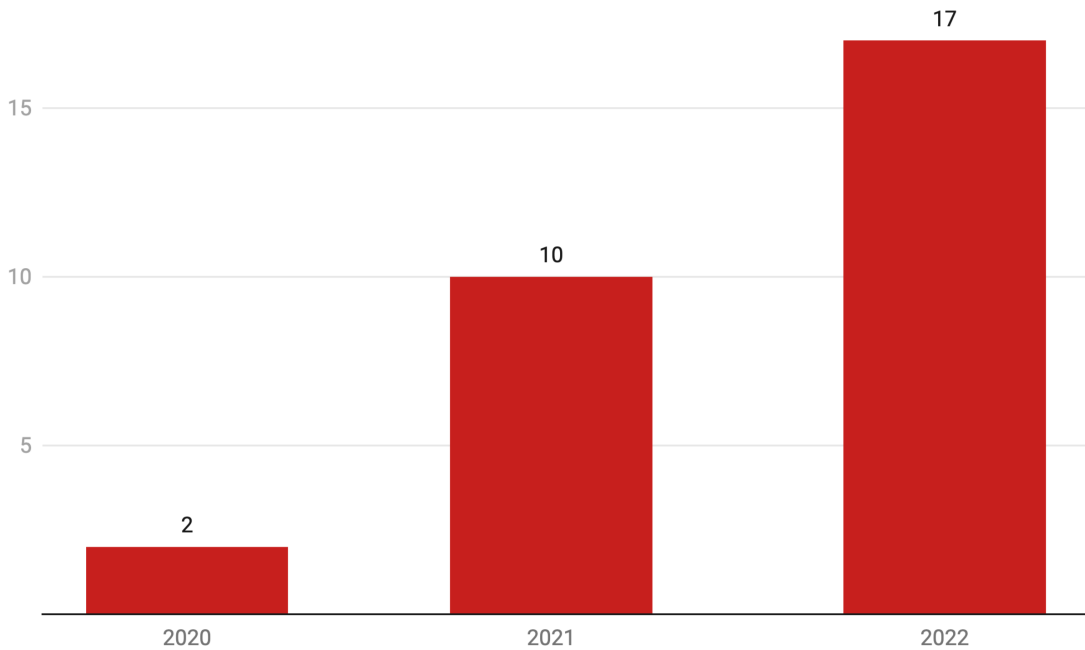


## TRAINED EMPLOYEES HELP STUDENTS SPEAK OUT AGAINST SEXUAL VIOLENCE



Number of Elon University reported rape cases from 2020 to 2022 as reported in the 2023 Fire and Safety Report.

VISUALIZATION BY ERIN MARTIN

Campus police, Title IX office attribute more reports to trusting employees

**Abigail Hobbs**  
Managing Editor of The Pendulum

Elon University has seen an increase in reported rapes in the last three years, according to the 2023 fire and safety report. The report details crimes reported in 2022, which includes 17 cases of rape, seven more than the year prior and 15 more than 2020.

All 17 cases were in residential facilities, which the university defines as dormitories and other on-campus housing.

Elon University Chief of Police Joe LeMire said the large jump from 2020 to 2022 can be partially attributed to the COVID-19 pandemic.

“There was a lot of universities, including us, that had sent people home, and then they came back to campus, but it was kind of modified as to what we were doing,” LeMire said. “So there were some lower numbers, and you’re gonna see a general increase when we go back to normal operations.”

The University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill also followed

this pattern, with 18 rape cases reports in residential facilities in 2022, compared to 15 in 2021 and 7 in 2020. North Carolina State University, Raleigh saw 13 reported residential facilities rape cases in 2022, 5 in 2021 and 4 in 2020.

LeMire said the jump can also be attributed to an increase in people making reports, not an increase in the crime itself, which is connected to the change in how the university deals with sexual violence.

“The bad part would be in the past if those things were happening, but nobody reported that and they kept it to themselves,” LeMire said. “The big thing in the background is getting people taken care of: do they get the resources they need, and do they get the counseling they need and do they get all that stuff that they deserve?”

Latisha Perry, interim Title IX coordinator and compliance manager, said she agrees that the increase in number is due to reports and awareness on campus.

“It is important to consider a few factors when thinking about raw data. First, generally speaking, receiving reports is a positive,” Perry wrote in an email to Elon News Network. “Over the past few years, our office and campus partners have worked to further raise awareness in our community about what sexual

harassment is and have dedicated time and resources to training and educating students, faculty, and staff about sexual misconduct.”

Campus Safety and Police has developed a sensitive crimes unit and works closely with the Gender and LGBTQIA Center for sexual violence prevention, including an online education program, HealthEU skits and peer education workshops.

“We’re really focusing on how we deal with trauma-informed interviewing and things like that campus has victim advocacy or confidential advocacy,” LeMire said. “We’ve really built up our infrastructure of how we deal with that type of crime and that type of incident. And when you do that, and you build up a lot of trust with the community, you get people to come forward that in the past hadn’t come forward.”

Perry also said the training the Title IX employees receive is also vital to building trust in the community.

“Part of the goal in doing so is help community members identify conduct that might constitute sexual misconduct and to report it to our office,” Perry wrote. “We are unable to respond to alleged misconduct if we are not told about it. We are encouraged that we have received these reports because that has given us the opportunity to respond.”

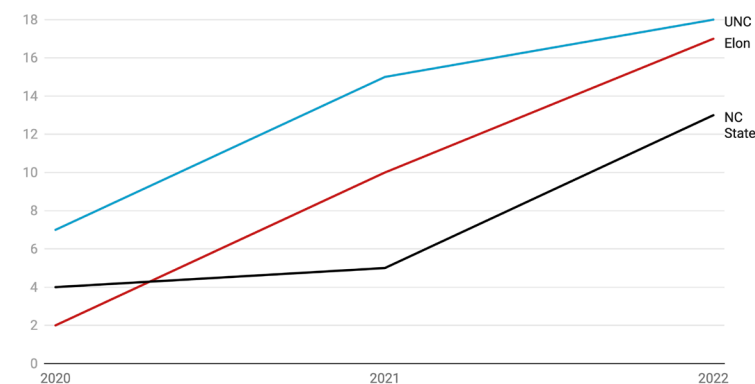
Prevention is one of the most helpful ways to limit sexual violence on campus, according to outreach advocate for the Rape Recovery Center, Maribel Garcia.

As an outreach advocate for the RRC, Garcia helps spread awareness on sexual violence and the resources the center provides.

Through the RRC focuses on cases in Utah, Garcia said there are important measures colleges can take to eliminate sexual violence on campus, including working with and educating greek life.

## Reported rape cases from 2020 to 2022

The amount of reported rape cases decreased due to the COVID-19 pandemic



VISUALIZATION BY ERIN MARTIN

All three universities saw an increase in reported rape cases after the COVID-19 pandemic, according to the universities’ 2023 Fire and Safety Reports.

## Students relocate due to mold in HBB

Mold found in Historic Neighborhood leaves students displaced

**Keely Garcia**  
Elon News Network

Elon University’s Historic Neighborhood dates back to 1889, so it shouldn’t come as a shock the buildings need occasional maintenance.

Despite recent renovations, Hook, Brannock and Barney — otherwise known among students as HBB — has a history of mold reports, and this year is no different. On Sept. 26, eight third floor Brannock residents were informed in an email from the Historic Neighborhood Community Director Jordyn Williams that they were being reallocated throughout Historic and Colonnades so their rooms could be rid of mold.

According to the Environmental Protection Agency’s website, mold is a type of fungi that can grow anywhere moisture and oxygen are present and is spread by the production of reproductive cells called spores. Mold typically grows on absorbent porous materials such as wood, paper, carpet, food, and insulation and can grow virtually anywhere.

According to the report sent to those who had to be relocated, the mold found in upstairs Brannock is the species aspergillus/penicillium, which can cause infections in lungs and sinuses in people with weak immune systems, according to the Centers of Disease Prevention and Control.

Senior Director of Facilities Management Raymond Fletcher has been working at Elon for five years and is responsible for operating and maintaining the university’s facilities and infrastructure.

Fletcher wrote mold can grow anywhere so facilities management focuses on prevention.

“Having a good maintenance program that maintains the appropriate equipment and repairs or replaces as they fail, is our best way of preventing this from becoming an issue for students, faculty, and staff,” Fletcher wrote in an email to Elon News Network. “We are always working to stay on top of mildew and mold issues in our facilities. We respond quickly when we get mold related work orders to ensure that the facility is safe for occupancy and to clean up or remediate if necessary.”

The EPA’s website said the key to reducing potential for mold moisture control, such as a dehumidifier, can be helpful for decreasing moisture in small spaces, such as dorm rooms.

Fletcher said facilities management has several processes

in place to mitigate mold on campus.

“A big part of our prevention method is maintaining our HVAC systems, fixing roof or pipe leaks as they are discovered, conducting routine preventative maintenance, and responding to work orders in a timely manner helps us keep mold growth in check,” Fletcher wrote.

In late August, the Alamance-Burlington School System had to delay the start of the school year until Sept. 11 because of a failed HVAC system causing moisture to build up in the air, resulting in a toxic mold infestation and costing the district over \$3.9 million to repair buildings. Over 30 schools in the district had mold issues according to a press release issued by ABSS.

The affected ABSS buildings date back over 50 years, which can contribute to the mold growth which has led to some much needed renovations of some ABSS facilities. Elon’s campus is about 134 years old and in recent years has also begun to renovate some of its older buildings such as HBB.

But even with renovations in HBB, including a new water line installation this past summer — which is responsible for bringing clean water to the building — and a dehumidification system being installed within the past four years, Brannock residents have still discovered mold in their rooms.

Freshman and first floor Brannock resident Reagan Tanner said she had no idea moving in that HBB has a history of mold and didn’t think there was any reason to be concerned.

“Probably a week or two after we moved in the pipe started condensating and it was leaking on my bed and I looked up and I saw mold,” Tanner said. “I was just like, well full-on disgusted, because mold just condensating and dripping down on my bed is freaking gross.”

When students need any sort of repairs done it is recommended by the university that they file a report with Fix-It, a website available to Elon students and faculty to report maintenance issues in campus facilities to facilities management. Reports can also be made to the facilities management trouble desk by calling (336)278-5500.

There are different protocols in place depending what the issue reported is. When it comes to mold, Elon’s HVAC team has to first test the mold before any decisions on how best to remove it can be made. According to Fletcher removal can be as simple as a surface wipe down or as serious as full remediation depending on the type of mold and how much of it has spread.

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Truitt Center celebrates 10 years in Numen Lumen

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Gibsonville Garden Railroad brings community together

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Club basketball sees increase in interest

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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.

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# Elon faculty, students react to settlement of WGA strike

## Film executives agreed to a new deal with WGA, ending 4 month strike

Alexa Citrin  
Elon News Network

Kai Swanson, a cinema and television arts professor, said they have been using the Writer's Guild of America strike and following settlement as an educational tool for their students.

"In my teaching, I've incorporated discussions around these issues, emphasizing the significance of contract terms, union negotiations, and the broader implications for the industry," Swanson said.

Swanson also teaches summer courses at the Elon in Los Angeles program and reflected on how students were able to see the real-life implications of the strike, and what information is the most important for them to know for their future career.

"While teaching CTA 2700 Comedy Writing and CTA 2701 Comedy Production for Elon in LA over summer 2023, students were able to see and feel everything as they were right in the center of Hollywood where strikes and negotiations were taking place," Swanson said. "The strike has underscored the importance of being well-informed about the current state of the industry, the nuances of contract negotiations, and how to prepare to navigate such challenges in their future careers in the film and television industries."

The WGA reached a tentative agreement after months of negotiations with studio executives. The deal came on Sept. 27, over four months after the strike began May 2. This agreement came after negotiations restarted, bringing an end to the strike that has paused production and project development.

Swanson said for many in the industry, the strike has halted any development and changed the way they feel about the future of their

careers, being proactive in advocating for their rights and fair compensation in their future careers," Swanson said.

Swanson said the strike could change what working in film will look like in the future.

"One of the most significant changes I foresee is a shift in the business model of television and film. TV is undergoing a transformation, with contraction being a major theme," Swanson said. "This could lead to fewer shows but with a greater commitment to quality, longevity, and fair compensation for all involved."

Students have also been reflecting on the deal. Alex Chadwick, a senior CTA major, said they were able to have a full internship while in Los Angeles.

"There were a lot of situations where sets were canceled and internships had to let their interns go. Luckily, my internship at a production studio had plenty of work for me in the commercial or advertising," Chadwick said.

Chadwick also reflected on the positives of the strike said it changed the industry.

"My experience was definitely altered by the strike, but I was happy to show my support for the writers," Chadwick said. "The strike was absolutely necessary."

They said the deal will change the environment of the industry, especially for students entering the workforce.

"I'm really hopeful that the industry will change to create a better environment for the writers. I'm also happy that AI concerns were addressed. As a

writer, I know I was scared of the consequences of artificial technology on my future," Chadwick said.

Chadwick also said they are hopeful for their future career.

"I definitely feel more secure about finding a job post-grad in film," Chadwick said. "The strike and the deal that came from it motivates me to continue working hard to pursue my passions and fight for my rights."

Hank Heimlich, a sophomore CTA student, said it was good the strike was settled.

"I think the end of the strike is a great thing. The WGA fought hard, stayed together, and really made the studios hurt," Heimlich said.

Heimlich said he is excited about not only his future career but also about his plans to study in Los Angeles in spring 2025.

"I don't think the details of the deal have been publicized yet, but from what they're said it's better than anyone expected," Heimlich said. "For me, personally, I feel like I have a chance at finding a career, and being able to find an internship as a writer again."

The WGA has not released the entirety of the deal as of Oct. 3, but according to CBS, a WGA representative said the three-year deal includes a 12.5% pay increase starting with 5% upon the ratification of the contract, as well as a 76% increase in foreign streaming residuals. Studios will also be required to inform writers when AI is used and cannot use writers' material to train AI.



TV IS UNDERGOING A TRANSFORMATION, WITH CONTRACTION BEING A MAJOR THEME. THIS COULD LEAD TO FEWER SHOWS BUT WITH A GREATER COMMITMENT TO QUALITY, LONGEVITY AND FAIR COMPENSATION FOR ALL INVOLVED.

KAI SWANSON  
CINEMA AND TELEVISION ARTS PROFESSOR

careers.

"This experience has been both a lesson and a call to action for them, emphasizing the importance of solidarity, understanding contracts, and



HALLI HARWOOD | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

A striker shows his support for the WGA July 24 outside Walt Disney Studios Headquarters in Burbank, California. The strike was settled Sept. 27, over four months after it began May 2. The WGA has not released the entirety of the deal as of Oct. 3.

### Corrections

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



JOSEPH NAVIN | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Elon University football players prepare to run onto McKinnon Field at Rhodes Stadium to play the College of William & Mary during the 2023 Family Weekend game Sept. 30. The game had the third-highest attendance rate in Rhodes Stadium history, with a total of 12,705 attendees. Elon won 14-6, leading Elon to become the top-ranked team in the Coastal Athletic Conference for conference play.



MADISON POWERS | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Interim Assistant Dean of Multifaith Engagement Hillary Zaken speaks with Brian Pennington and Provost Rebecca Kohn at the 10th anniversary celebration of Elon's Numen Lumen Pavilion on Oct. 2. Numen Lumen was established in 2013 and is home to the Truitt Center and the Center for the Study of Religion, Culture and Society. Read more on page 4.



JOSEPH NAVIN | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Apollo Chemical's facility on Willow Spring Lane, near Alamance-Burlington Regional Airport, has been connected to a discharge of 1,4-dioxane into the Haw River. Burlington has fined Apollo Chemical for a violation of the city's sewer use ordinance. According to Bob Patterson, water resources director for the city of Burlington, a pH level of 4.9 was detected in the water — just under the required pH range of between five and 11.



SARAH T. MOORE | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Daymond John, star of ABC's "Shark Tank," joined Elon University as the Fall Convocation speaker Sept. 29 in the Schar Center. Daymond spoke on his upbringing, how to keep "thinking like a shark" and entrepreneurship.

# Numen Lumen Pavilion celebrates 10 years



MADISON POWERS | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

The Numen Lumen Pavilion is located in the Lambert Academic Village. The building opened in March 2013 and is home to the Truitt Center for Religious and Spiritual Life and the Center for the Study of Religion, Culture and Society.

Numen Lumen Pavillion, a multifaith center, opened March 2013 to foster discussion

**Isabella DeJong**  
Elon News Network

Numen Lumen Pavilion — a multifaith sacred space in the heart of Elon University — is celebrating its 10th anniversary.

Numen Lumen was established in 2013 and houses the Truitt Center for Religious and Spiritual Life and the Center for the Study of Religion, Culture and Society.

According to the Truitt Center's website, the center fosters a space for discussion of religion within the campus community, explores shared aspects of common humanity and promotes the values of multifaith collaboration.

Since 2021, Rev. Kirstin Boswell has served as university chaplain and dean of multifaith engagement, working previously as a chaplain at MIT, Brown and Bentley Universities. Boswell said she praises Elon's Numen Lumen for the community it has built.

"From working on different university campuses, it's rare to have such a beautiful, dedicated space with dedicated staff," Boswell said.

Boswell said people come into Numen Lumen looking for a variety of things.

"People come into the space for any number of things. It could be for emotional support, spiritual support, you know, because they're struggling financially," Boswell said. "It could be any number of things."

In her role as a chaplain, Boswell said she is mindful that Numen Lumen serves

as a source of care and support for the entire campus community.

"Whether it's helping to connect them to the resources that they need to be able to center and, find their space, find their identity, help them with meaning and purpose and figuring out, figuring out all of those things," Boswell said.



PEOPLE COME INTO THE SPACE FOR ANY NUMBER OF THINGS. IT COULD BE FOR EMOTIONAL SUPPORT, SPIRITUAL SUPPORT, YOU KNOW, BECAUSE THEY'RE STRUGGLING FINANCIALLY... IT COULD BE ANY NUMBER OF THINGS.

**REV. KIRSTEN BOSWELL**  
UNIVERSITY CHAPLAIN AND DEAN OF  
MULTIFAITH ENGAGEMENT

Boswell said she has seen fewer and fewer students maintain their religious frameworks upon coming to college.

She said she sees the Truitt Center — a key part of Numen Lumen — as a place to help maintain personal faith for students.

"When you look at the Truitt Center's mission statement, one of the things that we talk about is engaging the campus with the wisdom of the world's spiritual and religious traditions," Boswell said. "I think that's really important because even as people are

trending toward less engagement, there are still those timeless truths that are found in many of the world's religious traditions that dictate how we should live in the world, how we should engage."

Freshman Jonathan Loeb, who practices Judaism, said he has gained appreciation for Numen Lumen for this very reason.

"I really feel like it has helped to shape my identity at Elon as it has allowed me to connect with my religion and community even though I've been so far away from my home which I think is really special," Loeb said.

He said he utilizes Numen Lumen in a way so he can feel connected with his Jewish community back at home.

"I wanted to be able to find a community to be able to practice my religion and go to services. Numen Lumen allowed me to have that space with people who share similar religious beliefs and be able to participate in services that made me feel as close to being at home as I could," Loeb said.

Boswell said cultivating meaningful relationships is another of Numen Lumen's central priorities.

"This is something that Elon is really known for, is helping people to foster really strong relationships during their time here," Boswell said. "So we're focusing on the breadth and depth of relationships that have come out of and grown out of this pavilion."

Brian Pennington, director of the Center for the Study of Religion, Culture and Society and professor of religious studies said he fosters discussion among students.

"One of my primary roles at Elon is to help students understand varying religious traditions of their own as well as others to promote common understanding, cultural

literacy, and global citizenship," Pennington said. "Academics is part of multifaith at Elon, and it's an avenue through which students have experienced a lot of personal growth in their capacities to navigate a complex global world."

Pennington said he works individually with students in the CSRCS' multifaith scholars program. Students in this program dedicate their junior and senior years to researching a topic of their choice surrounding multifaith through global engagement, internships and other research experiences.

Pennington said at Elon, multifaith initiatives promote growth on both intellectual and personal levels, and he said his colleagues make a strong effort to guide these scholars on their journey.

"The multifaith efforts at Elon are about academic inquiry and intellectual growth and learning as much as they are about personal exploration," Pennington said. "To pursue those objectives I work with my faculty colleagues in various departments as well as Truitt Center staff to develop programming that helps to teach students and expose the wider community to the various ways that religion comes to life in our world."

Pennington said students he has worked closely with have covered topics from all over the world.

"I have worked with students who have been exploring things like Islamophobia in the U.S. airline industry. Students who are trying to understand sort of things like church and state relationships in various countries around the world like Denmark and Egypt," Pennington said. "This has been really rewarding for me and we've seen students have transformative experiences doing this kind of research."



MADISON POWERS | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Director at Chabad Mendy Minkowitz and Vice President for student life Jon Dooley talk at the anniversary celebration of Numen Lumen Pavilion on Oct. 2.



MADISON POWERS | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Rev. Jan Fuller — university chaplain from 2011-20 — speaks with Provost Rebecca Kohn at the 10th anniversary of Numen Lumen Pavilion celebration.



MADISON POWERS | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Rev. Kirstin Boswell, the university chaplain, delivers an address at the 10th anniversary celebration of Elon's Numen Lumen Pavilion.

# HBB struggles with mold growth despite renovations

**MOLD | from cover**

“If remediation is required, we use a third-party remediation company to conduct the cleanup,” Fletcher wrote. “A full remediation typically would require the student, faculty or staff member to be displaced from their room or office during the cleaning process which would include HEPA air filters, surface wipe down, cleaning of the HVAC system, removal or replacement of damaged sheetrock and a final air quality test to ensure that the mold has been remediated or removed from the room or building.”

However, while Tanner tried multiple times to access the Fix-It website, she said she never submitted a Fix-It report.

“Fix-It report form has not been working for me at all,” Tanner said. “I don’t even know how to react because I was just full on like, ‘Holy cow, this is actually real’ and then I got sick”

According to the CDC’s website, mold exposure can cause a variety of health effects on certain groups such as stuffy nose, wheezing and red or itchy eyes and or skin.

While not confirmed Tanner attribute’s her case of what many students call the freshman flu — referring to when majority of first year students begin to get sick at the start of the semester — to the mildew found in her dorm.

“I’ve been sick for like two weeks now, it’s not COVID. I have

swollen tonsils, but it’s tonsillitis. But it’s often because of bacteria,” Tanner said. “My suitemate had a bacterial pink eye from where they had gotten sick.”



**I’M NOT SHOCKED THAT THERE’S MOLD IN BRANNOCK AND PEOPLE HAD TO MOVE. I’M REALLY NOT SHOCKED. I FEEL LIKE THAT’S JUST HOW HBB IS.**

**EVIE GANNON**  
ELON SOPHOMORE

After Brannock’s residents moved out Sept. 27, the cleaning company First Call Cleaning & Restoration arrived at HBB

to close off the third floor of Brannock and began the mold removal process and inspected the remaining two floors for mold.

“The mold was so bad in their dorm that the entire suite was sick. And it was just got to the point where they had reported it over and over again.” Tanner said. “They’ve moved them out for two to three weeks and they’re cleaning their dorms.”

While Brannock’s third floor is currently the only suites that Tanner knows to have been reallocated, her dorm on the first floor was also marked as having mold.

“They emailed us yesterday about spraying vital oxide, which is a mold remediation thing and told us it was a small mildew problem,” Tanner said.

According to the EPA, mildew refers to a certain kind of mold or fungus that typically isn’t

considered harmful but that may have a foul odor. Mildew can also be described as more white and flat as opposed to fuzzy. The two fungi are treated differently so if there is any confusion about whether it is mold or mildew present experts recommend getting the fungus tested.

Brannock isn’t the only building that has had its share of run-ins with Facilities Management.

Sophomore Evie Gannon lived in Barney during her freshman year and said she could smell the mold.

“I’m not shocked that there’s mold in Brannock and people had to move. I’m really not shocked. I feel like that’s just how HBB is,” Gannon said. “There were always smells there. There are always smells going on.”

However, Gannon said she also never made any reports to Fix-It. “I never reported anything

to Fix-It. Mainly because I didn’t know how to Fix-It. Now and then I think about it like, ‘Oh, I should have really submitted something,’” Gannon said. “I’d be very concerned but also at the same time really tired and be like ‘I don’t really want to deal with this right now,’ it was like ‘Out of sight, out of mind.’”

Though Elon’s Historic Neighborhood has much sentimental value, Tanner said she’s unsure if the work required to maintain HBB is worth it.

“It’s just like it has nothing to do with Historic, the locations are incredible. The office is incredible. The Historic Neighborhood Association is awesome. It’s just the dorms itself right now are not up to par for what we paid for,” Tanner said. “I feel like there’s so many issues with that building. They just need to tear it down and build it back up.”



Mold in a third floor dorm room of Brannock in Elon’s Historic Neighborhood.

COURTESY OF CAMILA MONTOYA, BRANNOCK THIRD FLOOR RESIDENT

## Prevention and awareness efforts aim to combat sexual violence

**REPORTS | from cover**

“To raise awareness to those groups, we went to where they are. We’re trying to be flexible with our timing to reach them in spaces where they are where they’re holding their events already just to kind of raise that awareness,” Garcia said.

The North Carolina Coalition Against Sexual Assault recommends promoting social norms that reduce sexual violence, teaching skills to prevent sexual violence, providing opportunities to empower and support girls and women, and creating protective

environments to reduce sexual violence, according to its prevention plan.

Students can report instances of sexual violence using the Title IX Sexual Misconduct Reporting Form or other ways found in the 2023-2024 Student Handbook.

LeMire encourages people to come forward to the university about the sexual violence they experience.

“We don’t want anything to happen. We certainly want zeros, but we also know that it does happen,” LeMire said. “We want those people that come forward so we can use all the help and resources that they deserve and let them make decisions.”



**WE WANT THOSE PEOPLE THAT COME FORWARD SO WE CAN USE ALL THE HELP AND RESOURCES THAT THEY DESERVE AND LET THEM MAKE DECISIONS.**

**JOE LEMIRE**  
UNIVERSITY POLICE CHIEF

**RESOURCES FOR ELON STUDENTS**

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# GENERATIONS CONNECT AT GIBSONVILLE GARDEN RAILROAD

Gibsonville's long-running garden railroad highlights community efforts, creativity

Tucker Price  
Elon News Network

On a small patch of land near downtown Gibsonville sits a miniature version of several North Carolinian monuments. Kitty Hawk, the Cape Hatterass Lighthouse, Beech Mountain, Grandfather Mountain – even Elon College is laid out along miniature train tracks.

G Scale model trains whiz past them every which way. Some of them are scale recreations, such as the model of a Santa Fe diesel engine. Others are just for fun, including Thomas the Tank Engine from “Thomas and Friends” and a steam locomotive pushing Doc Brown’s DeLorean from the “Back to the Future” franchise. People come to see the model train display from as far as High Point. One thing unifies them all – they were brought there by the community.

Several people sit below an awning controlling the speed of the trains. Adults – both parents and volunteers – guide children as they adjust various levers and buttons.

Steve Ellis is one of the adults guiding them.

“We have a kind of generational thing going on,” Ellis said.

Neil Levanites comes here with his son, Caleb, almost every Saturday.

“It’s a good outing for Caleb,” Neil said. “We enjoy it because we build great relationships here.”

Neil said Caleb is a huge fan of “Back to the Future Part III,” so Neil made the train that pushes a miniature DeLorean around the track.

“It’s great bonding for father and son,” Neil said.

The Gibsonville Garden Railroad is a nonprofit and has around 80 members, according to Ellis. The garden has over 29,000 feet of train track with 22 trains running at one time, according to its website. Ellis said visitors can also bring their own trains to run.

“The city owns the land we’re on, and the nonprofit owns the

track,” Ellis said. “So we do all the maintenance.”

Members of the Gibsonville Garden Railroad come up on Friday mornings to make sure the tracks are operational and clear of debris for their weekly openings on Saturday mornings.

In 1996, Bobby Summers – a former conductor of Norfolk Southern Railroad – opened the Gibsonville Garden Railroad. Trains first ran on elaborate miniature tracks Oct. 9 that year, on the same day that the first train arrived at Gibson Station 141 years earlier. Neil Bromilow, the former director of Planning, Design and Construction Management at Elon University, took up the mantle of president of the GGRR after Summers’ death in 2018.

Ellis said Bromilow is involved in the GGRR upkeep.

“Neil does a lot of the track maintenance,” Ellis said. “We’re trying to work on the gardening and

improve the look and feel.”

Nadia Pickens is one of the volunteers that runs tours along the tracks. She gives children a guided tour of the garden, which is almost a tour of a condensed North Carolina. She points out the “Land of Oz” attraction on Beech Mountain and explains the history behind the town of Burlington and the Gibsonville train wreck, represented by a crashed model train lovingly painted to look dilapidated.

Her son, Riker, pushes along a passenger train that’s been disconnected from its engine.

“He got addicted from my dad,” Pickens said. She said members of the GGRR showed Riker the ropes of model trains, helping him jumpstart his train hobby.

“Everyone’s helped out so much,” Pickens said. “It’s like a big family.”

The Gibsonville Garden Railroad is open Saturdays from 9 a.m. to noon from April to December, weather permitting.



EDEN GORDON | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

The Gibsonville Garden Railroad runs from 9 a.m. to noon on Saturdays from April to December, weather permitting.



EDEN GORDON | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Art Gibson packs away his Santa Fe GP-9 locomotive model after running it at the Gibsonville Garden Railroad in Gibsonville on Sept. 30.



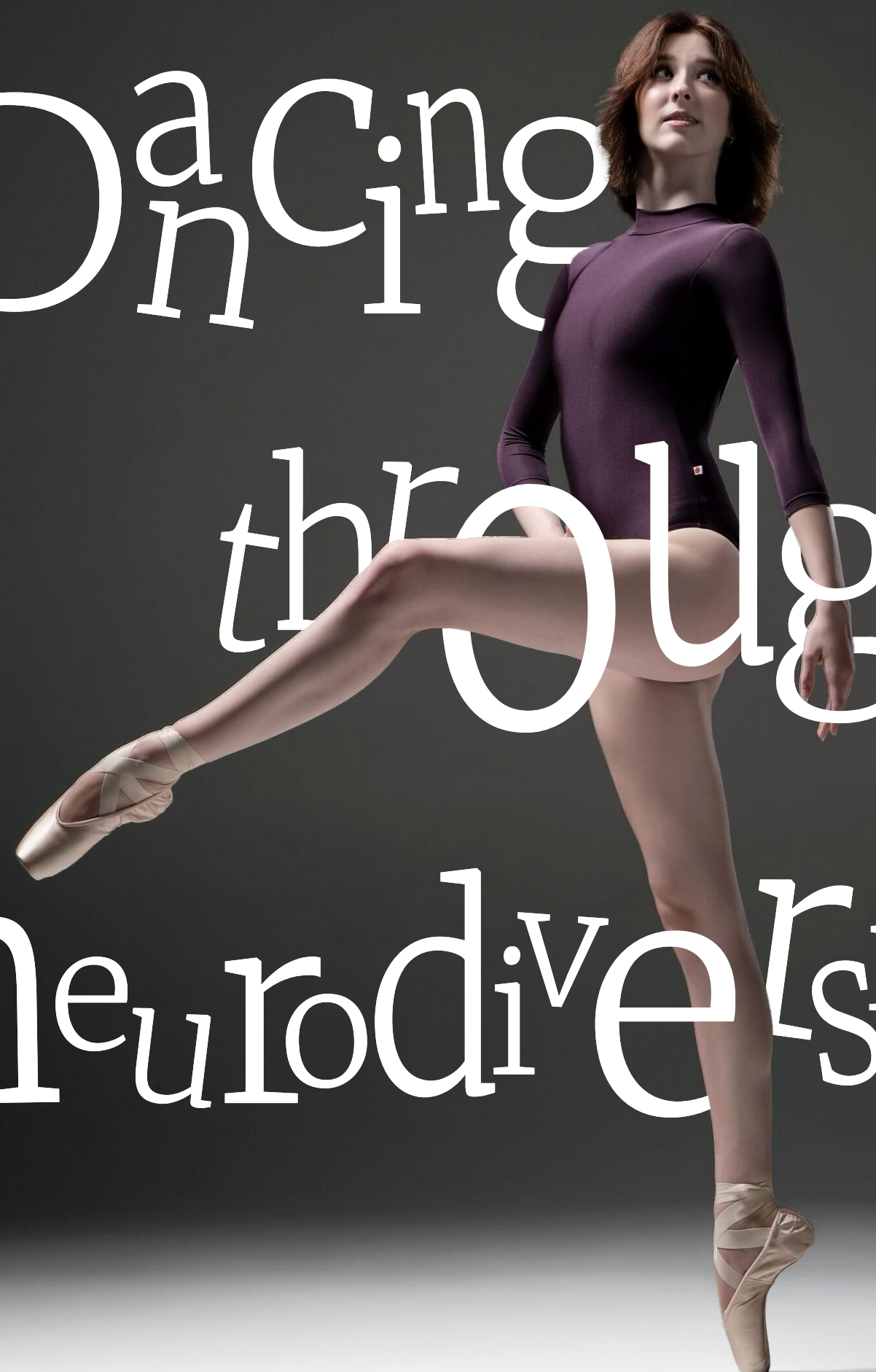
EDEN GORDON | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

G Scale model train runs on the Gibsonville Garden Railroad on Sept. 30.



JOSEPH NAVIN | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Visitors on Sept. 30 watch model trains run around the Gibsonville Garden Railroad.



# Dancing through neurodiversity

PHOTO COURTESY OF MILNER  
DESIGN BY ERIN MARTIN

Elon freshman aims to encourage accessibility for people with autism in dance

**Betsy Schlehuber**  
Elon News Network

Elon freshman Maddie Milner wasn't diagnosed with autism until May 2021 at age 16, when transitioning from private to public school proved difficult for her. But before her sophomore year of high school — during the COVID-19 lockdowns — Milner said she suspected she may be neurodivergent.

"We were all inside," Milner said. "There's nothing better to do than just think about what's wrong with you, I guess."

Milner said she was told as a child she wasn't autistic; she was just "quirky." Yet she was in therapy for all of elementary school to help her with social skills and texture sensitivities.

In between therapy and school, she was a dancer.

Milner started dancing when she was three and stayed in the same dance studio until she graduated high school. Milner said dance serves two purposes for her, one of which is to stim freely.

According to the Children's

Hospital of Philadelphia Research Institute, stimming is repeated body movements or repeated movement of objects. Some examples of stimming include flapping hands or twirling a lock of hair. According to the CHPRI, it is a very common practice for autistic people. According to the National Autistic Society, autistic people tend to stim for reasons ranging from regulating emotions to gaining or reducing sensory input.

While Milner said stimming fulfills both physical and emotional needs, dance as a stim leans more toward emotional.

Milner also said she expresses complex emotions through dance, a skill that she finds difficult to do verbally as an autistic person.

"It's not like, 'I want you to portray this sentence or this paragraph,'" Milner said. "It's like, 'I want you to portray the sadness of losing a loved one.'"

While Milner said dance has helped her express herself, her time as a dancer wasn't all good. Toward the end of her tenure at the studio she attended in high school, Milner said she was bullied by other dancers and experienced verbal torment, slight physical harassment and exclusion — a form of bullying Milner labels as "girl bullying."

Milner said it was hard to get the dance teachers to believe her accusations of bullying, so she

focused on not worrying about the girls, blocking them on social media and just dancing.

"I think how I got through it was because I was like, 'Well, I can't leave because I'm trying to get into colleges right now, and I can't just not be dancing for this crucial part of my life,'" Milner said. "So I was like, 'I'm here and I'm stuck here for now.'"

Statistics on autistic people being bullied vary, but Ambitious About Autism — a United Kingdom-based charity which aims to help younger autistic folks — says 75% of autistic people under 25 have experienced bullying. The organization also said autistic people are more prone to bullying because of their struggle to read social cues and situations.

Before Milner was bullied at her dance studio, she said she was bullied at school. Jennifer Milner, Maddie's mother, said Maddie's fourth grade science teacher did not like "gifted kids" and was "resentful of them."

At the time, Maddie was diagnosed with obsessive compulsive disorder and labeled a "gifted kid" but not diagnosed with autism.

"I had to have some conversations with her about the way she treated the kids, my kid especially, and the mean things she would say," Jennifer said. "But when that didn't work, I had to have a conversation with the

gifted teacher who was above her and say, 'This is not okay to treat my daughter like this, it's not okay to talk to my daughter like this,' in a very polite and professional way."

Maddie said Jennifer eventually had to talk to the school superintendent about the issue, and the school still did nothing.

Jennifer said the biggest decision she made to advocate for Maddie was to pull her out of public school after fourth grade. Not only because of the bullying, but also because Jennifer said Maddie was so stressed about school and standardized testing that she developed ulcers — painful sores in the stomach lining.

Maddie was homeschooled for a year before entering a "neurodivergent friendly" private school, according to Jennifer.

While Jennifer would often advocate for Maddie, she said she also taught Maddie how to advocate for herself, whether that was raising her to feel equal to men or preparing her to communicate nonverbally when needed.

"I put together flashcards for autism when she can't speak up, and she had those at school," Jennifer said. "The flashcards say, 'I'm overwhelmed,' 'I can't talk right now,' 'I need to leave and calm down.'"

Maddie said she communicates better in writing, so when Jennifer was helping Maddie transition

to Elon, Maddie chose her accommodations, which include the ability to leave the classroom with no questions asked. Then, Jennifer said once the accommodations were sent to Elon, Maddie wrote emails to all her professors explaining the accommodations and encouraged them to ask questions, if needed.

"She has taken ownership of that," Jennifer said. "And the more she does it, the more I see her stepping into her own power."

Maddie said she hated wearing leotards and tights at her high school dance studio. She also said the studio frequently played loud music and used bright lights, which would trigger her sensory issues and send her into a meltdown.

Now, as a dancer at Elon, she said she has the freedom to wear the clothes that she wants to wear and can wear noise-canceling earplugs to class. Maddie said Elon has been "really great" about accommodations and that her dance teachers are nice.

Maddie said she encourages all dance studios to be more "sensory-friendly," such as lowering the volume of the music, dimming the lights and having a more relaxed dress code.

"I think it is incredibly helpful, not just for autistic people, but just everyone in general," Maddie said. "I feel like it just creates a better space for everyone involved."

# CLUB BASKETBALL HOLDS TRYOUTS AFTER A SURGE IN INTEREST



MASON WILLET | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Senior club basketball co-president Max Casey plays defense during a scrimmage Sept. 28.

After struggling to recruit members post pandemic, the team sees a boost in interest

**Benjamin Berfield**  
Elon News Network

Over the last three years, Elon University's club basketball team has seen a massive change in popularity. The program went from struggling to gain interest after the COVID-19 pandemic to having almost 90 sign ups each year starting from 2021 according to Elon senior and club basketball co-president Max Casey.

Casey said in his freshman year, the team struggled with the lingering effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. He said the team did not hold tryouts that year, as talent was not a major factor when selecting the roster.

"It was COVID. We didn't have a lot of guys come out, and so we were just taking whoever we could get," Casey said.

Over the past three years the team has begun holding tryouts to accommodate the increase in interest. This year's tryout particularly saw many students who signed up in hopes of securing a roster spot.

"This year was pretty good," Casey said. "We had 60 or so come to the tryout itself and I think we kept just over 30 guys."

Unlike the typical basketball tryout that may feature a mix of different drills and scrimmages, Casey — along with fellow senior co-president Quinn Shannon — had the team mostly do scrimmages with a little bit of the three man weave, a basketball drill that reinforces basic skills.

"We try to start with a little three man weave just to get a sense of who can understand the basic concepts," Casey

said. "We move it into scrimmages because we just want to see kids play and how they play together."

Junior Connor McQuibben, who has played for two years, said tryouts and practices have been productive because the players have been able to get a sense of each other's skill sets. Even with the season just starting, McQuibben said he has already been impressed with the team.

"I feel like they're really picking up the intensity," McQuibben said. "It's a great group of guys and we're just trying to push each other as hard as we can each day."

The structure of club basketball tryouts allowed newcomers such as freshman Justin Brader-Araje said he appreciated

not only improves each player's skills but also is a way for players to build friendships, according to Casey who said that the team bonds both on and off the court. The team travels together to road games, giving the players more time to bond.

"We'll carpool together and then everyone goes out for a team dinner afterwards, getting to know each other," Casey said. "It's fun and you get to know them well."

On Oct. 1, the club basketball team traveled to Brodie Recreation Center in

Durham for the first game of the season where it lost to Duke University's club basketball team 34-33.

McQuibben expressed disappointment with the result of the game but said the team is looking forward to the next one.

"Obviously we're not happy with that result," McQuibben said. "We just got to make shots down the stretch, make free throws, but I guarantee you next game, we're coming out with this."

The team's next game is still to be determined, according to Casey.



I WAS A LITTLE NERVOUS ABOUT THE STUDENTS BEING COACHES BUT THEY'VE TAKEN ME IN WITH OPEN ARMS.

**JUSTIN BRADER-ARAJE**  
ELON FRESHMAN

the welcoming atmosphere of the team.

"I was a little nervous about the students being coaches but they've taken me in with open arms," Brader-Araje said. "They've been really helpful."

However, Brader-Araje said the competition is no joke.

"I think people underestimate club basketball, but a lot of these guys really can hoop and it's good competition," Brader-Araje said. "I think it's a high level."

The constant scrimmaging at practices



MASON WILLET | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Senior club basketball co-president Quinn Shannon practices Sept. 28.