

Black Life at Elon

2025-26

CELEBRATION OF EXCELLENCE

The Black Lumen Project



Aligning with Boldly Elon

The work of The Black Lumen Project exists in alignment with the universities Boldly Elon Strategic Plan. This alignment is most visible through four core areas that shape the student, faculty and staff experience: learning, thriving, connection and institutional growth.

These four areas — Learn, Thrive, Connect and Rise — offer a framework for understanding both the university's vision and how this work contributes to a more inclusive, supported and engaged campus community.



Learn: We will make bold innovations in relationship-driven learning and mentoring, launch a distinctive school of engineering, aid nursing programs and advance students' data competency.



Thrive: We will build a healthier and more diverse, equitable and inclusive community, where all students, faculty and staff experience belonging and well-being.



Connect: We will develop lifelong alumni personal and professional learning and networks; will partner with our local communities to enhance education, health and economic development, and will win athletics conference championships and lead our conference in academic performance.



Rise: We will position the university globally, expanding our admissions footprint, raising resources to support increased access and financial aid, and sharply defining international reputation.



A Note From The Director

Black life at Elon has never been peripheral. It has been created, sustained and carried forward by students, faculty, staff and alumni who continue to shape the institution in ways that are both seen and unseen. This work is not new, but the intention to document it, support it and learn from it in an ongoing way is what grounds this project.

Over the past year, the work of the Black Lumen Project has aligned with the university's Boldly Elon Strategic Plan, particularly its commitments to inclusive excellence, student thriving and a deeply engaged campus community.

This report offers a snapshot of how Black life at Elon is being supported, experienced and sustained across multiple areas of the institution. What follows is not simply a record of activity, but an effort to document impact, illuminate lived experience and identify opportunities for continued growth. The work ahead is not about adding more, but about deepening what already exists, strengthening relationships and continuing to ask how the institution can more fully support the people who sustain it.

The Black Lumen Project will continue to serve as both a space and a lens. A space for community and reflection, and a lens through which we can better understand and advance Black life at Elon. This is ongoing work. And it is collective.

This report is also the product of collaborative effort. Special thanks to Lynn Huber, co-chair of the Committee on Elon History and Memory, and Cheyenne Pinkston, assistant director of presidential stewardship, whose writing and partnership helped shape this year's report.

In peace,

Keshia Gee

Associate Professor of Dance
Director of the Black Lumen Project



Mapping the Black Presence at Elon

Diversity Ambassadors

The Office of Admissions recently launched the Diversity Ambassador 2 (DA2) track. This cohort consists of students committed to advancing Inclusive Excellence through recruitment and yield efforts for prospective Phoenix. The DA2 track extends the work of the existing Diversity Ambassador Tour Guide program while serving a distinct role. Unlike Tour Guides, DA2s focus on targeted engagement initiatives, including outreach during yield season, hosting overnight programs, participating on panels and supporting virtual programming.

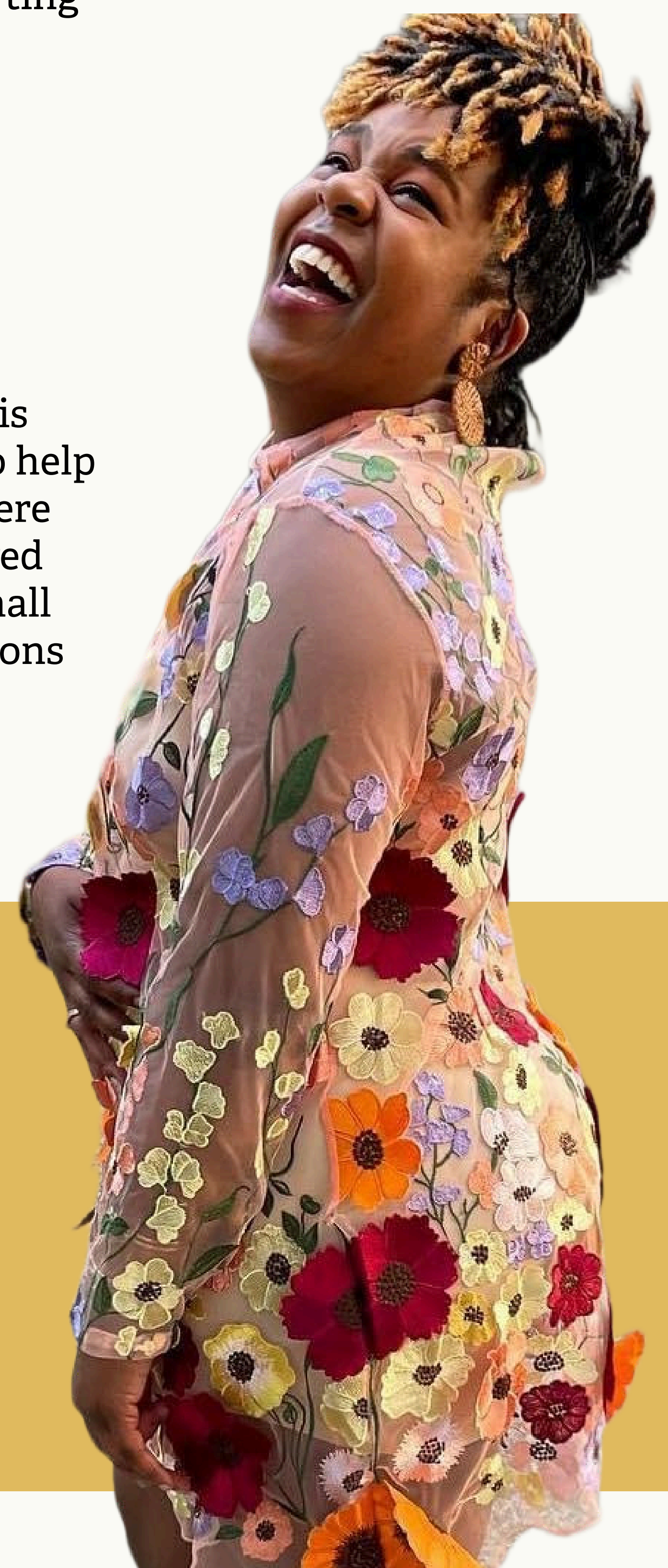
Admissions Inclusive Excellence Advisory Board

To further strengthen enrollment strategies in 2025–26, the Admissions Inclusive Excellence team established the Admissions Inclusive Excellence Advisory Board. This group consists of a small cohort of faculty and staff who work closely with Serena to help inform and strengthen enrollment strategies for Black students at Elon. Members were intentionally selected as key partners who can bridge admissions efforts with the lived experiences of current students. Over the course of the year, the board facilitated small focus groups, gathering student feedback on admissions materials and communications to better align outreach with student needs and perspectives.

Staff Spotlight

Jameka Pinnix, Assistant Director of Student Bias Education and Response

During the 2025–26 academic year Jameka has been expanding proactive bias education across campus by developing workshops, strengthening partnerships with student groups and creating sustainable resources using the BE Aware, BE Accountable and BE Advocates framework to support meaningful dialogue and community growth.



Advancing Access Through Admissions Leadership

Serena Crosby-Brown joined the Inclusive Excellence team in 2025 as senior assistant director of admissions for inclusive excellence. With prior experience as an admissions counselor and assistant director, she brings a strong background working with students in Maryland, Washington, D.C., and Virginia. She continues to manage these regions, with a slight adjustment to her Virginia territory. Maryland remains a critical pipeline for Black student enrollment at Elon, and Serena's leadership continues to strengthen both regional recruitment efforts and the work of the Inclusive Excellence team.

On Campus Black Faculty and Staff Representation

Black faculty and staff continue to play an important role in shaping the academic, cultural and professional life of Elon University. During the 2025–26 academic year, Elon employed 54 Black faculty members and 205 Black staff members across the institution. According to the university's Diversity Dashboard, Black or African American employees represented 8.7% of full-time faculty and 18.8% of full-time staff. Through their leadership, mentorship, teaching, scholarship and service, Black faculty and staff contribute significantly to the university community and to the support and development of students across campus.

Undergraduate and Graduate Enrollment

Enrollment data from the 2025–26 academic year reflects the continued presence and participation of Black students across Elon University's undergraduate and graduate programs. In fall 2025, the incoming undergraduate class included 90 first-year students identifying as Black and an additional 24 multiracial students who identified Black as one of their racial identities. According to the university's Diversity Dashboard, Black or African American students represented 5.7% of the undergraduate student population and 10.6% of the graduate and professional student population during the 2025–26 academic year. These figures reflect the ongoing growth and presence of Black students across Elon's academic community and highlight the importance of continued efforts related to access, belonging and student success.

Black Student Enrollment

2025–2026 Academic Year

Undergraduate Students

90 first-year Black students
24 multiracial students identifying as Black

5.7%

Graduate & Professional Students

Black or African American students
represented 10.6% of the population

10.6%

Black Faculty & Staff Representation

2025–2026 Academic Year

Faculty

54 Black faculty members
represented 8.7% of full-time faculty

8.7%

Staff

205 Black staff members
represented 18.8% of full-time staff

18.8%

Faculty Spotlight

Karen Lindsey, Assistant Professor of Strategic Communications

Karen joined the Department of Strategic Communications in 2021. Her scholarly and pedagogical work examines the intersections of race, gender and organizational leadership, with emphasis on ethical communication practices. Her work bridges theory and practice through applied scholarship, public engagement and industry collaboration.





Expanding Global Perspectives

During the 2025–26 academic year, 112 Black identified students participated in study abroad and study away experiences through Elon’s Global Education Center. An additional 22 multiracial students identified Black as one of their racial identities. These global learning experiences provided students with opportunities to engage across cultures, expand their academic and personal perspectives, and deepen their understanding of global communities and systems. Participation in study abroad and study away programs reflects Elon’s continued commitment to fostering experiential learning opportunities that support cultural exploration, global citizenship and student development both inside and outside the classroom.

Learning Through Research and Discovery

Black-identifying students continued to engage in undergraduate research opportunities across a wide range of academic disciplines at Elon University. A total of 61 students identifying as Black or African American completed undergraduate research for academic credit, collectively earning 157 credit hours across 26 departments and programs. These experiences supported faculty mentored scholarship, interdisciplinary inquiry, creative exploration and hands on research practices that contribute to students’ academic and professional development. Participation across numerous fields reflects the continued presence and contributions of Black students within Elon’s culture of experiential learning and undergraduate scholarship.

Graduate Student Spotlight

Raven Labarrie L’26 completed a residency with the Guilford County District Attorney’s Office, where she gained hands-on courtroom and litigation experience conducting pleas, handling bond motions and first appearances, preparing witnesses and prosecuting misdemeanor cases. “These experiences have provided me with a strong understanding of courtroom procedure, evidentiary rules, and the significant responsibility prosecutors carry when making charging decisions that affect individuals, families and communities,” she says.



Black Students Completing Internships

18.4%

68 Black-identifying students completed internships during the 2025-26 academic year.

Career Readiness & Professional Experience

Experiential learning continued to play an important role in the success of Black students at Elon University. During the 2025–26 academic year, 68 Black-identifying students completed internships, representing approximately 18.4% of the Black student population. Through these experiences, students engaged in professional environments that allowed them to apply classroom learning, develop career-ready skills, expand professional networks and explore potential career pathways. Participation in internships reflects Elon’s commitment to preparing students for success beyond graduation while supporting meaningful opportunities for professional growth and workforce development.

Community Based Learning & Civic Engagement

Black students continued to connect classroom learning with community engagement through Elon’s Community-Based Learning (CBL) program. This academic year, 29 Black-identifying students completed a CBL-designated course, representing approximately 7.9% of the Black student population. These courses combine academic content, critical reflection and reciprocal partnerships with community organizations to address public needs while deepening student learning. Through these experiences, students engaged with local communities, explored civic responsibility and applied their knowledge in real-world settings that advance both personal growth and the public good.

Black Students in Community-Based Learning

7.9%

29 Black-identifying students completed Community-Based Learning (CBL) courses during the 2025-26 academic year.





Expanding perspectives on social responsibility and global citizenship.

African & African American Studies

The African and African American Studies minor continued to foster interdisciplinary dialogue and critical engagement through its Lunch and Learn series featuring faculty scholarship across multiple disciplines. This year's conversations explored topics including the ethical and archival complexities surrounding post Civil War Slave Claims Commission records and the racial dimensions of the Sacco Vanzetti case. Through these discussions, students and faculty engaged with questions of race, historical memory, justice and representation while exploring how scholarship can deepen understanding of both past and present social issues.

Interdisciplinary Global Learning in the Caribbean

Led by Vanessa Drew-Branch and Carla Fullwood, the Barbados study abroad course provided students with an interdisciplinary exploration of the intersections between culture, poverty and social justice in the Caribbean. Through engagement with the historical, economic, political and cultural contexts of Barbados, students examined the structural factors that shape inequality and social conditions within the region.

The course, which carries the Advancing Equity Requirement designation, emphasized critical analysis of the systems that perpetuate poverty while encouraging students to consider strategies for advancing equity and social justice. By situating learning within a global and culturally specific context, the program deepened students' understanding of Caribbean societies and expanded their perspectives on social responsibility and global citizenship.



Telling the stories of Elon's Black students, staff and faculty, as well as how racism shaped Elon's history.



Reckoning and Remembering: Advancing Equity Through Elon's History

Established in 2018, the Committee on Elon's History and Memory (CEHM) explores questions related to the university's historical memory and collective identity to make Elon a more just and inclusive space. The History and Memory Report, published in 2020, offers 10 "plainspoken accounts" of the university's "anti-Black racism and Black achievements." The report includes 13 recommendations for addressing Elon's history moving forward, which CEHM is charged with guiding.

This year, the committee, co-chaired by Professor Lynn Huber and Associate Teaching Professor Sandra Reid, has focused on strengthening connections with on-campus partners, including Black Lumen, EBAN, Belk University Archives & Special Collections and Admissions. Among the highlights of their work this year are partnering with the archives to pilot "Voices of Elon," an oral history collection project, during Homecoming & Reunion Weekend. Black alumni were invited to share stories about their Elon experience. These digital videos will be part of Elon's archival records and available for student, faculty and staff research.

One of the most well-known aspects of CEHM's work is its walking tours of Elon, which focus on telling the stories of Elon's Black students, staff and faculty, as well as how white racism shaped Elon's history. Along with Black Lumen, CEHM received an Elon Innovation Grant to work with Bloomberg Philanthropies to develop an app version of these tours, accessible to visiting alumni, prospective students and the Elon community at large. The app is expected to launch in fall 2026 and will be used in a variety of classes, including those that meet the Advancing Equity Requirement.

Other initiatives in which CEHM is involved include working with admissions to educate student Diversity Ambassadors on the history of the Black experience at Elon and to provide an information sheet for visiting families interested in the school's history. The committee is also working with Black Lumen and others to begin exploring in more depth the role of local Black churches in Elon's history.



Alumni Spotlight

Khairi Morrow '25 is continuing her academic and professional journey at Wake Forest University, where she is pursuing a Master of Science in Health and Exercise Science. In 2026, she returned to campus to choreograph for the annual Donning of the Kente ceremony, continuing her connection to Elon while helping celebrate and honor graduating students through movement.



Legacy in Action: The Elon Black Alumni Network

The Elon Black Alumni Network (EBAN) continued to support student success and strengthen alumni engagement through scholarship support, community building and ongoing connection with Black alumni across the university community. During the reporting period, EBAN awarded \$45,865 in scholarships to two students, contributing to Elon's broader commitment to access, belonging and student achievement. The network also maintained engagement with a growing community of Black alumni, with approximately 3,000 alumni connected to EBAN and an estimated 1,900 actively engaged through communications and programming. As part of Elon's larger alumni network of more than 36,000 graduates, EBAN plays an important role in fostering mentorship, connection, philanthropy and continued investment in the experiences of Black students and alumni at Elon University.

Parent Engagement and Student Advocacy

The Black Life Advisory Council continued its role as a collaborative partner in supporting Black students and strengthening the broader Elon community through dialogue, advocacy and institutional engagement. In April, council members met with Randy Williams, vice president for inclusive excellence, and President Connie Ledoux Book to receive updates regarding campus initiatives, student experiences and ongoing university efforts related to belonging and inclusion. The meeting also provided space for parents and family members to share feedback, offer recommendations for continued growth, and express support for initiatives that enhance the experiences of Black students at Elon. Through continued collaboration and communication, the council serves as an important bridge between families and university leadership.

Student Life

The Renaissance Scholars Program

Over the course of this academic year, the Renaissance Program has focused on creating spaces where students can feel grounded in community while also being pushed to grow personally and professionally. Much of this work has centered on bringing students into conversation — with one another, with alumni and with professionals whose lived experiences and leadership reflect the breadth of Black life.

Cheyenne Pinkston, assistant director of presidential stewardship and adviser to the scholars, has been intentional about curating experiences that feel both relevant and formative. For example, the program hosted Deante Kyle through the Grits and Eggs Podcast, which gave students a chance to engage with storytelling and entrepreneurship in a way that felt accessible and inspiring. The program's Black Alumni Panel created space for students to hear directly from those who once sat in their seats, offering both practical guidance and a sense of continuity and possibility.

Experiential learning has also been a key part of their approach. A visit to the International Civil Rights Center and Museum in Greensboro gave students the opportunity to connect classroom knowledge with lived history in a tangible way. Similarly, a spring break trip to Atlanta allowed students to immerse themselves in a city rich with Black culture, leadership and legacy, broadening their perspective beyond campus. Students also engaged with 25 Elon parents and alumni for a networking dinner while in Atlanta.

Through this consistency and intentionality, the Renaissance Scholars Program has built a strong and positive reputation across campus. As a result, students are actively seeking out the program and asking how they can be involved, which speaks to the sense of belonging and value they see reflected in these experiences.

Creating spaces where students can feel grounded in community while also being pushed to grow personally and professionally.

Student Spotlight

Chaise Hannibal '28 has been instrumental in sustaining the work of the Renaissance Scholars Program. Though serving in an unpaid capacity, she is one of the most consistent and engaged members, showing up to every event, bringing others with her and helping build momentum among her peers. She also serves as a thoughtful collaborator, offering student-centered insights that continue to shape and strengthen the program.





Gathering in Purpose: The Black Solidarity Conference

The annual Black Solidarity Conference served as a central gathering for students, faculty, staff and community members to engage in dialogue, learning and collective reflection. The conference featured workshops, speakers and interactive sessions designed to explore issues impacting Black communities while fostering connection, leadership development and cultural awareness. As one of the university's signature Black History Month events, the conference continues to provide a dedicated space for community building, critical conversation and the celebration of Black identity and experience at Elon.

Honoring Legacy & Leadership: The Phillips-Perry Black Excellence Awards

The 2026 Phillips-Perry Black Excellence Awards celebrated students, faculty and staff who exemplify leadership, scholarship, service and cultural impact that embody the spirit of Black excellence at Elon. Rooted in the legacy of Glenda Phillips-Hightower, Elon's first full-time Black student, and Eugene Perry, Elon's first Black graduate student, the annual event honored individuals and organizations whose work advances equity, belonging and community at Elon. This year's ceremony included Legacy and Community Impact Awards recognizing leadership, advocacy, creativity and innovation that strengthen Black communities on campus and beyond. The program also paid tribute to the legacy of Janice Ratliff, whose more than 35 years of service profoundly shaped student life and mentorship at Elon.

Student Spotlight

Nastassia Harrison '28 is a dance science major with minors in exercise science and African & African American studies. She is currently pursuing EMT Basic certification through a partnership with Alamance Community College. Nastassia is also a recipient of the F.W. Beazley Leadership Scholarship and plans to pursue a career in physical therapy.





Connection, Culture and Community in the LLC

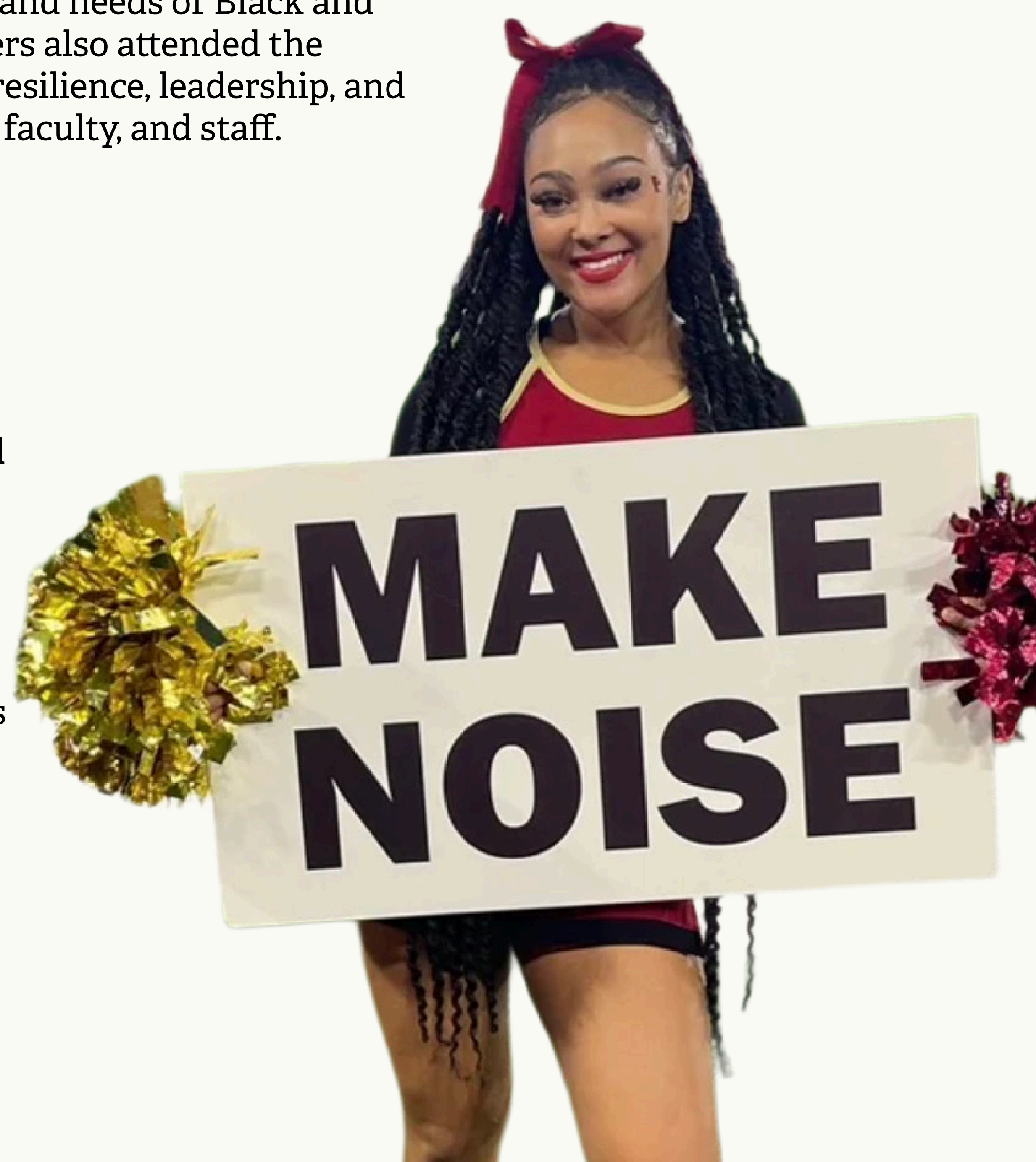
During the 2025–26 academic year, a total of 37 students resided in the African Diaspora Living-Learning Community (LLC). The year began with a retreat in the Center for Race, Ethnicity and Diversity Education (CREDE) focused on the history and purpose of the LLC, as well as guided conversations exploring the complexities and significance of the African Diaspora. Students also engaged in discussions centered on establishing shared community values. Additionally, weekly office hours were held on the hall most Thursdays throughout the year, creating consistent opportunities for engagement, mentorship and community building with students. Looking ahead, there is a goal to expand educational programming and civic engagement opportunities within the LLC experience.

In November, residents participated in a “Friendsgiving” gathering featuring cuisine connected to the African Diaspora. Throughout the fall and spring semesters, students regularly attended CREDE-sponsored community forums, including Black Table Talk, which centers the experiences and needs of Black and Brown students. During Black History Month, hall members also attended the Black Solidarity Conference, which highlighted stories of resilience, leadership, and community through the voices of influential Elon alumni, faculty, and staff.

Student Leadership Through African Diaspora at Elon

African Diaspora at Elon is a student-led organization dedicated to celebrating cultures and traditions connected to the African Diaspora. Throughout the academic year, the organization participated in collaborative tabling events with the Black Student Union and CREDE, helping foster greater community engagement across campus.

Their signature event, “African Night,” highlighted cultures from across the African continent through a student-led fashion show, music, dance, food and theatrical performances. The event drew more than 150 attendees, including students, staff, community members and students from neighboring colleges and universities.





Strategic Rest and Sustainable Leadership

As part of its commitment to fostering holistic well-being and professional growth, The Black Lumen Project hosted Kellie Dixon for a campus conversation titled “Strategic Rest: A Framework for Living, Working & Leading.” Drawing on her N.A.P. Framework (Nurture, Access and Prioritize), Dixon challenged participants to reimagine rest not as a luxury but as a necessary and strategic practice for sustaining leadership, productivity and personal well-being. The event brought together students, faculty and staff to explore practical approaches for integrating intentional rest into everyday life while reflecting on the relationship between self-awareness, leadership and organizational effectiveness. Through this engaging discussion, attendees gained tools for cultivating healthier and more sustainable approaches to living, working and leading.

The Rest Hour: Collective Care in Practice

Sponsored by The Black Lumen Project and facilitated by Professor Karen Lindsey, The Rest Hour invited Black-identifying faculty and staff to participate in a four-week community practice centered on intentional rest and collective care. Grounded in the Black Lumen Project’s annual theme, Black Liberation Pedagogies and Collective Care, the initiative encouraged participants to set aside one hour each week to disengage from technology, step away from productivity demands and embrace rest as a meaningful act of well-being and renewal. Twenty-five members of the Black Employee Resource Group (BERG) committed to the practice, creating a shared opportunity to prioritize restoration and reflection. Participants were also invited to document their experiences through writing, art or other creative forms, contributing to a collective archive of reflections from students, alumni, faculty and staff. By creating space for pause, restoration and reflection, The Rest Hour fostered an ongoing conversation about care, sustainability and the importance of making room for rest within the rhythms of everyday life.



Student Advocacy and Community Building

Elon University's Black Student Union (BSU), continued its longstanding role as a central source of advocacy, community and support for Black students across campus. Rooted in a mission of promoting Black culture, fostering cross cultural understanding and supporting marginalized communities, BSU remained committed to creating spaces where students feel seen, supported and connected. Throughout the 2025–26 academic year, the organization hosted a variety of community centered programs and conversations, including the Welcome B(l)ack Picnic and themed town halls such as Hot Cocoa and Hot Takes and Reset.

Performance, Storytelling and Historical Memory

Black-identifying performing arts students had the opportunity to participate in the creation of the documentary dance film, "We Are Here: Black Women at the Heart of Elon University," which is scheduled to premiere during the fall 2026 semester. The project engaged students in a collaborative artistic process centered on storytelling, movement, oral history and historical memory, highlighting the experiences and contributions of Black women throughout Elon's history. Through performance based research and creative collaboration, students contributed to a work that explores themes of visibility, resilience, belonging and legacy while gaining hands on experience in interdisciplinary artistic creation and documentary filmmaking.

Through performance based research and creative collaboration, students contributed to a work that explores themes of visibility, resilience, belonging and legacy .



