

# THE PENDULUM

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# HISPANIC HERITAGE MONTH SPECIAL EDITION



ADDISON BUCCO | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Hispanic Heritage Month is annually celebrated from Sept. 15 to Oct. 15. Each year Elon hosts a Hispanic Heritage Month kickoff in Medallion Plaza. There is food, music and performers each year. Dancers prepare to perform Sept. 15, 2021.



The history of El Centro,  
Latinx, Hispanic center

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What being Hispanic,  
Latinx means to students

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A dance academy that  
embraces creativity

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THE **PENDULUM**

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**EDITORIAL POLICY:**

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

**CORRECTIONS POLICY:**

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

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HISPANIC HERITAGE MONTH

**CALENDAR  
OF EVENTS**

**Latin American Studies Film Festival Presents:  
Frenemies**

Sept. 12 | Turner Theatre - 2:30 p.m. to 4:30 p.m.  
This screening is part of the Latin American studies film festival, which offers an instance of critical reflection of the intercultural roots of global peace through recent Latin American documentaries.

**The Camarada Tango Quartet and Dancers:  
"Tango Obsession"**

Sept. 14 | McCrary Theatre - 7:30 p.m.  
"Tango Obsession" features musical selections from the traditional tango of Toto Damario and Mariano Mores to the seductive rhythms of Astor Piazzolla's beloved masterworks. Camarada has selected a variety of tango styles – dark and sultry with driving tempos to sunny and syncopated. Admission: \$15 or Elon ID, tickets are available at [elon.edu/boxoffice](http://elon.edu/boxoffice).

**Hispanic Heritage Month Kick-Off Festival:**

Sept. 15 | Medallion Plaza - 5:30 p.m. to 7 p.m.  
Have fun with us as we kick off HHM by celebrating the independence of Latin America with live performances, music, vendors and food.

**Hispanic Heritage Month Book Display:**

Sept. 15 to Oct. 1 | Belk Library  
Stop by the library to check out books written by Latinx, Hispanic authors and/or related to Latinx, Hispanic culture and history.

**SUB Hispanic Heritage Month Trivia:**

Sept. 21 | Irazu - 10 p.m.  
The student union board is hosting an HHM-themed trivia. Join them for a fun time with prizes.

**SUB Cinema Presents: COCO**

Sept. 22 & 23 | Turner Theatre - 8 p.m. & 10:30 p.m.  
In honor of Hispanic Heritage Month, SUB will be showing the Disney Pixar movie, Coco.

**Hispanic Heritage Festival:**

Sept. 23 | CityGate Dream Center, 1423 N. Church St. - 2 p.m. to 8 p.m.  
Live music, food vendors, dance performances and games.

**Perspectivas Series:**

Sept. 27 | McKinnon F - 6 p.m. to 7:30 p.m.  
An opportunity Latinx, Hispanic community students to have deliberative dialogue on the topic of assimilation.

**Latinx, Hispanic Graduate Student Ice Cream Social:**

Sept. 28 | Lucha Libre Ice Cream & Churros - 6 p.m. to 8 p.m.  
An opportunity for Latinx, Hispanic identifying graduate students to network with Latinx, Hispanic faculty and staff.

**Esperanza Festival:**

Sept. 30 | Alamance Arts - 1 p.m. to 8 p.m.  
213 S Main St, Graham, NC - 1 p.m. to 8 p.m.  
There's no admission fee and plenty of no-cost options for families. There will be dancing, music, vendors, crafts, food trucks and more!

**Noche Latina:**

Sept. 30 | Rudd Field - 7:30 p.m.  
Join us for an afternoon of fun, music and soccer as we cheer the Men's soccer team on. Announcements will be made in both English and Spanish.

**Gala Latina:**

Oct. 6 | LaRose Commons - 6:30 p.m. to 8 p.m.  
A celebration of Latinx, Hispanic student success, dedicated to the empowerment of students, faculty and staff who identify as Latinx/Hispanic.

**Cafe con Lychee with Friends:**

Oct. 17 | El Centro - 5:30 p.m. to 7 p.m.  
This forum is a space for Latinx, Hispanic students to learn from each other and help create a support system at Elon. Join for a boba bar and a discussion around the book Cafe con Lychee by Emery Lee.

**Latinx, Hispanic homecoming tailgate:**

Oct. 21 | Rudd Field - 11 a.m.  
A classic American tradition with a twist, including Latinx, Hispanic music and food. Elon Football will play the Monmouth Hawks at 2:00 p.m. Tickets are required for the game and can be bought at [elon.universitytickets.com](http://elon.universitytickets.com).

**Identity Panel:**

Oct. 25 | Lakeside 214 - 6 p.m. to 7 p.m.  
Learn about the complexity and intersectionalities of Latinx, Hispanic identities. There will be a panel formed by Elon students, faculty and staff that identify as Latinx, Hispanic.

**La Habana:**

Oct. 27 | Taphouse - 10 p.m. to 2 a.m.  
The Latinx-Hispanic Union is throwing their semesterly dance party with great Latino music and free food.

**Dejame Enseñarte Latinx Art Gallery:**

Nov. 9 | McKinnon D - 4 p.m. to 6 p.m.  
The second annual Latinx art gallery that features Latinx, Hispanic student talent that includes art, musical pieces and spoken word

Corrections

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





Sky Candy Balloons pilot Sean Richardson turns on the hot air balloon burner while members of his family prop open the envelope of the balloon. Richardson participated in the second annual ALCOVETS hot air balloon festival, which ran Sept. 8 to 10. ERIN MARTIN | VISUAL MEDIA EDITOR



Tibetan Buddhist monk Geshe Sangpo spent three days constructing the sand mandala before destroying it Sept. 8. JOSEPH NAVIN | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER



A contracted concrete worker pours water on the ground on Sept. 8 so he can make a new batch of concrete mix along North Williamson Avenue for the downtown Elon permanent plaza. According to the town of Elon, construction is set to be completed in November or December. ERIN MARTIN | VISUAL MEDIA EDITOR



Sydney Love (left), captain of Elon University's volleyball team and outside hitter, celebrates with freshman teammate Shannon O'Laughlin (right) at the home opener against Western Carolina University at Schar Center on Sept. 8. The Phoenix swept the match, winning all three sets. ERIN HRONCICH | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER





Freshman Lizeth Torres-Tomas, freshman Jasmine Jackson, sophomore Carlos Gomez Lopez and freshman Jose Pahua Bejar talk at the Cafe con Leche event at El Centro on Sept. 4.

BELLA PELINI | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

# El Centro builds community on campus

Since 1998, El Centro has been a place on campus for Latinx, Hispanic support, but it originally started as a language center

**Lilly Molina**  
Elon News Network

Located on the first floor of Carlton, El Centro is an immersion space on campus for Latinx and Hispanic students to feel supported, according to Center of Race, Ethnicity and Diversity Education Director Sylvia Muñoz.

Muñoz said she remembers former university President J. Fred Young tossing around the idea of a place where students could speak Spanish freely.

“He saw that a lot of students had taken three, four or more years of Spanish and they were not continuing it. So he said, what if we can have a space at the university, where students can actually come in and talk Spanish,” said Muñoz.

Muñoz said she came to Alamance county from Costa Rica in 1995 to teach for one year. In her free time, Muñoz said she would teach Spanish to the Board of Trustees and Young. She said Young shared his idea of an immersion space that would soon become El Centro de Español.

“I thought it was a great idea. I thought it was also a bit crazy,” Muñoz said, “At that moment, I was like, how would you even start something like that?”

Muñoz said she had to return to Costa Rica after her one year of teaching ended. She said she got a call two weeks later from Young offering her the job of overseeing the project. After she accepted the position, Muñoz said she waited ten months for a visa. Muñoz said

she was finally able to get on board and lead El Centro de Español in 1998.

With the help of students who had recently returned from their study abroad programs, Muñoz said she came up with the idea to start El Centro’s first tradition, conversation classes. Muñoz said she and a few others hand-picked 40 faculty and staff to test out if the conversation classes were successful and, in turn, hoped that the staff would promote the classes.

“We started on the first floor of Moseley, right across from the front desk. It was a small room,” Muñoz said.

Muñoz said that she would bring coffee and bake tres leches as people practiced Spanish. She said the trial run of conversation classes were successful and she was ready to bring students into the mix.

“The whole idea was students will not get any credit for it, but at the same time, it was more of an immersion program with the university,” Muñoz said.

Muñoz said she noticed Elon was getting more of an influx of international students visiting El Centro de Español when it was just a language center. In 2002, El Centro de Español moved out of Moseley to Carlton. Muñoz said she also began to notice that more U.S. born and raised Latinx and Hispanic students were attending Elon.

“I started asking the question, who’s supporting them?” Muñoz said.

She said that U.S. born Latinx and Hispanic students felt intimidated by El Centro de Español due to the language component. As a result, Muñoz said she started a working group with other faculty and staff where they came together to brainstorm ideas on how to further support Latinx and Hispanic students.

Muñoz said in order to remedy this issue El Centro de Español became part of the multicultural center, now CREDE, in 2014

and she continued to focus on strategies to support Latinx and Hispanic students. In 2016, she worked with faculty and staff to do research on what other universities were doing to help support their Latinx and Hispanic students. That’s when Muñoz said she decided to change El Centro from a language based center to a Latinx Hispanic cultural center.

“We changed the name to El Centro instead of El Centro de Español,” Muñoz said. “We changed the logo, we changed the mission and the vision without moving away from the language because that’s part of the identity as well.”

Muñoz said that El Centro got its big break when it got remodeled in 2021. Muñoz said more students from all different backgrounds — not only Latinx and Hispanic students — began to visit the center. Many students regardless of background go to popular events that El Centro hosts like Café con Leche that happens once a month where students can socialize while eating culturally significant Latin food. El Centro hosts other events, especially during Hispanic Heritage Month, such as Gala Latina, an awards dinner where people can enjoy delicious food and dance.

Junior Jose Torres-Reyes is a student coordinator at El Centro and first visited the center during his freshman year.

“It has given me a space that I feel comfortable in and I can come in and be myself,” Reyes said.

MJ Larrazabal ’21, the assistant director of CREDE, was once a graduate student at Elon. Larrazabal said as a student she found El Centro as a safe haven and would attend the conversation classes to practice her Spanish. After graduation, Larrazabal said she saw the position was open and jumped at the chance.

“I was like, ‘I need to go back,’ because I wasn’t done with El Centro. I wasn’t done with Elon,” Larrazabal said.

Since returning to Elon, Larrazabal said she has been focusing on bringing more graduate students into El Centro. She said she noticed those students rarely visited when she was still in her graduate program. She is also working with Muñoz and other members of El Centro to “revamp” their events.



IT HAS GIVEN ME A SPACE THAT I FEEL COMFORTABLE IN AND I CAN COME IN AND BE MYSELF.

**JOSE TORRES REYES**  
EL CENTRO STUDENT COORDINATOR

“We’ve been revamping some of our events,” Larrazabal said, “I think that there were events that we were doing yearly because they were successful, but [...] I never want to get comfortable. I want to continue growing.”

Larrazabal said that El Centro staff are going to try and revitalize conversation classes and have an even bigger Carnival celebration, since last year’s was so successful. Larrazabal said she is excited for this year after seeing many freshmen wanting to know more about Latinx and Hispanic language and culture getting involved with El Centro.

Larrazabal said that through her time as a student at Elon, and now as CREDE’s assistant director, El Centro has helped her find and build community on campus.

“I don’t have my family here, so when I think about my Latinx, Hispanic family, I think of all of you,” Larrazabal said.

## Timeline of El Centro on Campus

EL CENTRO DE ESPAÑOL STARTED WITH CONVERSATION CLASSES AND WAS ON THE FIRST FLOOR OF THE MOSELEY CENTER

1998

EL CENTRO DE ESPAÑOL MOVED OUT OF MOSELEY TO CARLTON IN 2002

2002

EL CENTRO DE ESPAÑOL MERGED WITH THE MULTICULTURAL CENTER TO FURTHER ORGANIZE UNIVERSITY EFFORTS FOR UNDERREPRESENTED RACIAL AND ETHNIC COMMUNITIES

2014

MUÑOZ WORKED WITH FACULTY AND STAFF TO DO RESEARCH ON WHAT OTHER UNIVERSITIES WERE DOING TO HELP SUPPORT THEIR LATINX AND HISPANIC STUDENTS

2016

EL CENTRO IS AN IMMERSION SPACE ON CAMPUS FOR LATINX AND HISPANIC STUDENTS TO FEEL SUPPORTED

2023



**EMBRACING HERITAGE: STUDENTS SHARE IDENTITIES**ABIGAIL HOBBS | STAFF  
PHOTOGRAPHER**Fernanda Dias Pains****Senior****What does being Hispanic and Latinx mean to you?**

I think for me, before identifying as Latina, a lot of times I identified as being Brazilian, and I think that's a more prevalent part of my life because it wasn't conscious. When I am at home, they listen to Brazilian music, I speak Portuguese, most of the people in my community tend to be Brazilian.

And then outside of Charlotte — which is where I live — then I have El Centro because I meet a lot of people. I feel like maybe it is about sharing my culture, but also experiencing other cultures. ... A lot of the Latinx culture is so similar to each other that you can always find something in common and share experiences and find a community within each other.

**What does being Hispanic and Latinx mean at Elon?**

I tend to stick to my committee and to the people I know. ... El Centro is my community and so I tend to hang out with people here, ... so for me, I personally haven't had a whole different experience outside of El Centro at Elon.

SOPHIE ROSENTHAL | STAFF  
PHOTOGRAPHER**Jose Torres-Reyes****Junior****What does being Hispanic and Latinx mean to you?**

My background, where I come from, my culture in general, just being Hispanic involves being able to express and to show and just learn more about your own history.

**What does being Hispanic and Latinx mean at Elon?**

I think it's really important since we're like a small population here on campus just to have events here and have people show up and learn more about our cultures and how we celebrate anything we do, especially when we've had Hispanic Heritage Month being really big. ... We see a lot of people coming and going to the kickoff and just random events so it's really nice to see them wanting to come and learn more about our culture.

ABIGAIL HOBBS | STAFF  
PHOTOGRAPHER**Daniela Maldonado****Junior****What does being Hispanic and Latinx mean to you?**

Being Hispanic has definitely been a big part of my life and my culture and just basically shaping my identity. My family, they're immigrants from El Salvador and Honduras. So listening to their journey and their history of leaving their country and coming to the United States has always inspired me to just continue to pursue my dreams and just honoring all of the things that they've accomplished. ...

I think my culture has definitely taught me the importance of unity and being united within whatever community you find yourself in. So like for example, my family, we're super united, then through that I've found unity in my friends and then like coming to Elon, I have found my community and that's where my unity is.

**What does being Hispanic and Latinx mean at Elon?**

It's definitely a challenge. I feel like because you're in a place where not a lot of people may look like you, not a lot of people have similar backgrounds and like your stories, and the stories you share are really important in finding connection.

So I think that being Hispanic at Elon can be challenging in the sense that sometimes you feel like your identity is being questioned in a way. But I also think because of that, it's a way for you to be more connected with the Hispanic community at Elon, and also being able to reach out to others and have others learn about you and then you learn about them.

So, in a way, I think it's beautiful. I have a lot of friends who have asked me questions about my culture, who come and support a lot of the events we have in El Centro with LHU, so I think it's a really beautiful way to interconnect with one another, like being Hispanic at Elon.





# Huepa!

## Dance academy provides outlet for creativity, cultural expression

SOPHIE ROSENTHAL | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Yholima Vargas instructs Huepa elementary-aged dancers

Huepa! dance academy practices traditional Colombian dance, offers safe space for people of all backgrounds

**Madison Powers**  
News Editor

Yholima Vargas, born in Bogotá, Colombia, has danced since she was young and found safety and self-expression through traditional Colombian dance while living in Montreal, Durham and Burlington. She said as she dances, she yells the Colombian expression, “Huepa!” — a declaration of exhilaration.

“Performing arts has done amazing things for me,” Vargas said. “It has been my life companion. Wherever I go, dancing has been an amazing place to be. It allows me to feel comfortable in my own environment but also to tell people that it’s OK to be yourself.”

Vargas founded a Colombian dance academy in 2002 when she lived in Montreal. When she moved to North Carolina in 2015, she founded Huepa! Culture and Arts Institute the same year, a dance academy promotes Colombian performing arts and cultural identity through the CityGate Dream Center in Burlington.

“The name ‘Huepa’ was created because in Colombia, when we dance, we say ‘Huepa!’ It’s a word of expressing life and happiness and joy,” Vargas said. “I always say ‘Huepa’ when I’m performing, so I felt like it was the perfect name.”

Vargas moved from Santa Marta, Colombia to Montreal at the age of 19 and said she found herself struggling to feel at home but found solace in traditional Colombian dance.

“I was having a hard time integrating into a new country. I was so young, but dancing was the only thing I remember really staying with me,” Vargas said. “When I started dancing by myself, I realized that many people needed some type of refuge;

they needed a refuge to find themselves.”

Huepa! Culture and Arts Institute was founded in partnership with Burlington’s CityGate Dream Center, which offers programs and events serving the Alamance County Hispanic and Latinx community.

Vargas said dance has been an important part of her life for as long as she can remember.

“Cultural identity was very important to me, and it still is to this day,” Vargas said. “I grew up dancing traditional music until I was a teenager, through high school and even in college.”

“

THE NAME ‘HUEPA’ WAS CREATED BECAUSE IN COLOMBIA, WHEN WE DANCE, WE SAY ‘HUEPA!’ IT’S A WORD OF EXPRESSING LIFE AND HAPPINESS AND JOY.

**YHOLIMA VARGAS**  
FOUNDER OF HUEPA!

Vargas works as a social worker and English as a second language coordinator at Alamance Community College. She also hosts diversity, equity and inclusion workshops for local public school staff and law enforcement officers. She said it is important to highlight the Hispanic community both now and outside of Hispanic Heritage Month.

“It’s all about promoting the interests of the Hispanic community as one more that needs to be promoted, but not the only one, without taking away the importance of any

other culture,” Vargas said.

She said dance is one of the best ways to introduce people to a more accessible aspect of Hispanic culture.

“Performing arts is an amazing way to connect people, to allow them to find themselves in a safe space,” Vargas said. “It’s very fun, but it’s also about educating people that don’t know much about the culture.”

Though Huepa teaches mainly traditional Afro-Colombian dance, Vargas said dancers from all backgrounds are welcome.

“That’s the beauty of it — it’s all about promoting diversity and inclusion,” she said.

Gina Camacho, whose 9-year-old daughter Gracie dances with Huepa, said she found out about the group through Gracie’s cousin, who has danced with Huepa! for the past three years.

“We went to see her cousin perform, and she was like, ‘I want to do it,’” Gina said. “She caught right on, and she loves it. That’s our Saturday thing.”

Gracie has been dancing for two years and Gina said Huepa has helped Gracie become more comfortable in her own skin.

“She’s grown so much more confident,” Gina said. “Because of Huepa, she has opened up more to singing and performing in front of a big crowd, which is not easy to do.”

Gracie said dancing with Huepa has helped her overcome her fear of performing. “It’s helped me with my nervousness,” Gracie said.

Gina said that Gracie sang at her aunt’s wedding in early September — her first solo performance.

Gina said Huepa has formed a home for the Hispanic community.

“It’s wonderful. People get together from different countries,” she said. “We’re Mexican but we dance Colombian. We love Colombia and hope to visit one day. The Dream Center has really brought the community together.”



Angela Peña, who visits the U.S. from Santiago, Chile, every year for Hispanic Heritage Month — with her granddaughter, Sophia Peña.



“Not a lot of people know about Huepa,” she said. “Anybody can join Huepa. It doesn’t have to be a Hispanic thing. Anybody who’s interested and wants to dance, have fun and enjoy it, this will be the place.”

Mía Pinzón said she has lived in Burlington her whole life but only joined Huepa two years ago.

Pinzón said she loves Huepa and has formed close friendships with her fellow dancers.



DANCING IS A STORY, THE STORY OF WHERE WE’RE FROM.

**MIA PINZÓN**  
HUEPA DANCER

“When we all get together, it’s like my second family,” Pinzón said.

She said the traditional style of Colombian dance is different from American styles of dance.

“Dancing is a story, the story of where we’re from,” Pinzón said. “I think people should be exposed to that.”

Pinzón said the skirts the Huepa dancers wear during performance can be hard to move in.

“Since the dresses are big, we have to exaggerate our movements so our movements are visible,” Pinzón said.

The Huepa dancers range in age from 2 to 57 years old, and Vargas said all are welcome, regardless of ethnic background. She said her academy encourages cultural diversity and confidence in origin.

“It’s all about promoting that potential,” Vargas said. “I belong. Who I am and where I come from matters.”



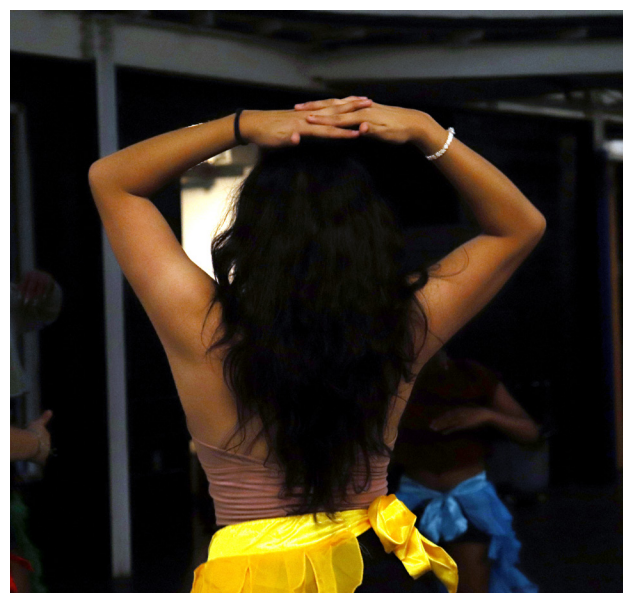
Vargas stands with an elementary-aged dancer at a rehearsal at the Dream Center.

COURTESY OF YHOLIMA VARGAS



Freshly ironed skirts after a Huepa rehearsal at the Burlington CityGate Dream Center on Sept. 9.

SOPHIE ROSENTHAL | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER



Pinzón dances during a rehearsal on Sept. 9.

SOPHIE ROSENTHAL | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

**20+**

dancers participate in Huepa

**2-57**

is the age range of dancers

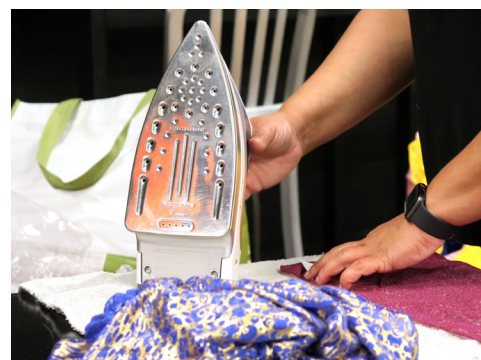
**COLOMBIA,  
MEXICO,  
GUATEMALA,  
JAMAICA AND  
CHILE**

are the represented countries



Heritage Month, practices cueca — the national dance of the Republic

SOPHIE ROSENTHAL | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER



Mariel Colón irons a brightly colored skirt used in Huepa! performances on Sept. 9.

SOPHIE ROSENTHAL | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER



Huepa dancers ready for performance. Huepa performs mainly Afro-Colombian dance, but Vargas said all people are welcome, regardless of ethnic background.

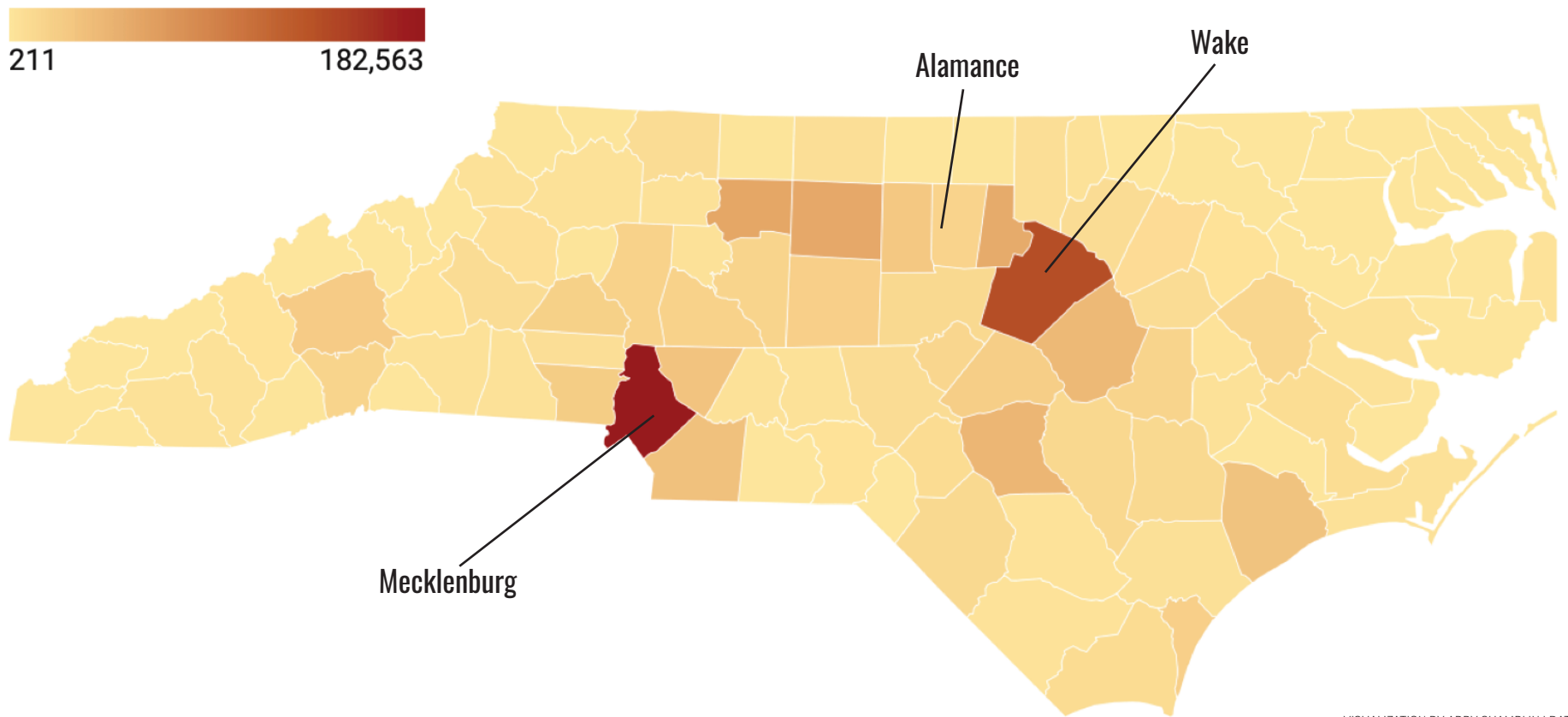
COURTESY OF YHOLIMA VARGAS



## HISPANIC, LATINX DEMOGRAPHICS AT ELON, ALAMANCE COUNTY

### 2023 North Carolina Hispanic, Latinx population estimate by county

Alamance County has a Hispanic/Latinx population of 27,171

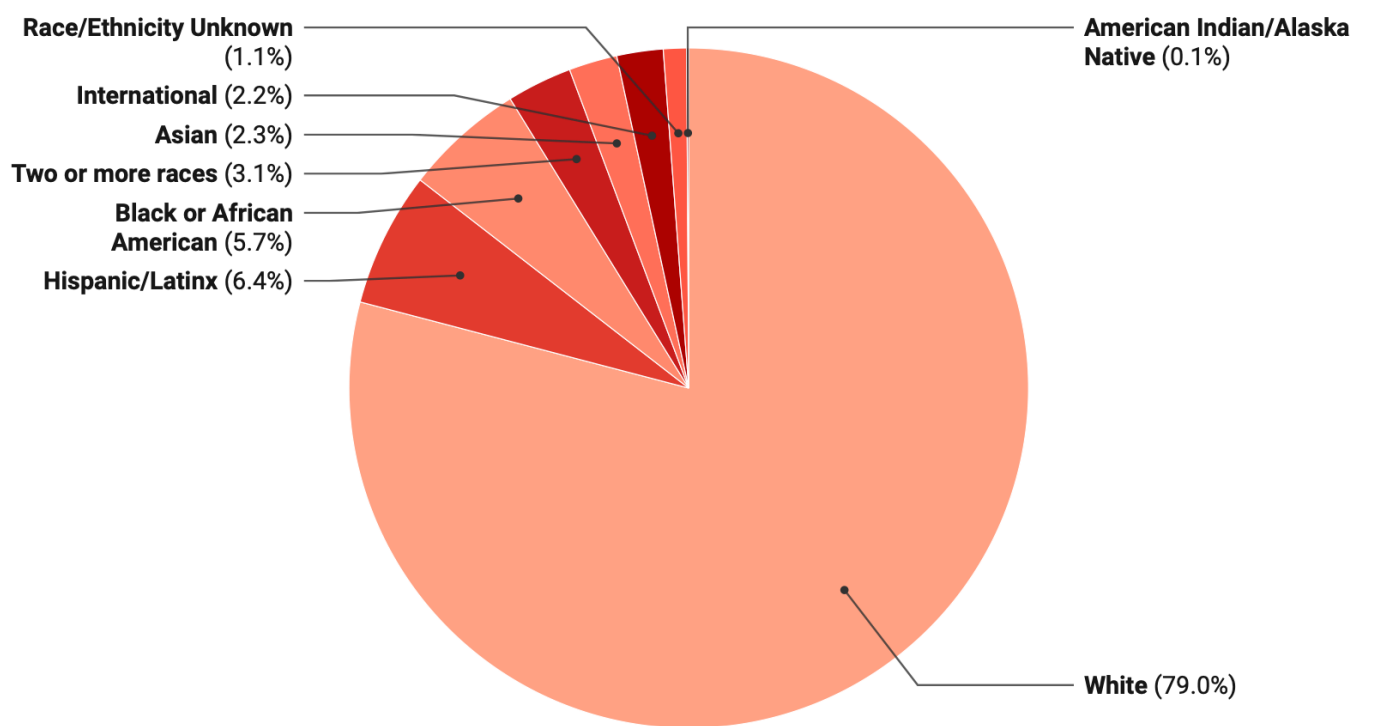


The county with the highest Hispanic and Latinx population is Mecklenburg County, according to the North Carolina Office of State Budget and Management.

VISUALIZATION BY ABBY SHAMBLIN | DATAWRAPPER

### 2022 Elon University undergraduate demographics

6.4% of Elon's undergraduate students identify as Hispanic, Latinx

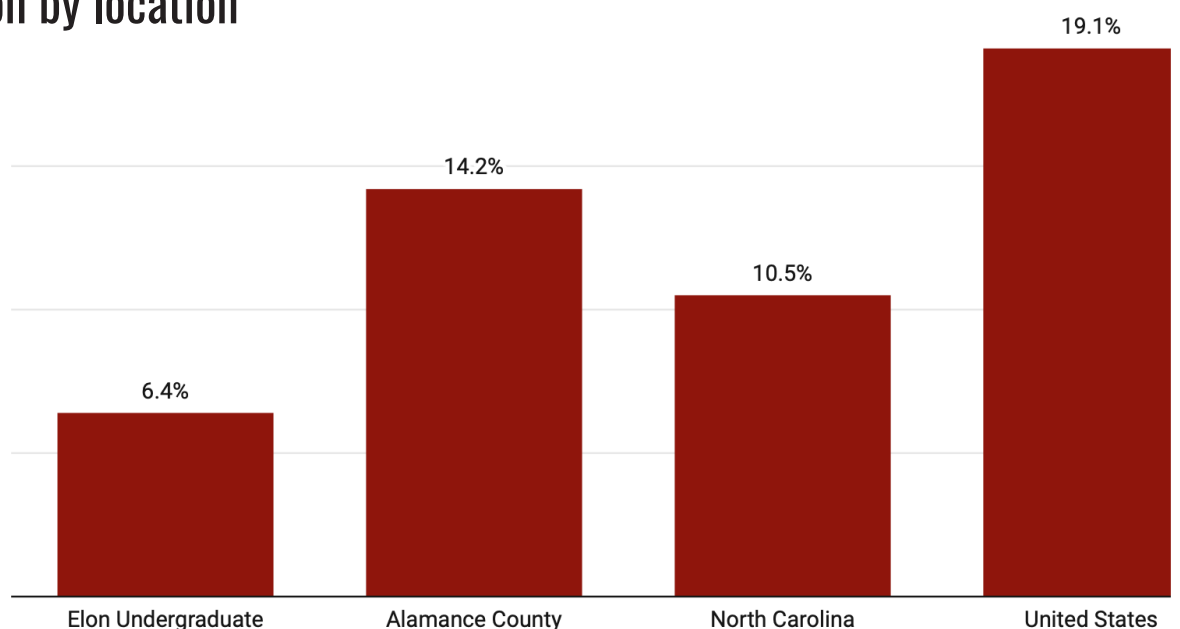


The largest population at Elon are white at 79%, with Hispanic, Latinx being the next highest at 6.4%.

VISUALIZATION BY ABBY SHAMBLIN | DATAWRAPPER

### Hispanic, Latinx percentage of population by location

14.2% of Alamance County's population is Hispanic and Latinx, while 6.4% of Elon's undergraduate students are Hispanic and Latinx



Alamance County has 14.2% Hispanic, Latinx population, while North Carolina has 10.5%.

VISUALIZATION BY ABBY SHAMBLIN | DATAWRAPPER



# BACK-TO-SCHOOL BUG: ILLNESS SPREADS AMONG CAMPUS

Elon University students see an uptick in illnesses, COVID-19

**Monika Jurevicius**  
Elon News Network

Many Elon University students began the school year with symptoms of illness as COVID-19 and flu cases increase throughout the state.

The North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services has seen a spike in respiratory virus hospitalizations, with a 1% increase from the start of the school year, from 5.6% to 6.6%. Elon University Health Services no longer tracks cases as the state no longer needs them to be reported to NCDHHS, according to Elon's Medical Director and University Physician Ginette Archinal.

Sophomore Lathan Ruban said he had plans set with his

friends when he tested positive for COVID-19 on Aug. 31.

"These past few weeks have been very fast-paced," Ruban said. "It's been very busy so COVID was kind of a little relief. My body was really saying, 'Take a break for a minute.'"

Elon Student Health Services still has guidelines set up for those feeling ill on campus to ensure that everyone is as safe as possible. Students are encouraged to stay in their living areas and speak to staff on their health status based on current CDC guidelines.

Archinal said students who start to feel sick should take the proper precautions.

"If someone starts feeling ill, do a home COVID test, take

over-the-counter cough and cold medications and wear a mask when in class and around other people," Archinal said. "If you have a fever, aren't getting better, or just want to be checked, schedule an appointment at student health or do a telehealth visit with TimelyCare."

Alamance County reported on CovidActNow.org, an initiative that helps communities stay up-to-date on COVID-19 data, that 4.5% of patients in medical center beds in the area are diagnosed with COVID-19 as of Aug. 26.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, students who test positive for COVID-19 must isolate for five days and may resume normal

activity — wearing a mask — until day 10.

Some students find themselves in gray areas when they are exposed to the illness and do not want to risk spreading it.

Ruban's roommate and sophomore Bunny Ingram is one of those students at a loss.

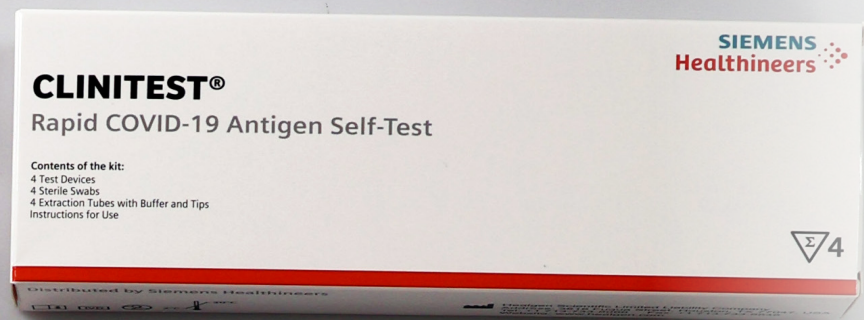
"No one is making accommodations for needing to stay in the dorm," Ingram said.

Ingram said that having the option of choosing to join a virtual classroom was convenient when students were sick during the peak of the pandemic, but removing that option now introduces new struggles.

Vice President of Student Life Jon Dooley wrote in an email to

the university community before the school year on July 10 detailing what measures people on-campus should take as flu season approaches. According to Dooley, COVID-19 and flu shot clinics will be held later in the semester, which will allow students to receive injections if they would like. More information can be found under "Campus Health Status and Alerts" on the Elon University website.

"Elon will continue to support the university community in slowing the spread of viruses on campus," Dooley wrote. "The Infectious Disease Response Team will continue to meet regularly to monitor campus conditions and offer recommendations for action, as needed."



ERIN MARTIN | VISUAL MEDIA EDITOR

# AI hits the road, high tech highways emerge in NC

Artificial Intelligence technology is being used to track commercial vehicles

**Tucker Price**  
Elon News Network

In July, North Carolina Highway Patrol announced it would implement an artificial intelligence-based system meant to catch violations of the Hands-Free Law and seatbelt use in commercial truck drivers, according to Acusensus, an Australian road safety technology company that uses AI software to monitor drivers.

Acensus opened its American headquarters in Las Vegas earlier this year, and North Carolina sports Acusensus' one of the first uses of

their "Heads-Up" technology in the United States, according to the company's website.

According to the North Carolina Department of Transportation, over 10% of the 1,658 traffic casualties in 2020 involved collision with a large truck. Nationally, 31% of individuals that drive for a living admitted to causing a collision while on the job, according to the National Highway Transportation Safety Association.

Elon computer science professor Scott Spurlock said that these innovations in artificial intelligence were previously unheard of.

"This idea that you can have a camera see something and know what's happening was science fiction like 10 years ago," Spurlock said. "And so we've had this deep learning explosion."

Spurlock said that Acusensus "Heads-Up" technology uses a

deep learning AI algorithm to understand what's going on in high-resolution images of truck drivers. Spurlock said this means artificial intelligence is trained on a series of images in an effort to help it label some images as containing good behavior and others as containing bad behavior.

"Deep learning says 'I'm going to make a neural network' — which is a type of machine learning model with a whole bunch of layers," Spurlock said. "These layers learn features from the data of things that it wants to watch out for."

For instance, Spurlock said a lower layer might be able to distinguish specific patterns from an image such as an edge or corner. Middle layers might be able to recognize that those edges and corners form a rectangle. Higher layers might learn that this rectangle is actually a phone, and still higher layers might recognize that a person is using that phone.

But deep learning is not without its biases, according to Spurlock.

"There's a ton of manual effort to set up your training data," Spurlock said. "And the manual effort is in labeling images."

These labeled images originate with a real human being — a trainer. Every conclusion the AI makes is based on the trainer's interpretation of the data, according to Spurlock.

Despite the potential for bias, Acusensus' reports show that "Heads-Up" technology had success in deterring phone use. Acusensus reported that mobile phone use



PHOTO COURTESY OF ACUSENSUS

Acusensus' "Heads-Up" system can be used in a portable form.

while driving in New South Wales, Australia, has gone down by 85% since 2019, when the technology was first implemented. Its "Heads-Up" technology has been used regionally throughout Australia and the UK to monitor both commercial drivers and the average commuter.

But for truck drivers, these measures come across as redundant, according to Clarence Brownley, owner of Cap Red Trucking. Brownley said there is already a camera in his cab that is meant to track phone use.

"They're already tracking us," Brownley said. "That's the time we're moving into."

However, Brownley said

he doesn't mind some extra monitoring.

"Anything we do nowadays, someone's got a camera tracking you anyway," Brownley said. "I don't mind it — as long as it doesn't cause any issues — or unless there's a misunderstanding."

Campus Safety and police officer Jennifer Collington said she feels the use of Acusensus technology is a little too much. She said her husband is in the trucking business.

"His company monitors him anyway, so it doesn't make a difference," Collington said. "It should depend on the company themselves and who they're driving for."



PHOTO COURTESY OF ACUSENSUS

Example photo of what the AI system captures and sends to local law enforcement.



# Professor publishes award-winning poetry collection

English professor Shaina Jones reflects on her time at Elon after arriving in 2022

**Nia Bedard**  
Elon News Network

Shaina Jones started her role as an assistant English professor at Elon University last fall. While helping her students hone their creative writing skills, Jones was working to publish her own collection of poetry.

Her poetry collection “To Be Named Something Else” was published under the name Shaina Phenix in April 2023. Jones’ students, friends and colleagues

**Shaina Jones**

celebrated the book’s publication Sept. 5 at the Numen Lumen Pavilion. Tita Ramirez, a fellow English professor, started the celebration by introducing Jones and her work.

“It is beautiful, it is joyous, it is heartbreaking,” Ramirez said.

Jones handpicked a selection of poems from the collection to share. The readings included “Ghazal for Black Girls in Miami,” a poem about a group of Black women vacationing in Miami.

“Sometimes I look at this book and I’m bewildered that I’m holding it in my hand,” Jones said.

Jones explained throughout her reading that Black “femhood,” celebration and Harlem — where Jones is from — are common threads throughout her collection.

“These are the support beams that are holding the collection up,” Jones said.

Aside from this reading, Jones said she has experienced many other meaningful moments throughout her time at Elon so far, including the last-minute reading her students encouraged her to hold.

“My students told me I had to read this,” Jones said. “They showed up in big, big numbers. Even some of my 1100-level people who thought they were never going to write again in their lives came from the basketball court screaming my name through the hallway.”

When “To Be Named Something Else” was initially launched in April, Jones’ brought together a group of her students, friends and colleagues for a launch party in the Center for the Arts Black Box.

Jones said it meant a lot to her that her students to attend.

“I feel like this impacted them, not that they wanted to hear poetry but just that they felt like I was worth it as a teacher,” Jones said.

Jones’ students are not the only people impacted by her poetry.

The manuscript Jones wrote won the Millers Williams Poetry Prize in August 2022. Jones received a \$5,000 cash prize, her work being published through the University of Arkansas press and approval from Patricia Smith, a fellow Black female poet — who Jones said she looks up to as a writer. Smith was the editor of the 2023 Miller Williams Poetry Series, which “To Be Named Something Else” was published.

“She didn’t just read Shaina’s poetry, she didn’t just like Shaina’s poetry, she loved Shaina’s poetry,” Ramirez said about Jones.

Jones is in her late 20s and told Elon News Network that despite her age, she has the right to be an educator and help her students develop their creative writing skills.

“It has been a little isolating to walk into a new space as a young person and trying to acclimate amongst people who are sometimes 20 years older than me,” Jones said. “I’ve done the work to exist in this space.”

Jones said she has grown as an educator since she started at Elon.

“I’m getting a lot of new experiences and really rethinking my pedagogy and my ways that I like to teach that work for students,” Jones said.

Jones said she is still very open to the challenges that this new space will bring for her and how these experiences will affect her creatively.

“It’s been I guess what any new

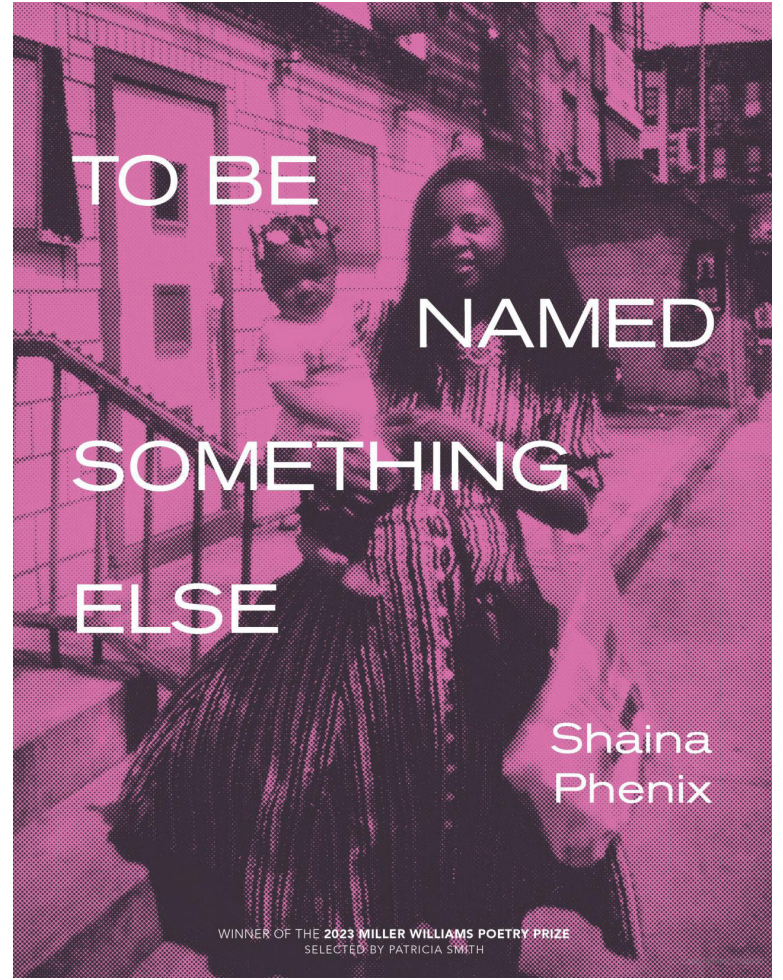


PHOTO COURTESY OF SHAINA JONES

English professor Shaina Jones’ “To Be Named Something Else” poetry collection, published under the name Shaina Phenix.

thing is right?” Jones said. “There are challenges, there are things that bring joy, there are things that perplex me, and there are things that bewilder me.”

“To Be Named Something Else” was published last spring

and Jones said she already has plans for her next venture.

“I thought I was writing a second book of poems, but it might be a book of essays, so that is what I am playing with,” Jones said.

# Sweet Signatures releases latest album ‘Bitter Sweet’

Sweet Signatures music director breaks down recording new album

**Rachel Holley**  
Elon News Network

After two-years in the making, Elon University’s all-female a cappella group Sweet Signatures released their fifth studio album, Bitter Sweet, Aug. 31.

Sweet Signatures was first established in 2001 by 15 women ready to entertain, participate in national competitions and further develop their love of singing, according



to its website, and has grown into the reputation as Elon University’s premiere all-female a cappella group.

Bitter Sweet is composed of 12 cover songs, four of which are live. The album is available on Apple Music and Spotify. Bitter Sweet is the most recently released album since “XX” in 2021.

Elon senior and music director of Sweet Signatures Morgan Hicks said their group puts out an album every two years.

“It’s a whole process of a lot of mixing and mastering and all of

that but then we put it on Spotify,” Hicks said.

Sweet Signatures records their albums with Liquid 5th Productions, a recording studio in Graham. Hicks said most of Elon’s a cappella groups also record their songs at Liquid 5th.

Hicks said after the group has learned and perfected their songs, they go to the studio in Graham and begin recording the songs — a process that took over two years for “Bitter Sweet.”

After recording comes the long process of mixing and mastering before the group can upload them to streaming sites.



Sweet Signatures President Perrin Trask said her favorite song on the album is a cover of Lady Gaga’s “Always Remember Us This Way,” with a solo by Grace Angelo. Trask said the group cried when they heard the final version of the song for the first time.

“It’s a really fun arrangement, and we all love singing it,” Trask said.

Other songs on the album include covers of Olivia Rodrigo’s “Traitor” and Taylor Swift’s “Wildest Dreams.”

The song “Break My Heart” premiered first and has a music video on the Sweet Signatures YouTube channel which was released four months ago.

Future Sweet Signatures

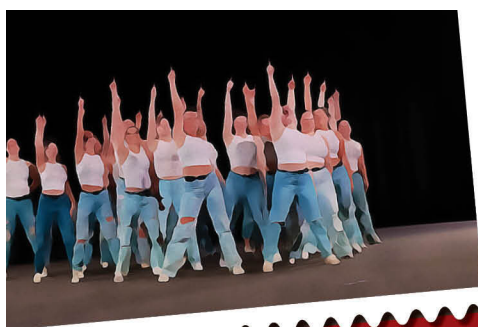


PHOTO COURTESY OF SWEET SIGNATURES

Sweet Signatures’ newest album “Bitter Sweet” can be streamed on Spotify and Apple Music.

performances include Rockapella on Sept. 30, Acapocalypse on Oct. 7 and their Fall Concert on Oct. 20 during Homecoming Weekend.

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## ELON NEWS NETWORK BEST OF 2024 SURVEY

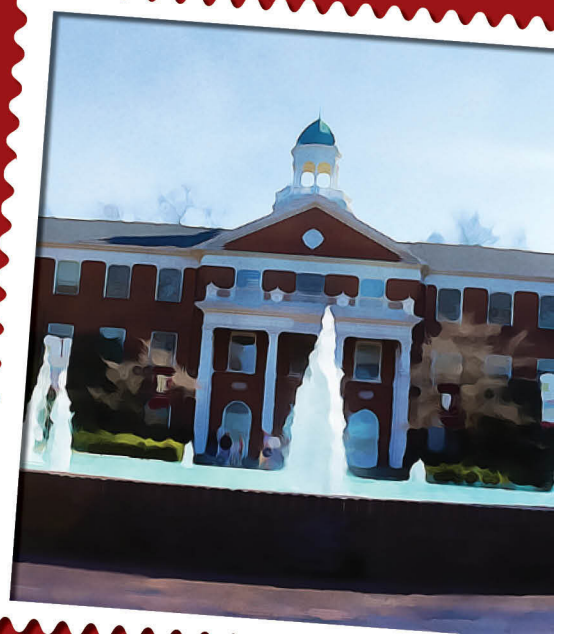






PHOTO COURTESY OF SYDNEY LOVE

## Family feud on the court: Elon junior plays against sister

Sydney and Ryann Love grew up playing volleyball together, but now compete against each other

**Audrey Toscano & Mason Willett**  
Elon News Network

As Elon volleyball kicks off their 2023-24 season, one player on the team is preparing to play against a family member. Elon junior Sydney Love, an outside hitter and captain for the volleyball team, played against her sister in Fall 2022 and will face her in a rematch this semester.

Ryann Love, a sophomore at The College of William & Mary, grew up playing volleyball with Sydney on the same side of the net. Though Elon's first scheduled game against William & Mary is Oct. 7, Sydney and Ryan said they are eager to get back on the court.

During the fall 2022 season, Elon and William & Mary faced each other during a weekend matchup, where Elon won the first match 3-0, and William & Mary won the second match 3-2.

"Playing against her at the collegiate level was super exciting, and I know we both love it," Sydney said. "We always have a huge fan section when we play each other."

Sydney and Ryann are from Chesapeake, Virginia, and began playing volleyball at a young age. Sydney, 2 years older, said watching her sister grow into the player she is today has been inspiring.

Ryann said Sydney was the one who got her into the sport initially and playing with Sydney only strengthened her love for the sport.

Both sisters said they began to take volleyball more seriously in high school as they joined South East Region Volleyball. After a few years on SERV, they transitioned to a new club called Beach Elite and said that was when they knew they wanted to take the next step and play in college.

"We skyrocketed from there," Sydney said. "We got so much better at playing with other girls that also wanted to play at the collegiate

level."

When the Love sisters began the recruiting process, Sydney said she wanted a school that was far from home with high academics, small class sizes and a welcoming community. With this in mind, she said Elon was the perfect fit.

In contrast, Ryann said she knew she wanted to go to a college closer to home.

Though the sisters chose different schools, both Elon and William & Mary belong to the Coastal Athletic Association so the two get to see each other in tournaments.

"Playing with her is exciting, but also playing against her is even better," Sydney said.

The Love sisters come from a big family, and Sydney said it is always fun to have her family all in the same place, watching them play.

"They were watching us play, but they were watching us play against each other, which was huge for them, too," Sydney said. "Of course, they can't pick sides of who they want to win, but that weekend it was good because we both took home a win."

Elon volleyball head coach Mary Tendler also said she enjoys watching the sisters' competitive dynamic.



PLAYING WITH HER IS EXCITING,  
BUT ALSO PLAYING AGAINST HER  
IS EVEN BETTER.

**SYDNEY LOVE**  
ELON OUTSIDE HITTER

"It brought an extra element to the weekend, which was pretty cool," Tendler said. "She embraced the whole experience."

Despite the competitive nature of their relationship, both sisters said they are still supportive of one another.

"She still wants what is best for me even though we are in the same conference

competing against each other," Ryann said. "She's always supportive."

Elon captains Sydney and Jordan Gower said the players are eager to showcase their abilities and compete against tough opponents like William & Mary this year.

According to Tendler, the team has a diverse roster of experienced players and promising newcomers, creating a dynamic blend of talent on the court as they continue through and look toward the rest of the season.

The team wrapped up its first home tournament of the year Sept. 10. After starting the season with a record of 1 and 6, the Phoenix won both of its matches in the tournament. Despite their rough start, Tendler said she believes the team found the momentum it's been looking for.

"I don't know if it's young, or whatever, we try not to make excuses," Tendler said. "But we have a lot of new people. So getting comfortable next to new people, it takes some time to do that."

Sydney said she is always trying to be there for the younger teammates the same way her predecessors were there for her.

"Being able to talk to my captains was amazing and it felt very comforting. And they were always there for me. I always knew I had someone to talk to," Sydney said. "So being a captain on this team is very rewarding, because I'm able to do the same for these girls."

After two impressive wins, Sydney said she believes the team is finding its rhythm, just in time for a difficult conference schedule that begins next weekend.

"I think confidence helps build on team chemistry and how we all mesh together and work together," Sydney said. "It's something to relate from like, remember how we felt our first home opener night, like it's big things like that, that helped us lead into the conference."

Sydney said she thinks the team will be able to turn the season around thanks to these wins and continue to get better.

"I feel like we're able to do it," Sydney said. "We know we can do it, we are capable of doing so let's just do what we know how to; let's just work hard."

Tendler said she is happy to have someone as talented as Sydney on the team, though she is prouder to see how Sydney has grown into a leader for the team.

"One of the best things as a coach is to see people progress," Tendler said. "It's on the court. They're doing things better than they did before — but it's more so just their leadership skills."

Tendler said she has seen Sydney specifically grow in her ability to lead this season.

"She's a co-captain for us now," she said. "She's just taking charge."

The Volleyball team is preparing to travel to New York to take on its first in conference opponent Hofstra University Sept. 16 and 17.

### SYDNEY LOVE

108 career digs  
460 career kills

### RYANN LOVE

13 career digs  
68 career kills



PHOTO COURTESY OF SYDNEY LOVE



# After exceeding expectations last season, ultimate frisbee team sets sights on nationals



Brady Jackson and club frisbee president Tyler Myers toss the frisbee to each other on the Elon intramural fields off of North Oak Street on Sept. 8.

ALEX STERNE | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Fueled by nearly missing nationals last year, Big Fat Bombs see hope for a strong season

**Alex Sterne**  
Elon News Network

Last fall Elon University's club ultimate frisbee team, appropriately named "Big Fat Bombs," began an unprecedented run after starting the season being ranked 138th in its division.

While this could have diminished the motivation of the team, President Tyler Myers quickly discovered the team's value didn't reside in the speed or the strength of the individual players but in its members' ability to focus on their passion for the sport and unity as a team.

Sophomore Scott Katz said the team can only get better from here.

"Last year we went into the year with no expectations at all. Once we got into the spring season we kind of started to believe that we could be something," Katz said.



WE MADE IT FARTHER THAN ANYONE WANTED TO GIVE US CREDIT FOR, INCLUDING OURSELVES.

**SCOTT KATZ**  
ELON SOPHOMORE

"We made it farther than anyone wanted to give us credit for, including ourselves."

The team made it so far, in fact, that the Big Fat Bombs found themselves heading onto the field for a potential trip to nationals. The only obstacle was neighboring High Point University — a "strong rivalry," according to junior Myles Sawin.

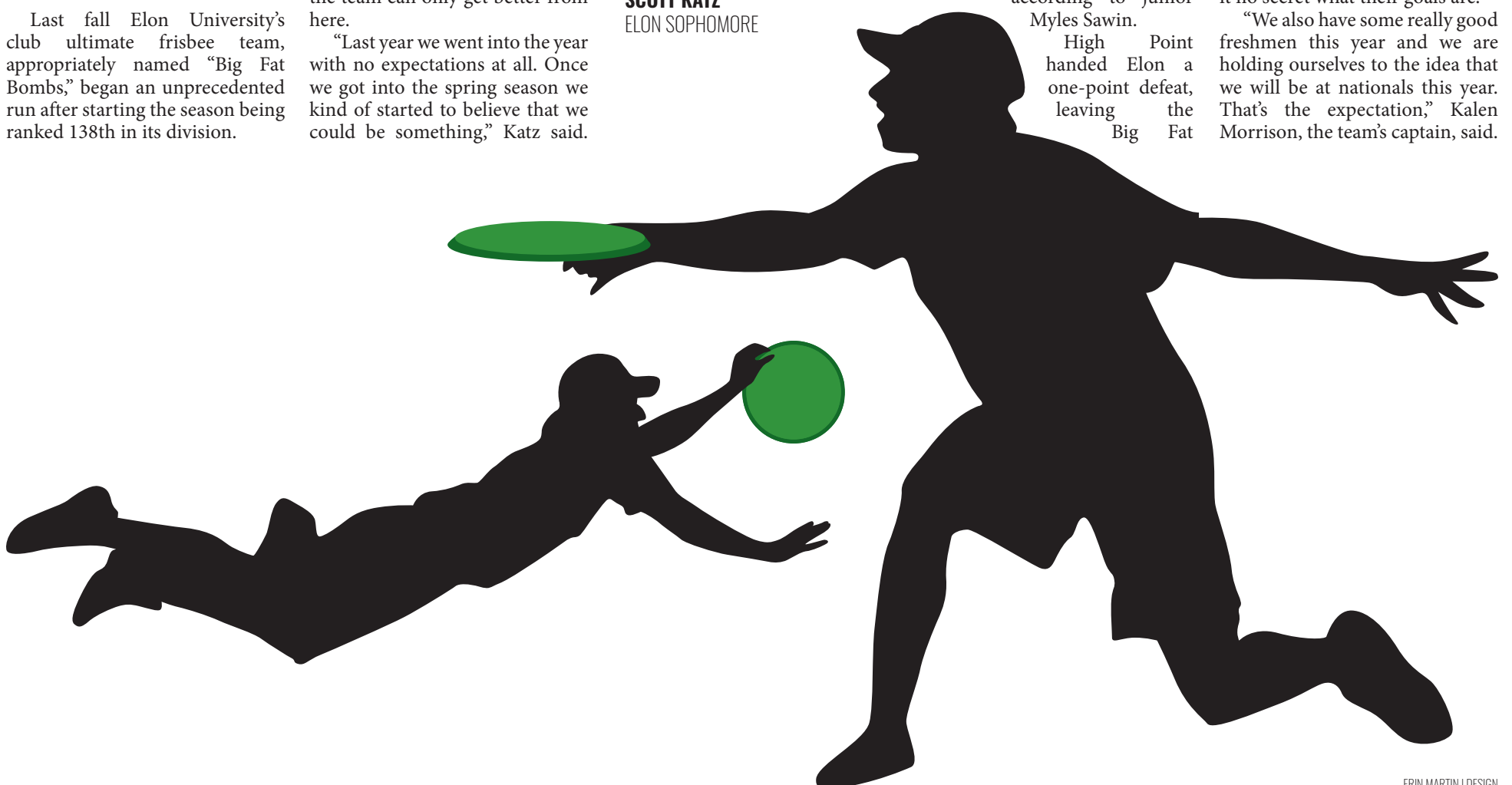
High Point handed Elon a one-point defeat, leaving the Big Fat

Bombs to look to one another and begin building back up for the next season.

"While it was extremely frustrating to not make nationals, we were so close, and we have such a bright future," said sophomore Reed Burkert.

Three weeks into the 2023-24 season, the team's members make it no secret what their goals are.

"We also have some really good freshmen this year and we are holding ourselves to the idea that we will be at nationals this year. That's the expectation," Kalen Morrison, the team's captain, said.



ERIN MARTIN | DESIGN