon Farmers Market is one of the many seeing the trickle down from these rising costs and industry dependence on federal subsidies. According to Smith, farmers have had no choice but to raise prices.

“Everything’s had to go up in the last five years,” Smith said. “Pretty much everything’s up at least double what it was.”

Despite rising prices and the transition to small market sales, a need to produce and sell at a deficit has continued to create uncertainty for the future of agriculture, Smith explained. In face of debilitating droughts and production prices, small farms that are unable to compete in the market with their industrial counterparts look to federal support.

The United States Department of Agriculture works to aid farms through subsidies and loans and providing relief during disasters such as extended droughts.

“Many farmers without USDA subsidies couldn’t even stay in business,” Smith said.

Audrey Thompson, daughter of a local farmer, sees not only a rise in cost but a drop in profit while working at her family’s stand.

“We’re having to raise our prices, which in turn can lower the amount that we’re able to sell,” Thompson said.

Thompson said her family raises prices only when necessary, understanding that higher prices can and will affect both new and returning customers.

“There’s some people obviously still that will refuse to buy things if they think it is too far out of their price range, and I can understand,” Thompson said.

During dry seasons some farms like T5-Farms owned by the Thompson family turn to well water and drip irrigation while others who do not have such systems look to minimize inevitable damage.

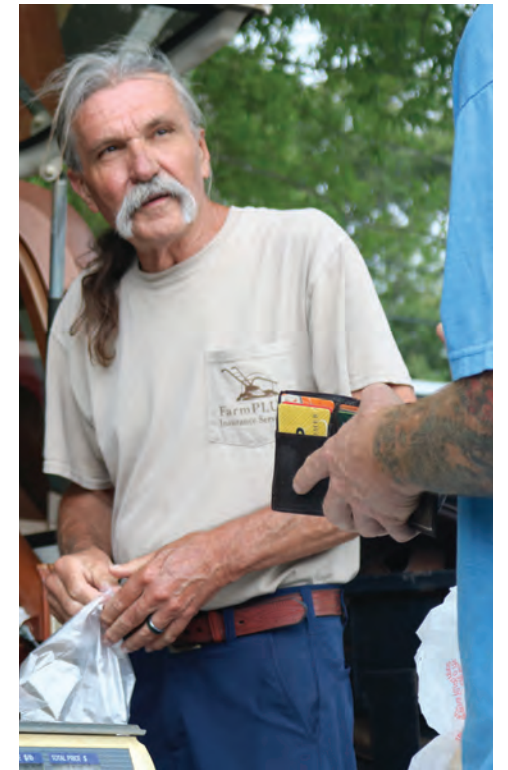
Thompson said the lack of rainfall still creates significant challenges. The farm must devote additional labor to watering crops and livestock, while issues such as deer damage and deteriorating soil quality continue to pile on additional cost.

“Our cows’ pasture dries up, so we’re having to feed more hay, which is an extra cost,” Thompson said.

Thompson said that dry conditions could affect soil health and delay future planting schedules.

Small farmers have accepted the drought’s effects will be lasting and extend beyond the current growth season, Thompson and Smith said.

“It’s impacting our fall season already, even if we start to get rain, because we’ve gotten behind on getting plants in the



AMIRAH WILLIAMS | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

A vendor at the Elon Farmers Market speaks with customers. Farmers said that challenging growth conditions have forced them to raise prices.

ground,” Thompson said.

Beyond the financial cost of production, many customers do not realize how much time, labor and resources are invested into the growing season.

Parker Vaughn, a first-time flower seller, said she hand picks and seeds all flowers from her family’s garden. Vaughn said that during the growing season all her flowers take about eight months to be market ready.

“Just shop locally, and you should really try and understand how hard people work on the businesses that they have, especially at farmers markets,” Vaughn said.

## Politician and farmer proposes bill to benefit agricultural developments

Rep. Ray Jeffers’ House Bill 617, which would support small farmers, is awaiting committee approval

**Alesandra McFadden, Olivia Nelson and Claire Watrous**  
EJP NEWS

Small farmers throughout North Carolina are struggling to stay afloat, facing financial troubles, property loss and competition with large-scale supply chain farms. But Rep. Ray Jeffers (D-District 2) is proposing legislation he said will ensure security and stability.

Jeffers, who’s also a local farmer, has proposed House Bill 617, providing funding to support North Carolina’s small farmers.

“Our small farmers are definitely in need. I think we have a legislature here that is very friendly to the farming and farming industry,” Jeffers said.

Jeffers’ proposed bill would allocate \$20 million in funding to small farmers who have a gross income of \$300,000 or less via support such as grants, tax relief and machinery.

The bill is divided into four main parts.

- \$12 million would go toward a “Small Farmers Support Grant Program,” which would give farmers funding to buy equipment.

- \$3 million would be used to provide “new or additional cold storage equipment,”

helping those who are unable to quickly transport crops and meats to their next destination.

- \$4 million would be put toward the Carolina Farm Steward Association to enact a FarmsSHARE program where North Carolinians can receive organic and locally grown food.

- \$1 million would be allotted for loans to eligible farmers who are a part of the Environmental Quality Incentives Program, a program that pays North Carolina farmers to practice eco-friendly production.

The bill is meant to help farmers invest in equipment, infrastructure, livestock fencing, food processing equipment, and other improvements that can make their operation more productive and profitable.

Audrey Thompson, a farmer from T-5 Farms in Alamance County said, “It can be really beneficial to get the money that we need to be able to continue to grow and stay doing what we’re doing.”

Jeffers said he met with farmers who told him they were excited about the bill because they understand firsthand the struggles North Carolina farmers are actively dealing with.

Most people rely on grocery stores or chain brands for food instead of supporting local farmers because of the increased costs associated with small scale production. He



CLAIRE WATROUS | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Rep. Ray Jeffers holds a press conference June 17 to discuss HB617 and how it would affect small farmers of North Carolina.

said his bill would give small local farmers the support and funding to make their goods more accessible to the public with lower prices.

“They have really embraced local food, farm-to-table and understanding where our food is coming from,” Jeffers said.

He said in times of instability in the food market, North Carolina has shown support for local farms.

“They can remember back during COVID when shelves were bare, but we could go down the street to our local farmer who may be growing produce and so forth and be able to access food,” Jeffers said.

Farmers say that support from the local community is important for small operations to be able to keep farming without worrying about making ends meet.

“We’re really grateful for the customers that we have and what they do for us,” Thompson said.

Additionally, Thompson and T-5 Farms sell to local restaurants. “We like to support locally the same that we like to be supported,” she said.

Not only does supporting local farms help influence economic growth, Thompson said fresh produce has higher nutritional values, meaning that buying from local farms is beneficial to consumers.

At Pandora’s Pies, Maria Lester said the business sources all produce from local produce vendors from the Elon’s Farmers Market. Additionally, she said she feels the benefits in the quality and the support of other local businesses.

“We all like to eat. We all like to wear clothes and we all like to fuel our cars,” Jeffers said. “I think we need to be mindful of where our food comes from and make sure that we’re supporting those that are taking the risk.”

Jeffers said that the bill is still awaiting approval from the Agriculture and Environment Committee, Appropriations Committee and the Finance Committee.



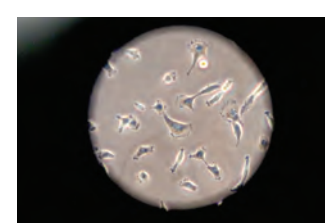
Band performs at Downtown Plaza for Juneteenth

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MiLB players chase their dreams, at a cost

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Students study virus that attacks cancer cells

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# SouLe and The SuperBand perform at Downtown Plaza as part of concert series

Local band took the stage during the town's Juneteenth celebrations

**Lua Agbaw, Brynley Witkowski and Chloe Randall**  
EJP.NEWS

The members of SouLe and The SuperBand took the stage at the Elon Downtown Plaza on June 19, voices and instruments ready to spread love and "the groove" to celebrate Juneteenth.

SouLe and The SuperBand was created by Le'Shawn "SouLe" Troy alongside his wife, Tyaisha "Black Diamond" Troy. The two of them are the band's main vocalists, and the group met in 2020 through a James Brown tribute. The band consists of nine members, and since its formation, it has grown tighter, developing strong bonds, long-lasting relationships, and a family dynamic that includes its fans.

"The fans, man, they are a lot of the fuel for what we do," SouLe said.

Morgan Baker and her daughter said they were excited to come out to celebrate Juneteenth and listen to music on a beautiful day.

"We are thankful that Elon put this on," Baker said. "We feel really lucky."



THE FANS, MAN, THEY ARE A LOT OF THE FUEL FOR WHAT WE DO.

**SOULE**  
SINGER, SOULE AND THE SUPERBAND

She said that they had not seen this band before, but their family always comes out to the summer concerts.

"We've never met a band we didn't like," Baker said.

Audience members Jamilah McConnell and Wendy Scott said that they were looking forward to the concert. Scott saw SouLe and the SuperBand perform last year.

"I know last year they did a whole medley of James Brown songs, which were the party dance songs when I was growing up," Scott said. McConnell said she prefers jazz but also enjoys R&B.



PHOTOS BY LUA AGBAW | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Left: SouLe sings in front of fellow band members Robert, left, and Carter. Above: Concert-goers dance during the performance by SouLe and The SuperBand on June 19 in Elon's Downtown Plaza.

"I'm glad they're bringing that music back," McConnell said. John and Lisa Patterson said they go to concerts together whenever they can, and that they like whoever performs at the Elon Plaza.

"We're not picky," Lisa said. They also said that they were enjoying the evening's weather. "It's Friday night. There's a breeze, the sun in the sky," John said. "It's a beautiful day."

The Oak House coffee shop owner Phil Smith was also excited to come out and support the band. "These guys are awesome," Smith said. "They started playing here about three years ago, came back, it was phenomenal. And tonight, they are rocking it."

Smith said that his favorite song the band played was a cover of "Proud Mary" by Ike and Tina Turner.

## MEET THE BAND

### SouLe, singer

SouLe found his passion for music when his sister encouraged him to start singing in a children's choir when he was 6 years old. SouLe said his inspirations included his mother, Sam Cooke and The O'Jays, particularly the member Walter Williams.

SouLe was born with sickle cell disease, but he said he believes he was made to be in the band. His ability to perform under various conditions is like a superpower, he

said. SouLe said that a couple of years ago he was hospitalized for several weeks, but the band stayed by his side.

"SouLe and the SuperBand means that whatever you're going through, and whatever you have gone through, it can only get better," SouLe said.

### Cal, guitarist

Calvin Richardson, also known as Cal, is the youngest member of the SouLe and The SuperBand at 22. He recently graduated from UNC Greensboro.

Richardson has been playing the guitar for 10 years, and joined the band about a year ago. One of Richardson's favorite moments in the band is when they played at the Wilmington River Fest, the performance having – in his opinion – one of their best audiences.

"They had these fireworks that went off after we played," Richardson said. "It was so cool."

That performance was the same day he was asked to become a permanent member of the band. "I hope that whoever's seeing this is able to come to a show," Richardson said. "This band is such a special band."

### Black Diamond, singer

Black Diamond said she grew up in a family full of singers. "My mom, my sister, my dad, everyone sang, and we grew up singing in the church," Black Diamond said.

Some of her favorite singers are Paula Abdul and Whitney Houston.

"When I saw them perform, I just knew that I wanted to be a singer," Black Diamond said. Her audience provides a way to confirm that people are receiving the message the band is trying to put out.

"As I'm singing, I'm always giving positive feelings and hoping people feel the love that I'm singing," Black Diamond said. "When I keep on seeing people dancing and laughing and coming to give me hugs, I'm like, they're really receiving that."

Black Diamond's advice for young musicians is that they should focus more on their craft rather than just audience feedback.

"Just as long as you feel good with what you're doing, and you're doing your best, and you are doing enough," Black Diamond said.

### Loz, trombonist

Reuben "Loz" Ahukanna is the band's trombone player, which he has been playing for 25 years. Loz said that he started with the band in 2019. "I try to play something every day," Loz said. "We try to get together a few times a month, maybe roughly once a week, once every two weeks or so."

Loz never gets tired of playing with the band and said it's something he loves to do. "You naturally feel fatigued, but I think that being with such a group of great people and making such great music," Loz said. "It helps to keep us motivated, helps keep us energized."



KADIN CRAWFORD | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER  
The International Civil Rights Center and Museum opened in 2010 in Greensboro.

# Lunch counter legacy continues to inspire at civil rights museum in Greensboro

Decades later, civil rights pioneers continue to work for progress and equality

**Kadin Crawford**  
EJP.NEWS

In the heart of Greensboro stands a relic from the 1960s sit-in movement that hopes to serve as a beacon of human rights to this day.

The International Civil Rights Center and Museum opened in 2010 to serve as an extended legacy of Greensboro's role to end segregation in the South. The museum was built around the formerly segregated F.W. Woolworth lunch counter.

CEO John Swaine explained the impact of civil rights and why the museum is still relevant

to this day.

"I can say this with a great deal of certainty that institutions like this attract people from across the globe on a regular basis," Swaine said. "Folks are learning about civil rights and human rights for the first time ever."

In 1960, four North Carolina A&T University students who were influenced by the Freedom Rides and other sit-in movements decided to spark a change. The Greensboro four traveled to Woolworth's and sat at the lunch counter in protest.

David Richmond, Franklin McCain, Ezell Blair Jr., (now Jibreel Khazan) and Joseph McNeil were denied service and threatened with arrest. But students from other schools joined the sit-in movement to put pressure on the lunch counter, which ended its segregation policy in June 1960. Woolworth's in Greensboro closed in 1993.

Lorraine Ahearn, an Elon University assistant

professor of journalism who covered the Black community in Greensboro and other historically marginalized communities for decades, said she has seen how civil rights in Greensboro today have improved.

## EFFECTING CHANGE

F.W. Woolworth ended its lunch counter segregation policy in June 1960.

monument to civil rights in Greensboro.

"This historic building looks backwards to civil rights of the past, honoring and respecting people who have fought for what is right and just," Swaine said.

"Nine members, including the mayor, in Greensboro's city council are Black," Ahearn said. "Things are changing."

Swaine said it's important to have institutions such as the center to stand as a

# Elon keeps significance of Juneteenth alive



OLIVIA NELSON | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Elon University archivist Shaunta Alvarez shows an old photograph from 1916 of some of the first Black chefs at Elon University.

Elon celebrates Juneteenth with tours focused on Black history

**Kadin Crawford and Olivia Nelson**  
EJP.NEWS

At Elon University, Juneteenth commemorations included a guided Freedom Footprints tour that showcased Elon's Black history from its first Black students to notable Black staff and faculty of the school. Elon's recognition of Juneteenth extended beyond a tour, as the month is dedicated to multiple experiences for the Elon community.

Shaunta Alvarez serves as Elon's interim coordinator of University Archives and for the last few years has planned and led Elon's Freedom Footprints tour to commemorate the holiday. Alongside her is Carla Fullwood, who is Elon's director of inclusive excellence education and development. The two of them work side by side to provide what they hope to is a knowledgeable yet fun Juneteenth experience for students, faculty and staff.

Juneteenth became federally recognized in 2021 to remember the emancipation of the last slaves in Galveston, Texas.

"To this day, a lot of people don't make that connection, don't fully recognize it," Fullwood said. "And so to actually have events on campus commemorating and honoring Juneteenth is just one of the ways that we try to raise awareness and help support and continue to help ... support knowledge of what this holiday means for our community."



OLIVIA NELSON | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Tour participants view historical plaques during Elon University's Freedom Footprints tour.

Since then, events and community gatherings have taken place across the country, and in the town of Elon it has been no different. During this year's annual Freedom Footprints tour, participants were immersed into culture and history through visiting and seeing historical buildings, artwork and photographs that are all a part of Elon's own history.

The tour kicked off inside the Moseley Center, which houses portraits of Elon's first Black students, Glenda Phillips Hightower and Eugene Perry, featuring the struggles of attending a predominantly white university

in the early 1960s. Alvarez continued through the tour, taking participants to familiar sites on campus that are home to important Black history that has shaped the school. The sites included Alumni Gym, Belk Library, Elon's Historic Neighborhood and West Hall.

Through educational Juneteenth events such as Freedom Footprints, Alvarez said she hopes to show that "the history of Black people at Elon did not begin when students integrated or when the first Black students came to school here. Black people have been a part of this community from its founding."

Fullwood said Elon employees were instrumental to the success of the commemoration.

"We had about over 80 faculty and staff engage in lots of conversations around race, racial understanding and understanding racial iniquity on our campus," Fullwood said. "It was a really powerful moment that brought us together."

Although Juneteenth lasts one Friday in June, Elon University officials said they hope to reflect on why the holiday is important to its story.

"I want people to come in and dig and ask questions, and research because that's how we learn," Alvarez said. "We're not a museum where things are hands off. We want people to look at the yearbooks, we want people to touch the documents and handle the photos and ask questions, so they can learn about the history themselves."



I WANT PEOPLE TO COME IN AND DIG AND ASK QUESTIONS AND RESEARCH BECAUSE THAT'S HOW WE LEARN. WE'RE NOT A MUSEUM WHERE THINGS ARE HANDS OFF. WE WANT PEOPLE TO LOOK AT THE YEARBOOKS, WE WANT PEOPLE TO TOUCH THE DOCUMENTS AND HANDLE THE PHOTOS AND ASK QUESTIONS, SO THEY CAN LEARN ABOUT THE HISTORY THEMSELVES.

**SHAUNTA ALVAREZ**  
INTERIM COORDINATOR OF  
UNIVERSITY ARCHIVES

# Elon professor wins international book prize

Erin Pearson spent more than 13 years penning "Grievous Entanglements"

**Lua Agbaw and Sara Anderton**  
EJP.NEWS

Associate professor of English Erin Pearson goes to the page, still blank. The thoughts just aren't appearing, until finally she remembers what her grandfather told her.

Pearson was awarded the 2026 Arthur Miller First Book Prize for her book "Grievous Entanglements: Consumption, Connection, and Slavery in the Atlantic World."

The Arthur Miller First Book Prize is given by the British Association of American Studies to authors of books that showcase "originality and significance to the field," as well as "intellectual rigour." The prize is named after Arthur Miller, an American storyteller who contributed to American Studies in the United Kingdom.

Pearson said she feels honored by the prize, and that it is meaningful to her to have the book recognized by a group of experts in the field.

"The fact that it's a book prize from the British Association of American Studies also feels fitting, given that my book puts the United States within an Atlantic context," Pearson said.

"Grievous Entanglements" was published on Oct. 21, 2025. The book dives into the abolitionist movement and into the dangers of consumption (the spending of goods to satisfy people's immediate desires) and complicity. It illustrates how being physically distant from slavery did not equate to being detached from the system that enforced it.

"What I would want people to take away from this book is recognizing that if you're telling that story, you have to understand how central ideas about consumption work," Pearson said. "They really structured the ways in which people talk and wrote and thought about their own connection to slavery."

Pearson said her grandfather would talk about his life as a white man in segregated Alabama. He showed her what he learned about discrimination, and that encouraged her to study more. It took her 13 years to write "Grievous Entanglements."

"I love digging into the tiny details of language or images," Pearson said. "That is the greatest pleasure I get in studying anything. But as you might imagine, when you're taking the time to sort of burrow into the small details, it means that it really can take a long time to read all the things you have to read."

Pearson wrote her dissertation about the

metaphor of cannibalism used in slavery and that got her interested in writing a book. Cannibalism was used to call enslaved African Americans cannibals and uncivilized. It was also used by abolitionists to compare slavery to cannibalism. Because the phrase kept coming up she wanted to research its meaning.

"You have Frederick Douglass describing slavery as sort of a monster that's greedily devouring our flesh," Pearson said. "You have Henry David Thoreau talking about slavery as being about the same as turning men into sausages."

Pearson said she loves to read literature and used poetry and novels as sources in her book. She also looked at historic documents and even used photos in the book. She loved how the publisher was able to print them in color.

Pearson analyzed political cartoons, speeches, letters and journals that people wrote in the time period. She was excited to learn about songsters, a pocket book of lyrics that people could sing.

She even used her research in the classroom. Her students read poetry from Elizabeth Margarete Chandler, a white American quaker who encouraged women to abstain from sugar in their tea. Pearson followed one of Chandler's recipes for honeycakes.

"My students hated them," Pearson said. "They do not taste the way our modern palate expects sweet cakes to taste."

Pearson said her book is applicable to today because aspects of slavery still influence parts of America and countries outside of it. Understanding language used around race and racism in the past reveals how it is relevant in the present, and strategies used to work against the system of slavery can be used to tackle modern problems such as systemic racism or climate change.

"The book also offers a kind of pre-history of familiar aspects of modern consumerism, such as fair trade coffee," Pearson said.

Pearson's advice to young writers is to find ways to move through projects at a consistent pace, despite what many believe about being a writer.

"I think many of us can fall into the trap of thinking that writing should follow a lightning bolt of inspiration and pour out of us as a perfect final product," Pearson said. "In reality, at least in my experience, writing is a combination of inspiration and exciting ideas and also rolling up your sleeves and getting the ideas onto the paper in some imperfect form and then steadily improving them once they're there."

Pearson said the process may sound monotonous, but it is what led her to move past the view of a blank page.



SARA ANDERTON | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Erin Pearson reads an excerpt from her award-winning book "Grievous Entanglements."

# America 250 poll reveals cynical views of the United States

Elon University Poll reveals people's thoughts on how America is doing

Alexandra McFadden, Harriett Stell and Claire Watrous  
EJP.NEWS

As the United States celebrates its 250th anniversary, opinions about the country's future turn pessimistic about the milestone, according to a recent Elon University Poll. The negativity was especially strong among older generations.

The poll, conducted between April 30 and May 6, 2026, was conceived by poll director and political science and public policy professor Jason Husser who wanted to go beyond the surface-level opinions often found in the news.

"Let's go deep and let's go beyond the headlines," he said. "Let's go deeper than what people think about."

Husser said the most interesting part to him was the divide in pride between generations. Younger people felt more pessimistic about current events and optimistic about the future, while older generations felt the opposite.

The poll asked participants nationwide 18 and older a series of questions about their pride in America and their optimism for the future. The margin of error was reported at +/-3.95. Generation Z showed lower numbers when asked about pride in their country.

"We generally see lower levels of psychological attachment or affinity to the concept of the United States, among Generation Z," Husser said.

Although younger people have less attachment toward the country, they often have more optimism about the future. Participants under the age of 30 had the highest confidence in U. S. government decisions over the next 50 years, with 54% saying they are somewhat or very confident.

People 46-61 years old have the lowest confidence rate in the future decisions of America, with 71% expressing little to no confidence. People older than 62 had the highest rate of believing the United States is unsuccessfully living up to the country's founding ideals.

Husser said the difference in country pride versus hope can be explained by the cultural events experienced in their lifetime.

"For instance, with millennials, people who are often saying they're doing these different types of financial habits, we can connect that to the great recession," Husser said.

Members of Gen Z indicated that they are confident and optimistic about the future of the country but are not happy with the current state of the United States.

A similar poll by the Pew Research Center conducted between April 6 to April 12, 2026, found less optimism among young people than the Elon University Poll.

"Young people are less likely than older



HARRIETT STELL | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Elon University Poll director and professor of political science and public policy Jason Husser explains data from the latest Elon Poll focused on Americans' opinions of the country's direction.

people to say they think the government will work better, that the economy will be stronger, things like that," said the center's Senior Associate Director Gregory Smith.

Husser said the Elon University Poll found that younger people showed lower levels of support for the notion that America is the greatest country.

According to Husser, older generations are not optimistic, but they are satisfied with the current state of the country.

"We see some baby boomers, for instance, who are very attached to the concept of the United States, but also pretty pessimistic over the next 50 years," Husser said.

The divide within generations is not a coincidence. Smith said age gaps have "different time horizons for thinking about the future." More commonly, younger people have higher expectations for the future.

Overall, Smith found that the overarching mood was unexpected because during a celebratory time, it is routine for people to feel pride and optimism.

Instead, he said, "most people are

dissatisfied with the way things are going in the country today. Most people say they think the country's best days are behind it. So there's a lot of pessimism. The mood is sour."

The Elon University Poll found similar results, as Husser said there were "very mixed attitudes to sort of negative attitudes at the moment, related from pride of being an American or feeling happy about America 250."

Husser said he hopes this survey encourages open conversations and decreases information asymmetry between people.

## SEE ELON POLL RESULTS



# Elon Tennis Academy balances fun, challenge for aspiring players

The camp supports players with training and development

Akshay Sudhakar, Caroline Cordon and Laszlo Dworkin  
EJP.NEWS

The Elon Tennis Academy combined intensive instruction with supportive coaching during a four-day camp designed to develop the skills of tennis players ages 5-18. Having operated for the past 17 years, the tennis academy uses both high-intensity practice and fun activities to develop players and create an engaging atmosphere.

Elon women's tennis head coach Elizabeth Anderson said the academy's goal is to help

every player improve according to their individual abilities and goals.

"We try to set up a very positive environment where players enjoy learning, they enjoy coming to camp and working hard and getting better," Anderson said.

The camp's daily structure reflected that balance. First, players complete technique-focused instruction, then apply those skills through activities such as games and head-to-head competitions.

Elon's tennis academy was equally as challenging as it was supportive.

"We try to make it pretty structured to where there's time for drills, there's time for technique, but then there's also time for more points and playing or fun tennis games,"

Anderson said.

Anderson added that positive motivation still remains intense, as players often respond well when coaches communicate confidence in their abilities.

"I know you can do this, and I believe in you," said Anderson, describing the message she gives athletes. "I know you can do better, and I want to help you to do better."



WE TRY TO SET UP A VERY POSITIVE ENVIRONMENT WHERE PLAYERS ENJOY LEARNING.

ELIZABETH ANDERSON  
ELON WOMEN'S TENNIS COACH

Anderson said that coaches must recognize that players both learn and respond to instruction differently. So, instead of using the same method of coaching across athletes, she said coaches should take time to understand individual personalities, experience levels, and learning styles.

Anderson also said that long-term development depends on the internal desire to become better. Throughout the camp, coaches encouraged campers to stay engaged and work through challenging drills, but players must also be willing to push themselves if they want to improve.

"I think it's that intrinsic motivation, that there's something within them — there's a fire, there's a desire for them to be better than they



AKSHAY SUDHAKAR | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Volunteer assistant coach Bob Owens gives advice to a camper about how to improve his grip.

are at that current moment," Anderson said.

Elon Assistant Director of Athletic Communications Jacob Kisamore also identified this inherent drive as an important part of athletic development.

A Youthcast Media Group study found that 45% of high school students left sports because the extremely competitive nature of the game began to outweigh enjoyment.

Furthermore, Kisamore said that youth sports programs should emphasize development along with competitive success without compromising on either goal.

"I think from the youth sports side of it maybe there's not as much necessity in winning championships," Kisamore said. "I think that side of it probably should be a little more like, 'We're going to develop you from a young age.'"

Additionally, the academy also gave Elon's tennis program a chance to create relationships with young players and their families throughout the surrounding area.

"I think it's a great opportunity for our team to give back a little bit to the local community and help build some connections with some kids and some families in the local Elon, Burlington, Alamance County area," Kisamore said.



AKSHAY SUDHAKAR | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

A camper in the Elon Tennis Academy reaches for low volley.

MiLB players discuss the strains of pursuing their dreams to reach the majors

Blake Pierre-Louis, Anika Kurup and Amirah Williams

EJP.NEWS

Every year minor league baseball teams spend tens of thousands of miles on the road and over 100 games on the field, all while making 20 times less than their major league counterparts.

Minor league baseball teams consistently play six games each week, with a season running from early spring to early fall. According to players with the Winston-Salem Dash, this schedule often defines the lives of the players who dedicate their time to the game.

Members of the Dash say this schedule tests not just the team, but also their families waiting at home. As a professional baseball player, athletes clock almost 1,500 hours at the stadium each year, equivalent to over two months on the field.

"I'd say 90% of the day you're at the field and then once you get back home, you're sleeping," Dash shortstop Kyle Lodise said.

Lodise said professional baseball players experience physical, financial and mental strain from long days on the road and in the stadium. Families of these athletes face separation and monetary strain from the traveling and preparation it takes to make it into the major leagues.

"These sacrifices are, I would say, from my family members," Lodise said. "The amount of time and money that they've invested just to give me the opportunity to be here."

Dash shortstop Ryan Burrowes, agrees that athletes make varying sacrifices to succeed in the league.

"Even though baseball is hard, it's pretty much everything," Burrowes said. "It's mental. It's not that much physically, but you have to be able to maintain that coldness of your mental state and just to be able to overcome adversities when you're not doing good."

The minor league and the Major League Baseball Players Association guarantee on-site mental health services, educational support and peer support while unionization allows minor league players to receive



## The cost of playing in the minor leagues

BLAKE PIERRE-LOUIS | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Outfielder George Wolkow takes the plate in hopes of putting runs on the board.

financial support from the league, and provides the option for players to sign name, image and likeness deals.

“

THESE SACRIFICES ARE, I WOULD SAY, FROM MY FAMILY MEMBERS.

KYLE LODISE  
DASH SHORTSTOP

"I think they've also gotten a lot better with understanding that, with how much we kind of endure on a day-to-day basis that the mental side of it and just the resources in general are a lot more important," Lodise said.

Name, image and likeness deals allow players across fields to receive extra funding through endorsements, social media

branding and merch.

"You know, especially since COVID. I think that the major league baseball and MLBPA have done a good job of giving players a lot more resources," Lodise said.

Team manager and former MLB player Guillermo Quiroz said Dash players have an intense passion for baseball that is shown in their attitude and consistency at tough practices.

"I mean, that's your job," Quiroz said. "That's what you gotta do. Obviously impacts when it comes to, health, family, doing sacrifices for them to be able to be out here and do their jobs."

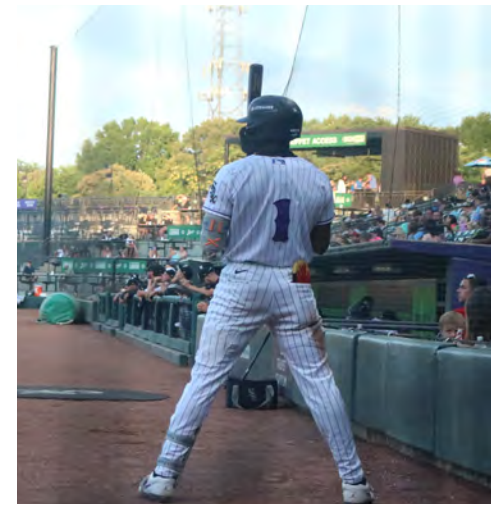
Professional players train for the majority of their lives for the opportunity to play in the major leagues.

"I started playing at around two or three years old growing up," Lodise said. "And that's all I've ever known, just playing baseball."

Members of the Dash affirm that the MLB is the overarching goal. In the past 17 years, the Dash have sent 361 players to the

major leagues.

"They're here to get developed, to go to the next level," Quiroz said. "And then hopefully from there they can take off and play at the big league level."



BLAKE PIERRE-LOUIS | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Starting shortstop Ryan Burrowes gets ready to bat.

## More than just a game: Why college women bet on sports

Social media is helping fuel the increase in women contributing toward sports betting

Bao Nguyen and Brynley Witkowski

EJP.NEWS

Betting among women ages 18-25 has increased by 51%, leading to economic and social changes.



BRYNLEY WITKOWSKI | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Many states have banned wagers placed on individual college players' performances.

Betting, which has been dominated mostly by men, stereotypically creates obsessive narcissism, according to David Bockino, Elon University professor of sports management. As Bockino explained, the exponential growth of sports betting among college women has been fueled by the accessibility of apps such as FanDuel and the influence of social media. While sports betting is often promoted as a fun and exciting activity, there are experts from Spring Nature who warned that it can have serious negative consequences. Bockino said for an example, college athletes who gamble risk being off a team and losing scholarship.

Betting on sports can harm college women just like any bettors by draining money that could be used for education, housing and other essential expenses, often resulting in financial stress and debt.

While sports betting has grown among college students, some women remain hesitant to discuss their participation openly. Elon University Assistant professor in sport management, Alex Traugott said perceptions surrounding gambling can differ based on gender, contributing to reluctance among some women to share their experiences or engage in conversations about sports betting. They can feel pressure to participate in order to fit in with their peers, making them feel excluded if they choose not to gamble.

Amelia Weaver, a student majoring in sport management and media analytics, conducted research among women participation in sports betting.

"I know of college-aged women who bet on sports, but they don't always want to talk about it. It's again the awareness and the shame," Weaver said.

Social media further intensifies these issues by constantly exposing users to betting predictions, winning tickets and gambling content. Weaver said this creates pressure to participate and makes betting seem more lucrative than it actually is.

When bets are lost, frustrated bettors often take their anger out on athletes through negative comments and harassment online. This growing problem has led to efforts to protect athletes from social media liabilities like the player property bets.

"When someone loses their bet, it is easy to go on social media and bash players who didn't perform well," Weaver said.

Athletes are increasingly exposed to criticism that extends beyond traditional fan reactions. A poor performance can trigger

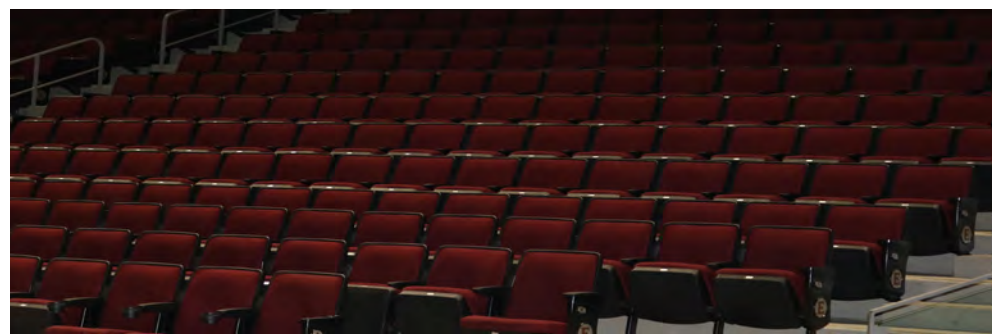
online backlash from bettors frustrated by lost wagers, creating a direct connection between gambling outcomes and the treatment of athletes on social media.

"There has been a rule put in place to protect college players from player props and just in general protecting them from social media and from negative things," Weaver said.

When betting, Weaver said participants can gain money, providing relief to people in financial stress. This money gain can result in participants taking interest in sports betting in the future, connecting them with a community of other people who have similar interests, like sports or betting.

Being a part of a group boosts their mental health positively and allows themselves to find their people, giving them a sense of self.

Weaver said that the sports betting community also allows people to take part in watch parties and connect one another.



BAO NGUYEN | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Athletes are increasingly feeling the brunt from bettors who take out their anger through negative comments online.



CHLOE RANDALL | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

# Mindfulness in nature: how college students find stress relief in ‘sit spots’

Mindfulness study creates “sit spots” to boost mental health and connection to nature

Harriett Stell and Chloe Randall  
EJP.NEWS

Elon University faculty and students have published research focused on nature-based mindfulness and its effect on undergraduate students’ mental health. The study is characterized by “sit spots,” commonly near water or peaceful areas closest to nature that help people concentrate on their emotional well-being.



JUST BECAUSE I’M SITTING OUTSIDE DOESN’T MEAN I’M WASTING TIME. THIS RESEARCH TEACHES YOU THAT TAKING A MOMENT FOR YOURSELF CAN BE PRODUCTIVE AND A FORM OF SELF-CARE.

KILEY SHERLOCK  
ELON STUDENT

Jill McSweeney, assistant professor of wellness, and Kelsey Bitting, assistant professor of environmental studies, coauthored the study “Evaluating the Impact of a Sit Spot Mindfulness Practice on Students’ Connectedness to Nature, Mental

Wellbeing, and Mindfulness.” Together, they described the importance of “sit spots,” to help college students stay connected to nature and prioritize their mental health, focusing on sensory details.

McSweeney explained the purpose of the study was to see how nature helps to engage in mindful practices, while also improving mental health.

“So we know that from our work, that it increases positive mood. So, a feeling of joy and happiness while also decreasing negativity,” McSweeney said.

Along with McSweeney and Bitting, alumnae Elyssa Kaufman and Kira Campagna played key roles in the study. Their research showed an increase in positivity, nature connectedness, and mindfulness displayed in respondents.

Kiley Sherlock, a student at Elon University who is pursuing a double major in environmental and sustainability studies and public policy, described nature-based mindfulness as associated with intention and living in the moment. This consciousness is effective for students dealing with feeling overwhelmed and stressed.

“We’re trying to investigate what that looks like when you’re practicing mindfulness outside and whether you’re getting the same benefits we associate with nature and mindfulness separately,” Sherlock said.

To assess if the study was beneficial, students participated in numerous surveys, which measured positive and negative effects and mindfulness. Students who completed eight or more “sit spots” experienced significant improvements within their well-being, including mood, nature connectedness and mindfulness.

As for students who completed less than eight “sit spots,” they experienced less positive change, missing out on deeper nature connectedness.



HARRIETT STELL | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Many Elon University students tend to go to Lake Mary Nell to relax, admire the fountain and partake in nature-based mindfulness practices.

Sherlock explained an interesting aspect of the study is that it acts as a bridge between mindfulness and nature.

“What we’re really seeking to address is the mental health crisis in the classroom, specifically for college students,” Sherlock said.

Bitting explained the novelty of the study as being an intersection between two commonly investigated topics.

“That is not something that has been done to a great degree in the literature we’ve found so far, so it’s pretty unique in that respect,” Bitting said.

Around Elon University there are many “sit spots,” including Lake Mary Nell and Lake Verona, that help students enter nature-based mindfulness. Sherlock explained her favorites are near water. Similarly, Bitting’s preferred location is a pond near her house, where she can watch the wildlife.

Sherlock and Bitting explained that struggles can be overcome by nature-based

mindfulness, and previous research done at Elon University has proven positive outcomes, such as reduction in stress and anxiety, while improving mood and relationships.

But Sherlock and Bitting have heard some criticisms about the study, such as it being a waste of time and unproductive.

“Just because I’m sitting outside doesn’t mean I’m wasting time,” Sherlock said. “This research teaches you that taking a moment for yourself can be productive and a form of self-care.”

“So maybe,” Bitting said, “that’s something we’re trying to counteract: helping individuals recognize that they’re part of this earth system, not separate from it or above it in some way.”

The nature-based mindfulness study was intended to give students an outlet where they could relieve themselves from daily stressors, while deeply connecting with nature.

Thank You

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# Elon researchers study what babies' hands reveal about the developing human brain

Psychology student aids in research of correlation between infant hands and brain growth

**Thailik McCormick and Anika Kurup**  
EJP.NEWS

Human brains constantly take in, process and apply ideas, even in infancy. But according to Sabrina Perkins, associate professor of psychology at Elon University, infant research is uniquely difficult.

Working with children under the age of 2 introduces the tediousness of direct communication, increased privacy and extended breaks, all of which leads to the lack of available infant studies to draw research from.

## PROGRESS IN MOVEMENT

The research shows that motor development can impact cognitive skills.

Perkins worked to bridge that gap by conducting studies in her own office, researching the development of hand dominance within infants.

"I was drawn to movement, specifically because like other animals infants can't tell you what they're planning or how they feel — but you can observe all of that through their activity and movement," Perkins said.

Perkins has been assisted by undergraduate students of various majors, diffusing infant development into their own fields. Senior exercise science major Jessica Garcia-Bastida looked into the applications of infant development within physical therapy.

"This research could help set a baseline so that if a child isn't meeting a certain milestone, we can look into why," Garcia-Bastida said.

On the other hand, senior psychology major Anna Grace Gilbert applied her findings to the field of psychology.



I TEACH MY STUDENTS HOW MOTOR DEVELOPMENT AFFECTS COGNITIVE SKILLS AND VICE VERSA, AND HOW IT CONNECTS TO SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND VARIES ACROSS CULTURES.

**SABRINA PERKINS**  
ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR OF PSYCHOLOGY

Gilbert and her team noticed that when babies reached for a toy, their mothers were more likely to name and explain that object. Psychologists call this phenomenon "joint attention," which is a fundamental building block in how babies learn.

Being a psychology major, Gilbert was



THAILIK MCCORMICK | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Student researchers use psychology professor Sabrina Perkins' in-office playroom to study hand dominance among children under the age of 2.

surprised by the implications of infant development throughout professional fields.

"I presented a poster on this research, and I learned how expansive the field of development really is," Gilbert said.

She explained that understanding how humans learn helps roboticists understand how robots learn, furthering the efficiency of building AI models.

Perkins, Garcia-Bastida and Gilbert all mentioned the importance of role-differentiated bimanual movement (RDBM) in the development of an infant.

RDBM is the process of performing separate tasks with each hand while having a

common shared goal. For example, if infants are handed a water bottle, they will hold the bottle with one hand while twisting the cap with the other.

The group linked RDBM with development, as it signals growth in the portion of the brain that connects the two hemispheres. "I teach my students how motor development affects cognitive skills and vice versa, and how it connects to social-emotional development and varies across cultures," Perkins said.

Perkins and her team continue to work toward closing that gap. Her infant development lab at Elon remains active, with multiple ongoing studies currently underway.

## Interns gain furball experiences by working at Elon Oaks

Veterinary hospital allows students to gain valuable practice in treating animals and working with medicine

**Sara Anderton**  
EJP.NEWS

Elon Oaks Veterinary Hospital doesn't just offer animal care to town residents. It also lets university students get experience through internships.

The university offers a lot of internships through its Campus Alamance program and Elon Oaks is the closest to campus. Students can easily walk to the hospital, which can make working their eight-week internship easier.

Students get the experiences of working with animals and medicine. Vet technician and practice manager Alli Noger said the staff treats interns like new employees.

"It is very helpful to have them, that extra hand to do some of the more basic things, and then the more highly trained people can do more advanced things," Noger said.

Dr. Kristina Belton, owner of the hospital said, "The interns learn the basics of how the practices runs and the basics of what a veterinary technician does."

Since Belton was a high school science teacher before she was an animal doctor, she wanted to offer learning opportunities. She found having the internship program was a "natural fit" for her and wanted to help the next generation.

Elon Oaks has two Elon student interns: junior Sienna Alvarado and sophomore Fernando Morazan. Alvarado is a biology major with a double minor in statistics and chemistry. Morazan, who was unavailable for an interview, is working for a degree in biology and neuroscience, and a minor in chemistry.

"It's a really tight knit community here, so I just thought it was the perfect place, and I love it," Alvarado said.

Alvarado started at Elon as a psychology major but switched around what she was studying a lot.

She was unsure of her career goals until she found an old letter she wrote to herself talking about her dreams of being a vet.

"Shadowing is really important in the veterinary field, so just watching all my coworkers, learning from them, communicating with patients," Alvarado said, "There's a lot more communication with humans than you'd think in veterinary medicine."



IT'S A REALLY TIGHT KNIT COMMUNITY HERE, SO I JUST THOUGHT IT WAS THE PERFECT PLACE, AND I LOVE IT.

**SIENNA ALVARADO**  
JUNIOR

Veterinarians can treat anything from domestic pets to farm animals, but Elon Oaks typically gets cats and dogs. Alvarado's favorite animal visit was a Xoloitzcuintli show dog that she described as "a naked dog."

"The owner was showing us all of his little tricks and all of that," Alvarado said. "I've never seen a show dog and what they can do. They are trained very differently compared to household pets."



SARA ANDERTON | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

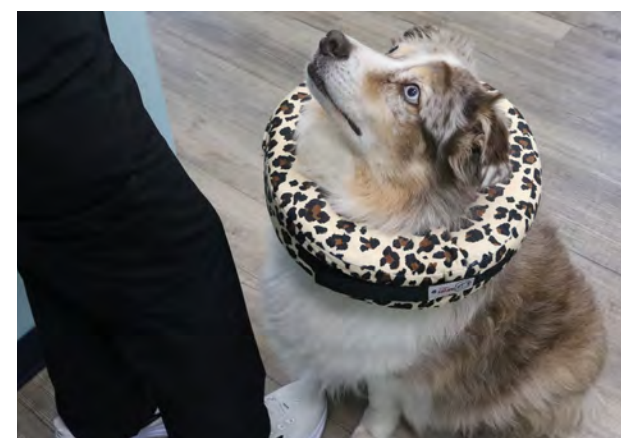
Sienna Alvarado rewards Bing with a treat for standing on the scale.

Not every Elon student has to take an internship. Alvarado not only wanted to do an internship, but her academics fellows program required it.

Alvarado is also taking many science classes and will have a research project with the biology department.

Even though it's not dealing with animals, she is still interested in learning more.

Alvarado said she hopes to get into North Carolina State University to continue with her vet school work. She wants to keep learning how to work with animals.



SARA ANDERTON | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Bing waits for more treats from Sienna Alvarado, an Elon student who is completing an internship with Elon Oaks Veterinary Hospital as part of the Campus Alamance program offered by Elon University.

# Brain activity study helps Elon students decipher people's decision-making processes

Psychology students study how humans reflect on past events and imagine alternative outcomes

**Caroline Cordon, Yashika Jagadeesh and Akshay Sudhakar**  
EJP.NEWS

Elon University psychology students are using electroencephalogram (EEG) technology to study brain activity during decision-making to explain why people interpret the same event in different ways.

Humans constantly recall memories and events from previous experiences while considering why an event happened. But the way individuals recall memories differs from person to person. Some rely on memories of what happened, while others imagine alternative outcomes. Senior undergraduate research student and psychology major Casey Baldwin's recent study has the potential to help people understand why individuals interpret the same event differently.

Baldwin's study, "Tracking EEG Neural Activity During Retrospective Causal Judgement," was overseen by assistant professor of psychology Kristina Krasich. The two worked together to focus on retrospective causal judgment, or the process of looking back at an event and deciding what caused its outcome.

This investigation studied how people used memories of what actually happened and imagined alternatives when making retrospective causal judgments.

Baldwin has been working on her most recent EEG project in Krasich's laboratory for about a year. Krasich's focus was to let her students take the lead while providing support.

"I try to engage them in every stage of the research process," Krasich said. "We begin typically by conceptualizing a project together, reading the literature, thinking through the logic, trying to really come up with a strong research question, a strong hypothesis. And then from there, it's really just a collaboration together."

To collect data, participants wore a 32-electrode EEG cap that recorded electrical data from the brain while they completed a computer-based stimulus task. During the experiment, participants chose whether to shoot a ball left or right before watching the outcome of their decision. The program then prompted participants to think about why the shot missed or alternative plays that could have occurred.

As participants completed the task, the EEG system recorded brain activity. Baldwin planned to use these neural signals to better understand how people acknowledged cause-and-effect relationships and personality changes.

"We're looking at personality and how different personality types affect how people think – whether they rely on more memory or they rely on more mental images," Baldwin said.

“

WE'RE LOOKING AT PERSONALITY AND HOW DIFFERENT PERSONALITY TYPES AFFECT HOW PEOPLE THINK – WHETHER THEY RELY ON MORE MEMORY OR THEY RELY ON MORE MENTAL IMAGES.

**CASEY BALDWIN**  
SENIOR UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH STUDENT

The study specifically examined the openness and agreeableness components of personalities. Baldwin and Krasich investigated whether these personality traits related to how strongly people relied on



YASHIKA JAGADEESH | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Senior undergraduate research student and psychology major Casey Baldwin applies electrode cap gel under electroencephalogram (EEG) electrodes.

factual memories or imagined alternatives when judging why an event occurred.

Because data collection is still underway, the researchers have not yet determined whether those traits influenced the participants' reasoning.

This act of imagining an alternative outcome was known as counterfactual thinking, or asking, "what if?" Additionally, people used causal judgments to understand choices, mistakes, responsibility and blame. These processes might have affected how people interpreted past choices, assigned responsibility, and decided whether a different action could have changed the result.

The EEG project was built on Krasich's earlier research using eye-tracking technology that in past studies has aided researchers in understanding what subjects were thinking in correlation to a specific stimulus.

A previous study that used eye tracking and contributed to Baldwin's research was an analysis comparing memories to imagination

in cause-and-effect relationships.

The past investigation posed questions that were relevant to the current study and demonstrated academic ideas for Baldwin to focus on in her EEG study.

"To what extent do we just use our actual memories," Krasich said, "versus how much do we use our imagination about what could have happened in any given different scenario, in order to determine a true, 'This was the cause of this effect.'"

Krasich's earlier eye-tracking study raised new questions about neural activity behind memory and thinking, which Baldwin's EEG research study was designed to investigate.

Data collection is still ongoing, and no conclusions have been reached yet, but Baldwin said she believed the research could contribute to a broader understanding of human reasoning and decision-making.

For Krasich, this research represents the larger picture of how the brain functions and makes sense of the world.

"Our primary objective is to advance basic scientific understanding," Krasich said.

## Elon students targeting cancer cells with help of viruses

Biotechnology student continues research on treatment for rare cancer

**Yashika Jagadeesh, Blake Pierre-Louis and Thailik McCormick**  
EJP.NEWS

Viruses may not be the evil antagonists they are often thought to be. In fact, viruses may be the next step in cancer research.

Oncolytic therapy uses viruses to destroy cancer cells and, according to Alexander Roberts, a rising senior at Elon University, it holds great promise for changing cancer research, although it remains understudied.

"I've always loved science, especially in high school — that's kind of where my science focus started," Roberts said. "Getting to use my hands, getting to do work, is something I really like. I took four science courses in high school, and of all of them, I liked the life-science-focused ones the best."

Roberts, who is the recipient of the 2026 Undergraduate Research Award from North Carolina Independent Colleges & Universities, has been working under the guidance of assistant professor of biology Efrain Rivera-Serrano to use reovirus as a new oncolytic treatment for fibrosarcoma, a rare, understudied cancer affecting muscles, bones and soft tissue.

It is difficult to treat because of its capability to spread quickly through the body, primarily via bones, soft tissue, muscles and lungs. Currently, fibrosarcoma has about a 40-60% survival rate.

Oncolytic treatment uses genetically modified or naturally occurring viruses to destroy cancer cells while sparing healthy tissue, and it's used to supplement chemotherapy.

Targeting creates the main difference between these two types of treatment: Chemotherapy aims to destroy all cells, which is why cancer patients lose hair and gut health, while oncolytic treatments hit cancer cells specifically via injection directly into the cancerous tumor or region. Both treatments work in their own ways, and Roberts said

both oncolytic treatments and chemotherapy can be used together to maximize the effects of the treatments.

Roberts said while researchers can use naturally occurring viruses, oncolytic

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I TOOK FOUR SCIENCE COURSES IN HIGH SCHOOL, AND OF ALL OF THEM, I LIKED THE LIFE-SCIENCE-FOCUSED ONES THE BEST.

**ALEXANDER ROBERTS**  
SENIOR BIOLOGY MAJOR AND STUDENT RESEARCHER

treatment works best when they design viruses with distinct attributes, otherwise known as genetic modification. But genetic modification of virus cells is a shortcoming of this treatment.

Even if reovirus can target specific pathways, the immune system relies on many different signaling and defense mechanisms.

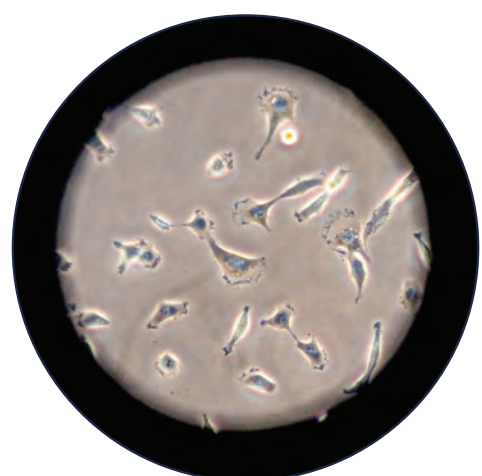
As a result, other immune system responses can affect how the virus spreads, as well as how the body reacts. Alongside that, this treatment lacks a perfect success rate. During the period of treatment, the virus can behave differently or possibly deteriorate over time.

Roberts said he tested two different strains of viruses, DB62 and EW46, to identify which was more effective.

"DB62 is great at infectivity — it gets into cancer cells and kills them very effectively," Roberts said. "For the most part, though, results have matched expectations — DB62 kills well, EW46 infects well but kills less."

The issue with most modern cancer treatments is the worry of cost, and while Roberts said there isn't an exact number for the cost, he indicated that the cost is not substantial.

"I don't think it would cost a ton," Roberts said. "From studies on the enhanced virus that's currently in clinical trials, it's not super hard to do. Once you know which virus genes target the immune factors in cells, you know how much to edit them up or down. The genetic editing part isn't too complicated."



THAILIK MCCORMICK | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Fibrosarcoma cells under a microscope.

### AWARD WINNER

Roberts won the 2026 Undergraduate Research Award from North Carolina Independent Colleges & Universities.