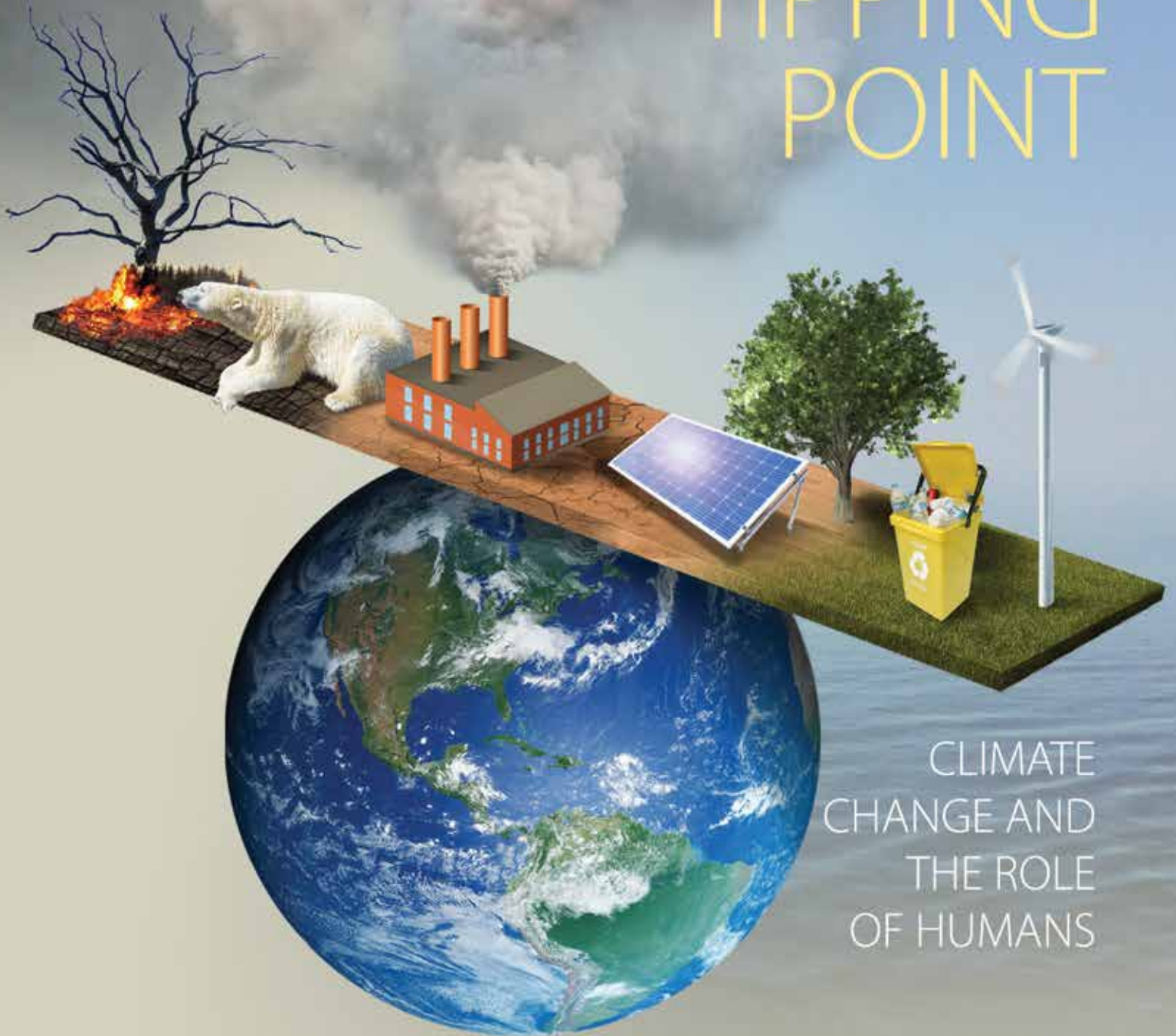


WINTER 2021

THE MAGAZINE OF

# EOLON

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CLIMATE  
CHANGE AND  
THE ROLE  
OF HUMANS



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The year was 1988 and the crowd was small, but the future president said the discussions were 'challenging and stimulating.'

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**I AM ELON**

BY KIM WALKER

Human connection means everything to **Jordan Patterson DPT '22**. When he and his cohort were beginning the Doctor of Physical Therapy program in January 2020, he made sure to foster relationships with each of his classmates. A stickler for punctuality, Jordan would always be one of the first to arrive on campus for a day of classes. As other students trickled in, he made the rounds, greeting everyone with a fist bump.

Not surprisingly, Jordan's cohort nominated him to be the class president, a role he relishes. "I keep the tempo of the class, making sure everyone is doing OK and working out priorities of my classmates," he says. "I'm our liaison to the faculty, making sure our needs are met."

Jordan, a North Carolina native, played football in high school, and a knee injury landed him in a physical therapist's care. His experience with the injury and the rehabilitation process were eye-opening, and he learned that he wasn't quite as invincible as he'd thought. That experience drew him to the profession and helps inform his work with clients.

During his first year at Elon, Jordan volunteered with the Health Outreach Program of Elon — H.O.P.E. Clinic for short — a student-run pro bono clinic that offers physical therapy services to uninsured or under-insured clients. In-person meetings were impossible because of the pandemic, so they relied on telemedicine instead. He said that type of care sparked his creativity and taught him how to think differently.

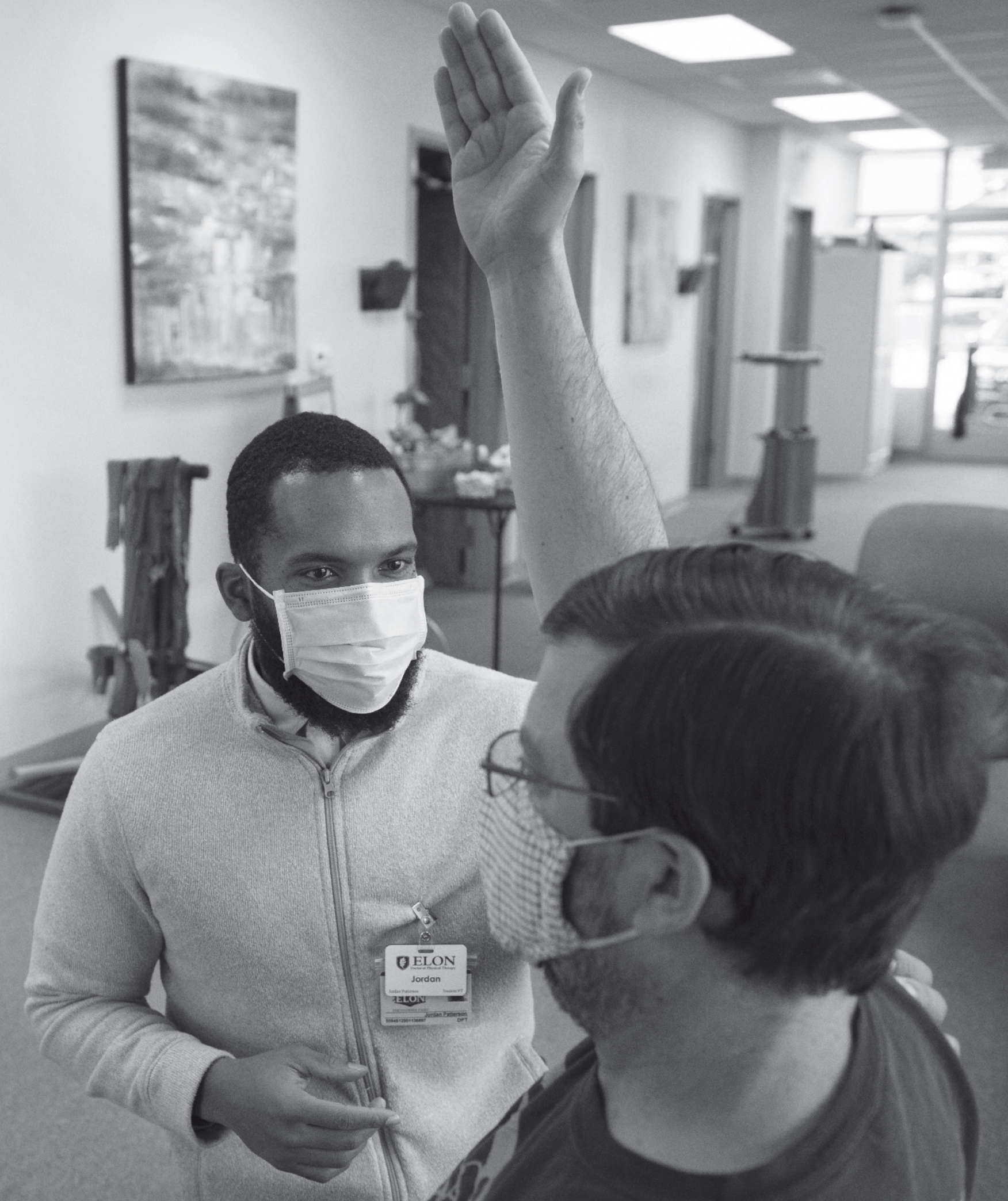
Jordan spent January and February in a clinical rotation at CORA Physical Therapy Chapel Hill, treating patients both in person and virtually. He found that connecting with patients and developing rapport were just as important as the physical care. Patience, with himself and his patients, guided him and helped him see the bigger picture.

"I listen and I commit to each person," Jordan says. "I may not immediately know every answer, but I am listening 100 percent of the time, always doing my best. I will give you as much time as it takes to reach our goal."

**Jordan is Elon.**

Visit [elon.edu/magazine](http://elon.edu/magazine) to see more stories that are part of our "I Am Elon" series.









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## The art of *decision-making*



My dad taught me to drive in an empty Kmart parking lot near our home in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. He wasn't known for his patience, and the "driving lessons" were painful. I don't know what stressed me more, learning how to accelerate or the acceleration of his temper. After a few lessons, I did learn how to drive (a stick shift), and my life changed after that. I applied for a part-time job and drove myself back and forth to school, basketball practice and work.

Independence. I longed for it, but along with it came a new set of responsibilities. The same is true for Elon as an institution.

I've frequently shared on campus that "Elon has Elon's back." This is my way to remind the community that we are an independent, private university. Unlike a state university or public college, Elon's independence means we carry the opportunities and the challenges, the risks and the rewards. Decision-making in this independent environment is challenging, and doubly challenging during the pandemic. However, decisions are necessary as we learn and navigate the intersection between delivering our mission and staying healthy and safe. To make effective decisions, Elon has historically relied on four practices.

The first is feedback. The university has eight divisions, several units, councils and boards. Strong communication when faced with decisions has provided important context and understanding. "If this, then this" scenario planning influences details of our decisions. I've also appreciated that when we make a decision and some unintended or unexpected

consequence occurs, Elon is humble enough to step back and say, "Let's try this again and utilize the new information to improve." That humility is a hallmark of Elon. You find it in the willingness of our students and alumni to reassess and change direction.

The second practice Elon has embraced in decision-making is paying attention to what is happening across higher education. We have established a set of peer and aspirant colleges and universities that serve as important points of information, lessons learned and benchmarks for decisions. While we aren't exactly like any single other university, we share common characteristics with many institutions. Learning from other higher education organizations has helped Elon make more informed decisions, particularly when it comes to the pandemic. We have worked with Davidson College, Duke University and Wake Forest University to learn from each other and to share what approaches are working well on our campuses. This effort has proved to be critical as each of our institutions faced decisions about reopening, health and safety protocols, and implementing testing programs.

The third practice in decision-making is related to time. Higher education is often tied to the visual analogy of ivy creeping up the side of a decades-old building. The visual signals a slower pace and leaves the impression that universities are timeless and unchanging. That has not been Elon's approach. We are constantly making decisions and working to act on those decisions. Our strategic plans are 10-year roadmaps that embrace key decisions often requiring years of investment. Think about our strategic and public decision to deepen our residential campus that was made in 2010. By 2020, we had constructed





{ Elon held its first in-person, socially distanced College Coffee of the spring semester on Feb. 9. }

housing for more than 1,100 additional students to live on campus at a significant cost and reward to Elon's future.

The fourth practice in decision-making at Elon is to keep our focus on student learning. I often find this practice is the centering one, helping to clear the fog that can develop when several choices are in play. The simplicity of asking the key and enduring question, "And how is this beneficial to students?" resets the conversation and brings clarity to any decision.

The pandemic has not afforded Elon (or any of us) the needed time to process decisions. Instead, we have had to rely on these four honed practices coupled with emerging knowledge, historical understanding of diseases and the wisdom of public health experts. As each decision is made, new opportunities and challenges emerge, and the cycle continues. Standing still is not an option. The pandemic has pressed us to keep moving forward to deliver and shelter the mission, the future of the university.

A student recently asked me if I found myself "stressed out" with the number of decisions that needed to be made. I shared our four practices with her and then added my fifth personal practice of inviting God to be with me in my decision-making. It reminds me we are not alone in this journey toward Elon's future. Like the difficult driving lessons with my dad that opened a new world of independence for me, Elon also has a hard-earned independence. The resilience of lessons learned during the pandemic, making strategic and student-centered decisions so that classes continue and student learning progresses have contributed to our ability to persevere. Most importantly, Elon's independence and institutional strength is in the powerful and committed community sheltering its future. In other words, "Elon has Elon's back." ♣

Connie Ledoux Book  
PRESIDENT

# TOP MARKS

A roundup of Elon University's latest rankings and accolades



- **For a 16th consecutive year, Elon University is ranked No. 1 in the percentage of students who study abroad**, according to the Open Doors 2020 report by the Institute of International Education. The ranking of the nation's doctoral universities was determined using participation numbers from the 2018-19 academic year, before the COVID-19 pandemic forced the early termination and cancellation of scores of study abroad opportunities for students at Elon and other universities around the globe.



- **Elon's undergraduate business degree program in the Martha and Spencer Love School of Business ranks No. 45 in the country**, according to new rankings from business education news outlet Poets&Quants. The ranking includes private and public institutions of all sizes. Among private colleges and universities, Elon's program ranks No. 23.



- **The Princeton Review lists the Elon University School of Law and Martha and Spencer Love School of Business among the best in the country.** The law school was listed in Princeton's 2021 guidebook of "The Best 164 Law Schools," while the business school was listed in its "Best Business Schools for 2021" guide based on the quality of the MBA program.



- **Elon's School of Education is recognized nationally for its teacher education programs** by Teaching Degree Search, which relies on data collected by the U.S. Department of Education. Elon's undergraduate teaching programs are ranked No. 15 in the nation and the top in the Southeast, while its master's degree program in special education ranks No. 6.



- **Elon is among 150 top colleges and universities included in the first edition of a new guidebook, "Colleges Worth Your Money: A Guide to What America's Top Schools Can Do For You."** The ranking uses 75 key statistics about each institution, focusing on factors such as cost, admissions, career outcomes and return on investment data.



- **For a sixth consecutive year, Campus Pride, a national advocacy group, has named Elon one of the 40 "Best of the Best" American colleges and universities** for policies, programs and practices friendly to lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender students.



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## The power of a relationship-rich education

As educators, President Emeritus Leo M. Lambert and Professor of History Peter Felten know firsthand that relationships matter when it comes to student success in higher education. It's one of the concepts they explored with their co-authors in their 2016 book, "The Undergraduate Experience."

In their latest work, "Relationship-Rich Education: How Human Connections Drive Success in College," they've gone deeper, bringing forward the personal stories of hundreds of students, faculty and staff along with survey responses from thousands of U.S. college graduates. It's a book that makes a new and compelling case for the importance of personal connections on college and university campuses while providing guidance on how to foster those relationships.

"We thought this would be a great opportunity to look at how this is manifesting itself in this new century and with a new population of college students," Lambert said about the motivation behind the book.

"Relationship-Rich Education" was published by Johns Hopkins University Press during the COVID-19 global pandemic, a time when personal connections and relationship development are even more challenging. Many college students have interacted with each other, their faculty members and staff members via videoconferencing rather than face-to-face or over a cup of coffee.

"I think we have all gained an appreciation for how much we lost on campus due to the pandemic and have pledged never to take so much for granted again," Lambert said. "We have learned a great deal about making online and hybrid classroom experiences much more relationship-rich and I believe we will continue to use these



{ Professor of History Peter Felten & President Emeritus Leo M. Lambert explore the power of relationships in education in their new book. }

new pedagogies and technologies going forward."

Felten, executive director of Elon's Center for Engaged Learning and assistant provost for teaching and learning, said it's important to recognize the trauma that so many have been through during the pandemic and acknowledge that it will take more than a vaccine for individuals and communities to bounce back.

"This will be hard, long-term work," Felten said. "The pandemic has underscored inequities in our society and also how important human connections are in our lives. We all miss both being together to celebrate important events and also having the daily interactions in the hallway or after class that can bring joy into our lives — and that can be vital for student success. The pandemic has been a powerful reminder that relationships matter." ❁

## Remembering George Johnson

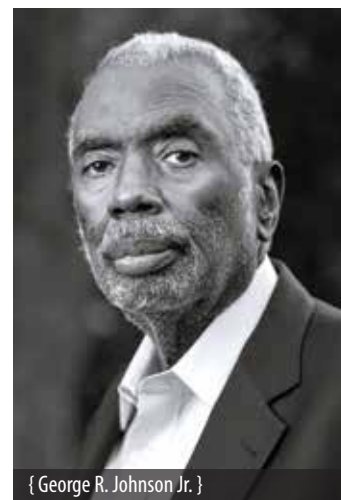
Dean Emeritus and Professor of Law George R. Johnson Jr., a towering figure in the North Carolina legal community who shepherded Elon Law through its first accreditation process with the American Bar Association, died Nov. 15 following a lengthy illness. "Legal education and Elon University have lost a great leader of integrity and intellect in George R. Johnson Jr.," said Elon President Connie Ledoux Book. "His many contributions and mentorship of students have forever impacted and made better Elon Law."

A 1976 graduate of Columbia Law, Johnson joined the Elon Law faculty in time to welcome the charter class in 2006 serving as the school's first associate dean of academic affairs. When Leary Davis, the school's founding dean, retired in 2008, Johnson served as interim dean for six months before his ultimate selection to permanently lead the school until his decision to return to the faculty ranks in 2014. As dean, he oversaw a self-study and hosted ABA representatives who reviewed all aspects of the law school. In addition to his teaching, Johnson chronicled the legal status of African

Americans from 1790 to 1883 for the African-American Almanac.

"Dean Johnson recognized the power of diversity, equity and inclusion, not only at Elon Law, but across the profession, which must continue to make strides in mirroring the communities we serve as attorneys and advocates," said Elon Law Dean Luke Bierman.

"It is most fitting, then, that the North Carolina Bar Association recently named Dean Johnson a 2020 Legal Legend of Color, an honor that I hope brings his family and friends much comfort in the days ahead." ❁



{ George R. Johnson Jr. }



## A pathway for TEACHER SUCCESS



{ From left: Bruce Benson, superintendent of the Alamance-Burlington School System, Connie Ledoux Book, Elon University president, & Algje Gatewood, president of Alamance Community College, sign the declaration of intent for the new Alamance Scholars Program. }

**E**lon University, the Alamance-Burlington School System (ABSS) and Alamance Community College (ACC) are partnering to develop a new initiative to address the shortage of teachers in local schools and to enhance the racial and ethnic diversity of educators in area classrooms. The new Alamance Scholars Program is designed to attract students with financial need from across a variety of backgrounds who desire to earn a degree in education and make an impact in their hometown of Alamance County.

“We are all committed to developing new ways to ensure highly qualified teachers provide leadership in our classrooms throughout our community,” said Elon President Connie Ledoux Book in January during a declaration of intent signing ceremony. “The Alamance Scholars Program demonstrates our shared responsibility to meet this critical educational need and to support and prepare young leaders who are eager to contribute to society through the noble profession of teaching.”

As part of the program, high school students will begin as members of a new ABSS Teacher Cadet Program. They will spend time in several classrooms observing and learning about teaching from current educators. After high school, students will continue their studies to earn an associate’s degree at ACC in a variety of disciplines. There, they will receive dual academic advising from ACC and Elon.

Following their ACC graduation, students will enroll at Elon University and pursue a bachelor’s degree in middle grades education or

elementary education with possible specialization in special education, pre-kindergarten or English as a second language. Upon graduation from Elon, the Alamance Scholars will be guaranteed employment within ABSS.

The new initiative builds upon existing relationships between Elon University, ABSS and ACC through programs like the Elon Academy, a college access and success program for local high school students; Collegiate Start, a program that allows high school students to attend Elon; and the “It Takes a Village” Project, an educational support program for elementary school students. The first ABSS students will begin the Teacher Cadet Program and be eligible to join the Alamance Scholars Program in fall 2021. At that time, ACC students who have completed 30 credit hours will be able to enter the program and transfer to Elon. Once the program is fully implemented, it could welcome up to 25 new students annually. ♣



{ Joe Paturzo '20 }

## Joe Paturzo '20 named Elon University Youth Trustee

**T**he Elon University Board of Trustees has elected 2020 graduate Joe Paturzo to a two-year term as a youth trustee. His term ends October 2022.

An Odyssey Program scholar and Elon College Fellow, Paturzo graduated with a degree in biochemistry. He received the Howell Scholarship in Chemistry, the First Year Physics Award and was named to the Phi Lambda Upsilon National Honorary Chemical Society and the Phi Eta Sigma First Year Honors Society. Deeply involved in undergraduate research while at Elon, Paturzo studied the properties of magnetoactive elastomers, a flexible and magnetizable polymer.

During the summer of 2019, he was a research fellow at Johns Hopkins Hospital in Baltimore

studying the billing practices of hospitals with a history of suing patients for unpaid medical bills. That experience led him to become a co-author on two papers produced by Johns Hopkins physicians and researchers and influenced him to pursue multiple advanced degrees. He returned to Johns Hopkins as a research fellow in summer 2020 to continue his research into hospital billing practices and has expanded his work to also include focus on quality assurance measurements within health care and the epidemiology of COVID-19 in older populations.

Paturzo is applying to medical schools with the goal of taking that next step in his academic and professional career in July 2021. ♣





*“Reconciling is a process. It’s not an act, it’s not an event. It’s something you make up for in the sense that there is a process, and at the end of that process is that you have to make people whole again. That you have to help restore people and put them back in their original condition prior to the injury.”*

— Deena Hayes-Greene, co-founder and managing director of the Racial Equity Institute, speaking during Elon’s Martin Luther King Jr. Commemorative Lecture on Jan. 19.

## CORNER

# FACSTAFF



**Department of Physical Therapy Education faculty members Steve Bailey, Beth Evans and Srikant Vallabhajosula have been awarded a Lung Cancer Initiative of North Carolina Access Grant.** As part of the project, the faculty and DPT students will analyze a lung cancer patient’s future risk of falling based on balance, strength and endurance measures, and explore whether guided exercise intervention can decrease a patient’s fall risk.



**Two faculty members in the Martha and Spencer Love School of Business have been named to Poets&Quants’ “Top 50 Undergraduate Business Professors of 2020” list.** Haya Ajjan, the Sheldon and Christine Gordon Professor in Entrepreneurship and associate professor of management information systems, and Adam Aiken, associate professor of finance, were among the more than 100 nominated professors in two categories, research and teaching, evaluated by the business education news outlet’s editorial staff.



**Professor of Journalism Anthony Hatcher collaborated with other School of Communications faculty on his new book, “Media Writing in the Digital Age.”**

The book, published in the fall by Kendall Hunt, is tailor-made for the school’s COM 110 Media Writing course and similar introductory media writing classes at other colleges and universities. Professor of Strategic Communications Julie C. Lellis, Associate Professor of Cinema and Television Arts Doug Kass and Assistant Professor of Journalism Brooks Fuller served as contributors.



**Alyssa Martina, director of the Doherty Center for Creativity, Innovation and**

**Entrepreneurship, joins the inaugural cohort of Faculty Innovation Fellows,** a program of Stanford University’s Hasso Plattner Institute of Design, or d.school. Martina is among 20 educators from 16 higher education institutions around the world who will design projects that enhance the innovation ecosystems at their schools over the next two years.



# LIFELONG CONNECTIONS

*Professor of Finance Raj Gupta lives out the Elon teacher-mentor-scholar model in everything he does. He is as comfortable presenting at conferences as he is mentoring undergraduate and graduate students and helping them reach their full potential. In recognition of his work with students, Gupta earned the Beta Gamma Sigma Professor of the Year Award. He has also earned the Martha and Spencer Love School of Business Excellence in Scholarship Award for his contributions to the broader business community.*

## Raj Gupta

BY ALEX DEMPSEY '12

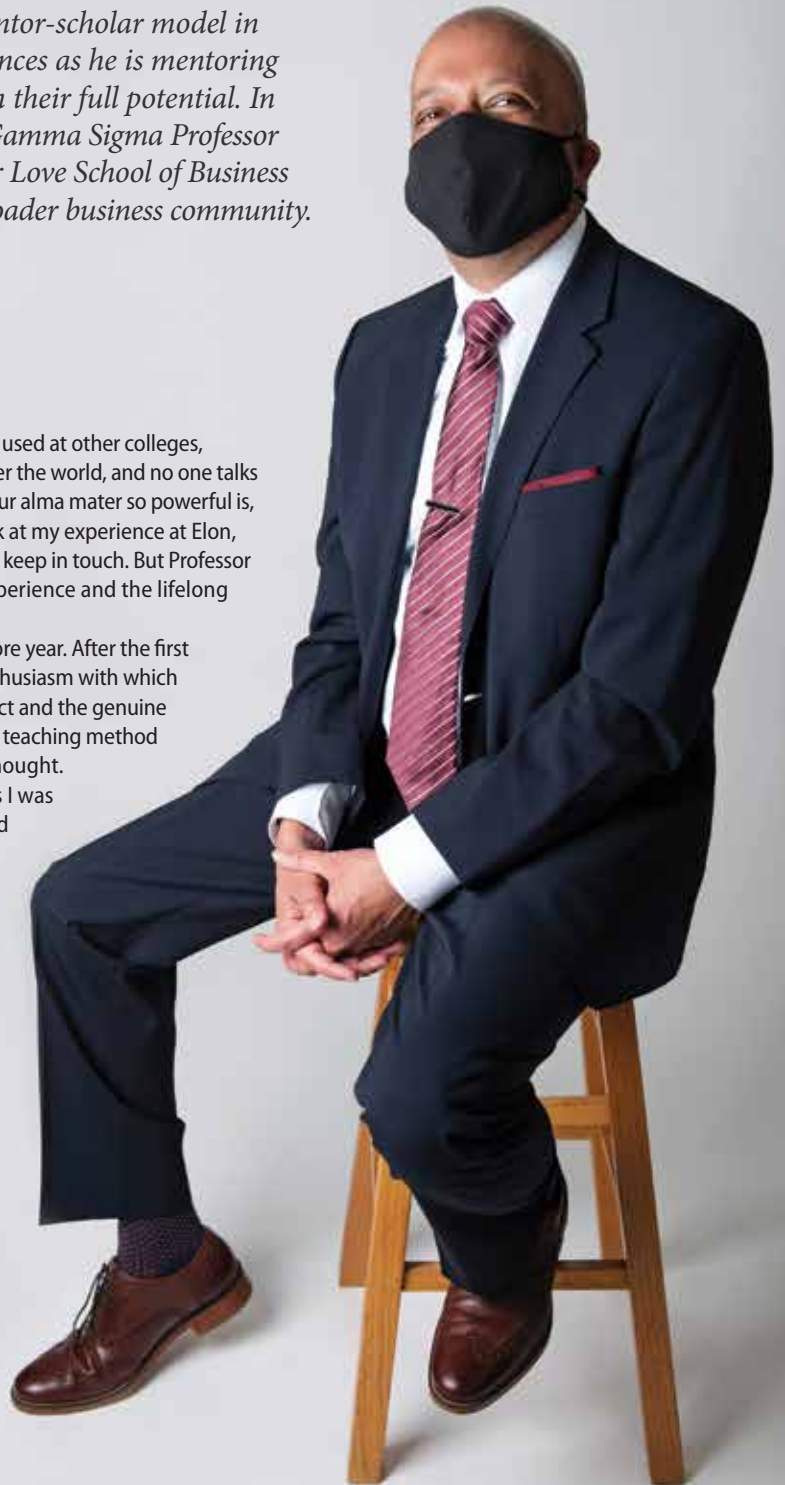
**L**ong live Elon. It's a phrase we all know and love. I've heard similar catchphrases used at other colleges, but at Elon, it rings true. I've been fortunate enough to meet people from all over the world, and no one talks about their university as much as us Elon folks. What makes the connection to our alma mater so powerful is, in no small part, the relationships students have with their professors. Looking back at my experience at Elon, I was fortunate to have many incredible teachers and mentors with whom I currently keep in touch. But Professor Raj Gupta stands out as someone who truly exemplifies the power of the Elon experience and the lifelong connections it yields.

I first got to know Raj when I took his Corporate Finance class during my sophomore year. After the first day in that class, I decided to make finance my major. I will always remember the enthusiasm with which he teaches, the care that he takes to stimulate intellectual curiosity toward the subject and the genuine interest and pride he takes in his students. What I still find most impressive about his teaching method is that it empowers students to seek more knowledge and fosters independent thought.

Raj's mentorship goes far beyond the classroom. I can't count the number of times I was studying in the Koury Business Center and popped by his office to talk markets and bounce around ideas. Those moments fostered my interest in finance that led to my future career. I also had the pleasure of working with Raj on the CFA Investment Research Challenge; his guidance helped me and the rest of the team truly become better analysts and future professionals.

Elon professors are fantastic academics, but they are even better people. This is particularly true with Raj. I will never forget his many acts of kindness, whether it was inviting the CFA team to his home to meet his family over samosas, grabbing a round at the Oak House during Homecoming, offering to write recommendation letters for graduate school or sharing connections that could lead to new careers or contacts. It's these amazing qualities and true passion for students' welfare and success that make Elon's faculty, and Raj in particular, so special.

While the bond Raj and I have is terrific, it is far from unique. Raj has built these incredible connections with countless students. He has attended several of my friends' weddings, gone out of his way to spend time with alumni if they happen to be in town and made important connections between alumni that have helped advance their careers. Graduating from Elon is a special accomplishment, and it is one that will prove fruitful for a lifetime. However, that lifelong experience would not be possible without people like Raj, who foster the next generation of great industry professionals, pushing them to be their best while keeping them connected to the Elon network well after graduation. ✪



*A finance and accounting double major, Alex Dempsey '12 is an associate at Quinbrook Infrastructure Partners and a recent MBA graduate from the Wharton School at the University of Pennsylvania.*



# STUDENT SPOTLIGHT



Seven Elon sophomores have been named University Innovation Fellows by Stanford University's Hasso Plattner Institute of Design, commonly known as d.school. **Zoe Rein**, a math with teacher licensure major; **Christina Wyatt**, a finance and economic consulting double major; **Haydn Stucker**, a mechanical engineering and computer science double major; and **Jane Ragland**, a finance and accounting double major (top row); and **Jakob Reuter**, an entrepreneurship major; **Riley Corvin**, an economic consulting major; and **Margaret Cox**, an engineering major (second row), are among the 198 students selected from 14 countries.



{ Javik Blake '23 }

**Sophomore Javik Blake, a journalism major and Communications Fellow, was recently named the recipient of the Abe Voron Award**, a scholarship presented by the Broadcast Education Association for students pursuing a career in radio. In 2020, he was recognized by the Sportscasters Talent Agency of America as the 10th ranked collegiate sports broadcaster in its Jim Nantz Award competition.



{ Emery Eisner '22 }

**Journalism junior Emery Eisner has received the Pulitzer Center's Climate Science Reporting Fellowship.** The grant will allow her to research the climate injustice occurring in Robeson County, North Carolina, one of about 150 majority-minority counties in the U.S. that were ravaged by hurricanes in 2016 and 2018. Elon is one of the Pulitzer Center's more than 30 Campus Consortium partners, an educational initiative that brings Pulitzer Center staff and journalists to Elon's campus twice a year.



{ Mackenzie Wilkes '22 }

**Junior Mackenzie Wilkes has been selected for the Carnegie-Knight News21 Fellowship program**, one of the most prestigious student journalism internships in the country. The journalism and political science double major who serves as the executive director of Elon News Network, will join student journalists from across the country this summer to report on the pandemic on a national level.



{ Jo Crump '21 }

**Senior Jo Crump has received North Carolina Campus Compact's Community Impact Student Award** for outstanding leadership and service. Crump, who is majoring in public health studies, Spanish and Latin American studies, has been active in the Leaders in Collaborative Service program, served as the coordinator for Family Abuse Services and is involved in a community-based research project on the HIV epidemic.

## SYLLABUZZ | COR 435: Art Through a Mathematical Lens

BY KIM WALKER

During a typical year, many Elon students spend Winter Term abroad, traveling and learning in unfamiliar environments. The COVID-19 pandemic eliminated most options for travel in 2021, but the students in Professor of Mathematics Crista Arangala's COR 435: Art Through a Mathematical Lens journeyed through many beautiful and complex environments, all tied to math.

They watched videos about the work of 92-year-old artist Yayoi Kusama, a multi-talented Japanese artist known for creating "infinity rooms" constructed entirely of mirrors. They learned about the life and work of Dutch artist M.C. Escher, famous for creating surreal and hyper-realistic work that incorporates many mathematical concepts such as fractals, infinity and patterns. Incorporating literary art as well as visual art, the course also explored Edwin A. Abbott's 1884 novel "Flatland: A Romance of Many Dimensions," a satirical commentary on social hierarchy that also explores the concept of dimensions.

Arangala says her students initially responded strongly to the book's tone, opposed to its classism and sexism, but through discussion and research they learned about Abbott and understood his use of satire. The path leading from response to reflection was a great way to begin the course, she adds.

The students ventured out of the classroom to Elon's Maker Hub, where they learned to use 3D printers and created models for their midterm group projects. For the assignment, they imagined and built a model combining the concept of multiple dimensions presented in "Flatland" with the artistic style of either Escher or Kusama. "For many students, this was their first time in the Maker Hub, which was very exciting," says Arangala. "I believe this project really tapped into students' innovative spirit."

Beyond examining how art depicts concepts such as infinity and dimensionality, Arangala also led the class to analyze differing perspectives and recognize similarities. That extended to evaluating how all of the subjects they've studied within the Elon core curriculum come together, in ways that may not be obvious. "Some students talked about expression classes that are clearly related to art," Arangala says. "But some students talked about economics and the ways that field incorporates differing perspectives."

The course was designed by Professor of Mathematics Karen Yokley, and this was Arangala's first time teaching it. That meant students weren't the only ones who got something out of it. "As an applied mathematician, I am drawn to the





{ Kathleen Canty '21 }



{ Delaney DeAvila '21 }



**Four seniors in the School of Education's teacher education program have been awarded scholarships from the Hattie M. Strong Foundation.**

**Kathleen Canty**, a history major with teacher licensure; **Delaney DeAvila**, an elementary education major; **Olivia Haley**, a music education major; and **Hayley Risk**, an English major with teacher licensure, are student teaching during the spring semester.



{ Olivia Haley '21 }



{ Hayley Risk '21 }

**Senior Amanda Willingham, a strategic communications major, was selected as one of 50 students for the American Advertising Federation's Most Promising Multicultural Students program.** Held virtually in late January, the program connected advertising professionals with the nation's top multicultural college seniors for four days of networking, personal brand coaching and livestream sessions.



{ Amanda Willingham '21 }



applications of mathematics in other disciplines," Arangala says. "I have learned so much from the students in this course. I want to go back and read and watch every piece of work that they mentioned to make the course even better next time." ♣

**ABOUT THE PROFESSOR**

Crista Arangala is an applied mathematician who has been teaching at Elon for 21 years. Her work has allowed her to dive deep into the connections between mathematics and other disciplines.

**RECOMMENDED MATERIALS**

- "Flatland: A Romance of Many Dimensions" by Edwin A. Abbott
- "Metamorphose: M.C. Escher, 1898-1972" documentary (1999)



# A SUSTAINABILITY SNAPSHOT

Elon's sustainability initiatives can be traced back to the 1970s. These efforts gained greater focus with the establishment of the Environmental Advisory Council in 2004 and the creation of the initial Sustainability Master Plan in 2007. Since then, Elon has been working to reach carbon neutrality by the year 2037. Here is a look at what has been accomplished so far.

**61%** Of the 147 specific strategies identified in Elon's latest 10-year Sustainability Master Plan, 61 percent are underway.

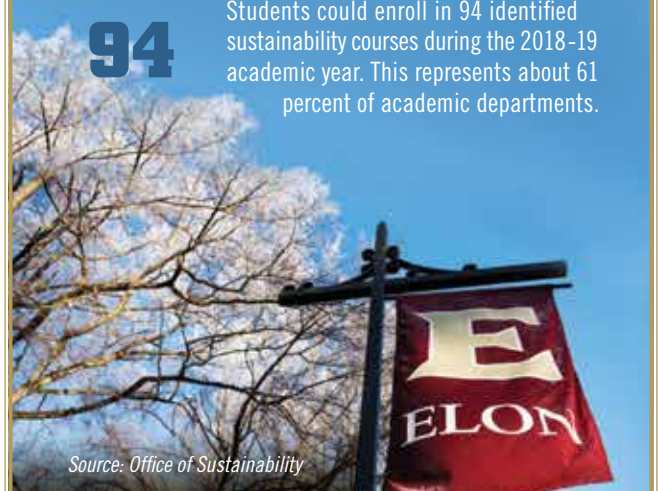
**34%** While Elon's total square footage has more than doubled since 2005, energy consumption per square foot has decreased by 34 percent.



Elon earned a silver rating in the Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education's Sustainability Tracking, Assessment & Rating System (STARS) for its sustainability efforts across campus.

**32** There are 32 LEED certified projects, or sustainable buildings, at Elon, representing roughly 30 percent of the campus building square footage. These include Lindner Hall, Lakeside Dining Hall and LaRose Student Commons, among others.

**94** Students could enroll in 94 identified sustainability courses during the 2018-19 academic year. This represents about 61 percent of academic departments.



Source: Office of Sustainability

# SPRING CULTURAL CALENDAR PREVIEW

For a complete list of events, visit [elon.edu/culturalcalendar](http://elon.edu/culturalcalendar).

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 31

## Blair Imani, "Intersectional Interfaith"

*Virtual presentation*



A historian, Imani will speak on the importance of interfaith work engaging learning and advocacy around race, gender, sexuality and historically marginalized identities.

THURSDAY, APRIL 8

## An Evening with Jimmy Wales, Founder of Wikipedia and WikiTribune

*The Baird Lecture Series*

*Virtual presentation*



A technology futurist and founder of Wikipedia, Wales has been recognized by the World Economic Forum as one of top 250 leaders around the world.

FRIDAY, APRIL 16

## The Department of Performing Arts presents "Macbeth" by William Shakespeare

*Virtual presentation*

In a world haunted with witchcraft and politics, this adaption of "Macbeth" explores the blurred lines between good and evil with a modern lesson for today's audience.



THURSDAY, APRIL 22

## Earth Day Sustainability Lecture by Carolyn Finney

*Virtual presentation*



A storyteller, author and cultural geographer, Finney aims to increase awareness of how privilege shapes who gets to speak to environmental issues and determine policy and action.

## UPCOMING PERFORMANCE

THURSDAY, APRIL 22

## Earth, Sky, Water, Fire

*Virtual concert from McCrary Theatre available on Facebook Live*

Under the direction of Stephen A. Futrell, the Elon Chorale teams up with the Elon World Percussion Ensemble, directed by Jim Roberts, to celebrate Earth Day with a performance of West African song and dance.



## BROADWAY STAR DANIEL J. WATTS '04 to deliver Elon's 2021 undergraduate Commencement address

**Daniel J. Watts '04**, Tony Award nominee for his breakout performance as Ike Turner in "Tina: The Tina Turner Musical," will deliver Elon University's undergraduate Commencement address to the Class of 2021 on Friday, May 21.

Watts got his start on Broadway in 2006 when he was tapped to fill a role in "The Color Purple." Producers saw his talents and Watts went on to win roles in the Broadway productions of "In the Heights," "Hamilton" and "Memphis," among others. Along with numerous off-Broadway performances, including his original productions, he has had recurring TV roles on Amazon's "The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel," NBC's "Blindspot," HBO's "Vinyl" and "The Deuce," and Tracy Morgan's "The Last O.G." on TBS.

Last fall, the American Theatre Wing recognized his first lead performance as one of Broadway's best, nominating him for a Tony as Best Featured Actor in a Musical. "Tina: The Tina Turner Musical" is nominated for 12 Tonys in all, including Best Musical, and Watts is Elon's first alum to be nominated for the prestigious award. The awards ceremony has not yet been



scheduled due to the COVID-19 pandemic. You can read more about Watts on page 34.

Planning is still underway for Commencement 2021 as the university evaluates the various health and safety considerations as well as local and state regulations related to the pandemic. Plans for Commencement 2021 as well as plans for an in-person celebration of the Class of 2020 will be announced by March 26.

Information about Elon's Commencement week activities will be posted to [elon.edu/commencement](http://elon.edu/commencement) once events and programs are finalized. ✨



# **FIRE** on the **Ice Track**

*Lauren Brzozowski '19 has traded her track spikes for bobsled shoes as she pursues her dream of going pro.* | BY ALEXA BOSCHINI '10



{ Former Elon track star Lauren Brzozowski '19 is part of the Team USA bobsled development team. }

**R**UNNING HAS ALWAYS BEEN a driving force for Lauren Brzozowski '19, from racing her older brother and twin sister as kids to running down the soccer field to sprinting for Elon's track and field team. Now, the strategic communications graduate uses that foundation to propel herself down an ice track in a metal sleigh at 80 mph.

Brzozowski moved to Europe after graduating from Elon to pursue a professional track career, racing for the No. 1-ranked Loughborough University in London while earning her master's degree. But when the COVID-19 pandemic forced her to return to the U.S., she quickly pivoted to a new sport to keep her dreams of going pro alive and landed a spot on the Team USA bobsled development team. "The training is fairly similar except now I usually don't run more than 100 meters," Brzozowski says. "But in terms of the sport in general, it's totally different — much colder, much faster and much more dangerous. It's the hardest sport I've ever done in my life in terms of mental toughness and physical ability."

A native of Wyckoff, New Jersey, Brzozowski initially wanted to pursue soccer in college. But she picked up track in seventh grade and loved running shorter distances at a higher intensity. "Sprinting just goes way back," she says. "I've always had a skill for it, and I love how far it's taken me in terms of the people I've met, the coaches I've worked with and the athletes I've seen in the lane next to me, whether they're in front or behind. It's always good competition and a good time."

Brzozowski's hard work and dedication to soccer and track in high school led to a full track scholarship at Elon. She competed in multiple events during her time as a Phoenix but specialized in the 400 meters and the 200 meters. She credits Elon with exposing her to a wide range of opportunities on and off the track, including writing for *The Edge* magazine, working with professors on research proposals and traveling to Greece with the track team.

"That was one of the reasons I wanted to continue running track after Elon,"





{ Lauren Brzozowski '19 finished fourth in her first bobsled competition in January at the North America Cup. }

**“I wanted to see how far I could take sports and I knew there was more in me. ... That’s why I am where I am today. I want to inspire people through sports and do what I love.”**

— Lauren Brzozowski '19

kept training, posting regular updates on Instagram so her teammates back in London could follow her progress. That’s how she connected with Towson University track and field coach Mike Jackson, a friend of her high school coach. “He reached out and offered to coach me because he was happy to see I was still training,” Brzozowski says. “He thought I had more in me.”

Jackson previously trained one of his runners in bobsled.

Brzozowski says. “Being able to see the different level of professional athletes and careers you can have in sports both in America and overseas was very eye-opening.”

She joined the track team at Loughborough, which also houses one of the U.K.’s Olympic training hubs, while working toward a master’s degree in marketing, but that journey was cut short when COVID-19 hit. “I went home thinking I might be back in four weeks, but I didn’t go back for five months,” Brzozowski says. She continued her studies remotely from the U.S. and

That revelation sent Brzozowski down a new path for going pro as she realized her strength and speed from track could position her well for winter sliding sports. To learn more about the field, she reached out to another Elon track alumna, Veronica Day ’11, who has competed for the U.S. in skeleton, in which athletes slide head-first down an ice track on a flat sled. Then a recruiter invited her to participate in a virtual combine, where she made the cut for an in-person tryout for USA Bobsled & Skeleton in Lake Placid, New York.

From there, Brzozowski traveled to Utah to train with the U.S. bobsled development team. She spent December engaged in intensive speed, strength and plyometric training with the team and tried her hand at different bobsled roles. The two-person event includes a pilot, who steers the bobsled down the track, and a brakeman, who pushes the sled to start the race, hops in for the duration of the ride and pulls the brakes at the finish. In monobob, one athlete pushes, steers and brakes. After a year of ups and downs, Brzozowski made her bobsled competition debut in January with Team USA at the North America Cup, where the rookie finished fourth in the monobob event and clocked the fastest start times of the competition.

“I wanted to see how far I could take sports and I knew there was more in me,” says Brzozowski, whose impressive performance has made her an Olympic hopeful. “To have that ripped away from you, it makes you set more goals and keep working hard. That’s why I am where I am today. I want to inspire people through sports and do what I love.” ♣



# Pursuing religious understanding

BY THE REV. JAN FULLER

I remember the question as if it were yesterday. It was during the first month of my first year of study at Yale Divinity School, when my campus ministry practicum supervisor asked me, “What would you die for?” That tiny but perhaps not so innocent question would change my life.

My first reaction, if I am honest, was anger. I had been dodging sniper bullets and artillery shells and watched too many people die during the civil war in Lebanon, my original home, and was just glad to be alive and out of danger. I did not want to think of death. But over the following months, that question haunted me. I could not find it in my heart to die for a living or hypothetical person or for a cause, although I had many causes for which I cared passionately. I had spent my whole life watching communities being ravaged by violence, conflict, enmity and pain that was often seemingly rooted or described in religious terms. I knew my death would solve nothing. I wanted to embrace my life.

The unanswerable question brought me to an affirmation: If my death would not make a difference, my life could. I would live for peace, for an end to violence, for religious

understanding across lines of difference. It became a goal, a drive behind all my professional and personal efforts. I did not yet know how I would do this but knew it would be on college campuses.

The attacks on Sept. 11, 2001, further clarified my calling. I knew and loved Muslims, raised without fear of them unlike many Americans. I began teaching Christians to understand Muslims and Islam as an honorable path (not always successfully) and began reaching out to Muslim communities in my area. One relationship led to another. I started building friendships with Hindu, Buddhist and Jewish communities, and bringing them together for programs, dialogues and celebrations. All of these were “on the side” of my job description as a college chaplain in Virginia but were the passion and energy in my life as campus spiritual leader. Chaplaincy was changing with the world, adding religious diversity and engagement to our job descriptions.

It was at that time that I received a call from Elon to continue doing the work to which I had committed my life. It was 2011 and Elon had committed to multifaith engagement, and I was to lead it forward. I know now that Elon was ahead of the national movement and planned for it. I felt that I had been born to be Elon’s chaplain.

Those early days were exciting as we invented new programming, added new staff and created new partnerships. The Numen Lumen Pavilion was dedicated two years later, and immediately became a happy hub on campus for multifaith engagement. We gathered capable religious and spiritual life staff committed to learning and building relationships in many communities, to greater understanding and dialogue, and to collaboration for the deeper work of justice, equity and inclusion. If my 40-plus years as chaplain have taught me anything, it is that we can be much more effective if we work together rather than separately. As I conclude my time of spiritual and multifaith leadership at Elon, I am convinced that the work of learning from each other, religiously and spiritually, will continue and become even stronger and more widely practiced all around campus in the years to come. And I am more convinced than ever that this is the right direction — our country and the whole world need the skills and gifts developed in interfaith interaction.

A recent encounter at an Eid al Adha celebration on campus certainly solidified that for me. After dinner and an educational program, members of the local Muslim community made their evening prayers with us. The leader explained the prayers and invited members of our community to join in or to observe. After the event, I saw two students talking intently at their table, long after everyone else had departed. I knew that one was a Christian and the other a Muslim. They had lived together for a year but had never discussed their religious practices. The Christian student shared that she had participated in the Muslim prayers, and finally understood what her prayers were meant to be — submission and adoration of God. Both students agreed that their own practices had deepened through knowing their roommate’s practices and beliefs. The happiness of that moment still fills me, reminding me of the hope we have for this work.

So, as I think of what’s to come, I am hopeful. I’m hopeful that more of us on campus will see that we have a responsibility to help students, faculty and staff share the gifts their spiritual perspectives offer. I’m leaving it up to a new chaplain and all of you to continue challenging each other to take seriously religious difference and diverse methods of finding meaning, for the enrichment of all. That’s a goal worth living for. ✦

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*The Rev. Jan Fuller retires from Elon at the end of the 2020–21 academic year after serving as campus chaplain since 2011.*



# A Will to Lead

BY JALEH HAGIGH



{ Chris Martin '78 P'13 }

ALUMNI, PARENTS AND FRIENDS CAN MAKE A LASTING IMPACT AT ELON BY including the university in their estate plans as part of A Will to Lead, a special initiative of the Elon LEADS Campaign that allows donors to help secure Elon's future while providing life-changing opportunities for students for generations to come.

"Placing Elon in your will is the most powerful way that each of us can make a long-term impact at our university," said Elon LEADS Campaign Chair and Elon Trustee Chris Martin '78 P'13, announcing the initiative. "Estate gifts allow you to provide for your loved ones now, create an enduring legacy at Elon and build an essential pipeline of support for the university's future."

President Connie Ledoux Book called A Will to Lead a vital part of reaching the \$250 million goal of the Elon LEADS Campaign. As of mid-February, donors had contributed \$205 million toward the goal, including \$34 million in estate gifts alone. "I am grateful to all the donors who have stepped forward during the Elon LEADS Campaign to place Elon in their wills," Book said. "We are all stewards of Elon's past, present and future, and the impact that our donors make lives on with every generation of Elon students. I can think of no better legacy."

Martin made a \$3 million estate gift in 2018 as part of his Elon LEADS commitment. The gift will provide future resources for scholarships and other key institutional priorities. "I wanted to ensure that my estate provides for both Elon and my son Nicholas '13, which I've done," Martin said. "I made my gift an unrestricted endowment gift because I want it to go where it's needed the most, including to support scholarships. I trust Elon to do the right thing with this gift."

Estate gifts of all sizes are important to Elon's future, Martin said. They also allow donors to make their biggest impact at Elon because they do not have to part with any financial assets during their lifetime. "I believe we all have a will to lead, and I am asking each member of our community to join me in creating this transformative legacy and prepare the graduates our world needs," he added.

"A Will to Lead provides our community the opportunity to begin the estate planning process or update their current estate plan," said Elizabeth Read, assistant director of planned giving at Elon. "Estate gifts are among the easiest gifts you can make, and we are available to help walk you through the process."

**Learn More** | For more information on how you can make Elon part of your estate planning by including the university in your will, please visit [elonleads.com](http://elonleads.com) or contact Elizabeth Read, assistant director of planned giving, at 336-278-7474 or [eread@elon.edu](mailto:eread@elon.edu).



# Benefits of Estate Gifts

- ▶ **A Lasting Legacy:** Your impact will be felt for generations to come.
- ▶ **Support Your Priorities:** Choose the program or opportunity you cherish most.
- ▶ **Maximum Flexibility:** Provide for yourself and loved ones with no financial impact today.
- ▶ **Peace of Mind:** Be confident Elon will honor your philanthropic wishes.
- ▶ **Ease of Giving:** Let Elon staff walk you through the process, including providing language to share with your attorney or financial adviser when making your estate plans.
- ▶ **Order of the Oak:** Your estate gift qualifies you for membership in Elon's planned giving recognition society.

## Ways to Give

- ▶ **Estate Beneficiary:** Designate Elon as a beneficiary in your will, either as a percentage of your estate or a specific amount.
- ▶ **IRA Beneficiary:** Designate Elon as a beneficiary of your retirement account(s).
- ▶ **Residual Bequest:** Designate a specific amount or percentage of your estate to Elon after your assets have been distributed to other priorities.



*“My estate gift is the way I can make the biggest impact at Elon and to the success of the university for a long period of time. We all have something to give, and I feel honored to give back to Elon.”*

—Priscilla Awkard '95, Member, Phoenix Club Advisory Board & Elon Sports Hall of Fame



*“Estate gifts allow alumni to make the commitment today for the future and to make sure Elon continues to get stronger. It's the best feeling in the world!”*

— Angie Leckie & Lee Leckie '98, Member, Elon Alumni Board

# Leading Through You

Donor support creates a lasting impact at Elon. Read more about these and other gifts at [elonleads.com](http://elonleads.com).

Elon is grateful to the following donors who have responded to **A Will to Lead** by making new estate gifts or increasing previous estate commitments to benefit future generations.

## Vicky and Sam Hunt

Elon Trustee Vicky Hunt and her husband, Sam Hunt, of Burlington, North Carolina, have made a \$3 million estate gift that will create an endowment to support student scholarships, the top priority of the campaign. To date, donors have created more than 180 new scholarships during the campaign. President Connie Ledoux Book thanked the Hunts for their unwavering dedication to Elon, which has spanned three decades. “During this time of pandemic uncertainty, I am grateful, and Elon University is grateful, for the steadfast support of Trustee Vicky Hunt and her husband, Sam,” Book said. “The Hunts are fierce believers that the education Elon provides is the difference maker for the future of Alamance County and our nation.”

Sam and Vicky Hunt are longtime business, political and philanthropic leaders in Burlington and Alamance County. They have been loyal Elon benefactors, making lead gifts to scholarships, including the Odyssey Program, which serves promising students with significant financial need.

*“Elon has always been a priority with us and when we give to Elon, especially through scholarships, the impact on the lives of students and on the future of the university is immediate, long lasting and, of course, very gratifying.”*

—Vicky Hunt



{ Vicky & Sam Hunt }

The Hunts have also generously contributed to the Phoenix Club, Hunt Softball Park, Schar Center, Elon Law, The Inn at Elon and Elon Academy, the university’s successful college access program. “Elon has always been a priority with us and when we give to Elon, especially through scholarships, the impact on the lives of students and on the future of the university is immediate, long lasting and, of course, very gratifying,” said Vicky Hunt, who is a member of the ELON LEADS Campaign Steering Committee.

In addition to her role in the couple’s businesses, Vicky Hunt has served as an Elon trustee since 1997 and served on the boards of the N.C. Film Commission, Alamance County Community College, American Red Cross, the Pet Adoption & Welfare Society and the N.C. Zoo. Sam Hunt is the retired chairman and CEO of Atlas Lighting Products and Hunt Electric Supply Company of Burlington. He served four terms in the N.C. House of Representatives before being named Transportation Secretary in 1993. He went on to serve as president and chairman of the N.C. Railroad from 1996 to 2002.



**John '76 and Lesley Hill**

Elon alumnus and Trustee John R. Hill '76, of Bonita Springs, Florida, has increased his estate gift as a way of giving back to an institution that prepared him for success. Hill and his wife, Lesley, made their first estate gift in 2016 and planned to add to it over time. The Elon LEADS Campaign and A Will to Lead initiative inspired the couple to act now. "Estate gifts provide someone with an opportunity to demonstrate how much they care about Elon without requiring them to make a gift now," Hill said. "Elon was an important turning point for me and laid the foundation for the blessings I've been able to enjoy. I'm very thankful for that and feel it's important to give back. Money is well-managed at Elon and as a trustee, I'm able to see that, and that's important."

Hill, who earned his Elon degree in economics and business, encouraged all alumni to consider supporting what they cherished most about Elon with an estate gift. "We want to let people know how simple this kind of gift is to make," he said. "If you already have an estate, it's easy to add Elon into those plans. Many of us have been blessed and had good careers and have the opportunity to give back."

Hill has served as an Elon trustee since 2013 and is the former president of the Elon Alumni Board. The couple established the John R. Hill '76 and Lesley W. Hill Endowed Fund for Engaged Learning in Business and have also contributed to scholarships,



{ John R. Hill '76 & Lesley W. Hill }

Richard W. Sankey Hall, The Inn at Elon, Phoenix Club and the Inman Admissions Welcome Center, where the first-floor conference room is named in their honor.

"John has been one of the chief architects in the building of a strong alumni network at Elon," said Jim Piatt, vice president for university advancement. "He and Lesley have been devoted stewards of Elon, and we are grateful."



{ Kevin Tedeschi P'18 }

**Kevin Tedeschi P'18**

Kevin Tedeschi P'18, of Duxbury, Massachusetts, has seen firsthand the benefits of an Elon education, having watched his son, Ralph '18, form close friendships on campus and excel in the Martha and Spencer Love School of Business. He credits his pride in Elon with inspiring his estate gift to fund scholarships. "My father taught me early on if you have wealth, you should share it. I am fortunate to have wealth, and I need to share it," Tedeschi said. "I believe in Elon and in what I'm doing with this gift. Elon was a great fit for Ralph. It was the right size, and he enjoyed it from day one."

Tedeschi also praised Elon's national leadership in engaged learning and outstanding combination of professional programs with the arts and sciences. Those hallmarks of quality are worth supporting. "Elon is a national institution, and it makes me proud to be associated with it," he said. "I like to give to education where they do a good job, and Elon is one of those places."

"Elon is indebted to Kevin for his loyal and generous support of the Elon LEADS Campaign and scholarships in particular," said John Gardner '01, senior director of development. "Elon is a stronger university because of dedicated parents like Kevin."

# On a Streak

BY EMILY AMBROSE '18 AND KATIE PEOPLES '06



Nicole Wright '03

Annual support from the Elon community is essential to providing the experiential education that makes the university stand out. In 2020, **Elon was ranked No. 22 in the nation for alumni participation by U.S. News & World Report** — just one spot behind Yale and ahead of Cornell and Wake Forest. Many alumni choose to give back monthly or yearly, creating streaks of generosity that enhance the Elon experience for students year after year.

## Supporting research and access to education

Giving back to Elon has been a top priority for **Nicole Wright '03**. She's given almost every year since her graduation, with a record of giving to Elon that now spans **11 consecutive years**. As an associate professor in the School of Public Health at the University of Alabama at Birmingham, Wright chooses to support the biology department at Elon. "The type of research projects that are coming out of the biology department these days are phenomenal, and if alumni donations offset costs elsewhere for students to be able to have the resources for these projects, then that's enough for me to continue to donate," says Wright. She also gives to the Elon Academy, a college access and success program that serves promising high school students with financial need in Alamance County. "I support anything Elon does to give back to the local community, particularly when it comes to education," she says.

## A brighter future for generations to come

Elon parents **Flip and Candy Cady P'05 P'06** visited many campuses when touring colleges for their son more than 20 years ago. But when they came to Elon, they knew it was the right fit. Elon remains very much a part of their family, with two children and a son-in-law having graduated from the university. They are also loyal donors, having donated to Elon for **20 consecutive years**. Their commitment to giving year after year undoubtedly has a ripple effect on the countless lives and communities that Elon students go on to impact. "The experiences our children and son-in-law had in and out of the Elon classrooms helped shape them into the adults, parents, friends and colleagues they are today, and we felt it was a great opportunity to provide this invaluable experience for someone else."

## Leaving a lasting legacy

**Jane Carmichael '68** has made an annual gift to Elon for **52 years in a row**, a tradition she started when she made her first gift in 1969 as a young alumna of Elon College. Her commitment to benefiting Elon students through her generosity continues to this day. "Elon was the right place for me to achieve an undergraduate degree, and I want Elon to continue its mission," she says. Along with her husband of 53 years, Dr. Richard Dudley Carmichael, Jane is also a member of the Order of the Oak. The society recognizes donors who will leave a lasting legacy at Elon by providing opportunities to students through planned giving.



Flip & Candy Cady P'05 P'06



Jane Carmichael '68



# All in the Family

BY MEGAN MCCLURE

LEARN MORE



The Elon Society honors leadership annual giving donors who make a gift of \$1,500 or more each year, for any purpose. Through their support, these donors sustain the Elon experience for all students. For more information, please visit [elon.edu/ElonSociety](http://elon.edu/ElonSociety).

**W**hen Dr. Sara Schilke '08 and Kyle Smialek '07 think about why they give back to Elon, a few reasons spring to mind. Like many alumni, their lifelong Elon relationships are chief among them.

For one, Elon helped bring them together. Although the couple didn't know each other while on campus, they met after graduation at the wedding of mutual Elon friends. Today, they live in Atlanta with their young son, Grant, where Schilke works as a veterinarian and Smialek serves as vice president of operations for technology start-up Shiftsmart.

They also credit the people who made Elon feel like home. For Smialek that includes Greg Zaiser '90 G'95 P'20, now vice president for enrollment, as well as his

Elon tennis teammates and coaches, the now retired Tom Parham and Michael Leonard. "Elon was the only school that didn't make us feel like just another number," says Smialek. "They still make time for us and want to meet up when we're on campus. They genuinely care about us."

Family also factors into giving back for the couple, who generously support the men's tennis team as members of the Elon Society. Both Schilke and Smialek have siblings who also claim the university as their alma mater, and Smialek learned early on from his father and late mother to give back to what you care about. "My mother was adamant about staying engaged and giving back to the places that taught you," he says. "She and my father always ingrained that in us."





# Unlocking Opportunities

Griffin Barriss '21 has discovered ways to collaborate with partners around the globe for the common good.

BY PATRICK WRIGHT

A seven-hour bus ride can leave one with plenty of time to think. For Griffin Barriss '21, those seven hours were enough to change the course of his Elon journey.

Barriss, a senior Honors Fellow, Global Ambassador and a die-hard four-year member of Elon's Model United Nations Club, has always been drawn to global development. He first tapped into his global interests in a pair of courses during his first year at Elon. He fed his passion in an introduction to public health course taught by Senior Lecturer in Public Health Studies Amanda Tapler. He developed an interest in Indian independence, politics and religion in a South Asian politics course taught by Professor of Political Science and Policy Studies Jason Kirk. Two years later, he had the opportunity to combine those two passions into one hands-on experience in a new country.

In January 2019, Barriss and a group of Elon students set out for Jamkhed, India, as a part of Tapler's annual Winter Term Public Health Practicum. Students spent several weeks getting firsthand experience in global public health. They worked with the Comprehensive Rural Health Project (CRHP), a non-governmental organization dedicated to supporting poor and marginalized communities, to confront the region's public health issues. It was on the bus ride from Jamkhed to the Mumbai airport that Barriss realized his experience in India could translate into another meaningful opportunity at Elon. Barriss had set his sights on the univer-

sity's Lumen Prize, and there was no time to waste. "I immediately reached out to Professor Tapler," he says. "We had just six weeks to go pedal to the metal."

Just six weeks to prepare a proposal to be considered for the university's most prestigious award supporting undergraduate research. No pressure. As rising juniors at Elon, Lumen Scholars receive a \$20,000 award and the opportunity to work closely with a faculty mentor on a research project, which often culminates in conference presentations and publications. So, with little time to spare, Barriss needed a research topic. He wanted to dive deeper into the CRHP, its programs and its impacts in India. Fortunately, the organization had just the opportunity.

CRHP leaders wanted to conduct peer-reviewed research on one of the organization's key initiatives, the Adolescent Girls Program. The six-month program teaches Indian girls, ages 12 to 18, valuable lessons in health and social justice to inspire them to become agents of change in their communities. The CRHP had been unable to conduct its own research on the program due to a lack of time and resources, so Director Ravi Areole reached out to Tapler for help. Specifically, he wanted Barriss to lead the research. "I think that's a really important piece to note because international global research can go wrong in many, many ways," Tapler says. "And to have the director have a conversation and say, 'I'd really like to work with Griffin on a new project,' is special."

With a topic secured and Tapler as his mentor, Barriss





{ Clockwise from left: A health worker with Comprehensive Rural Health Project in India holds a focus group to discuss the interview questions to be used in the research Griffin Barriss '21 is conducting on behalf of the organization; Barriss' research mentor, Senior Lecturer in Public Health Studies Amanda Tapler; a health worker conducts a pilot field interview with a local Adolescent Girls Program graduate. }



proved to the Lumen Prize selection committee that he had the knowledge, plan and passion for carrying out his research, earning him a place among the 15 members of Elon's Lumen Scholar Class of 2019. The Lumen Prize funded Barriss and Tapler's January 2020 return trip to Jamkhed, where the two began to collect data for the project. They worked closely with the CRHP research team to design questions and interview graduates about life after the program and their impact on their communities.

With the research well underway, Barriss returned home to Massachusetts and planned to again go back to Jamkhed over the summer to check in on progress. However, with the COVID-19 pandemic at its peak, traveling to India became impossible. Instead of working face to face with the CRHP in India, Barriss relied on phone calls and virtual meetings to continue his research, displaying resilience throughout. "He's been amazing during a very stressful time for everybody," Tapler says. "He's been able to pivot during COVID-19 and continue the process. I think some students might not have handled it as calmly as Griffin did."

Barriss continued to work closely with the CRHP over the summer, but with some unplanned free time, he found another way to promote public health — this time, at home in the United States. While in Massachusetts, Barriss took on a six-week internship with the nonprofit startup The Ventilator Project. The company launched in March 2020 to provide more cost-effective, scalable ventilators to hospitals facing shortages across the country.

The internship allowed Barriss to apply some of what he has learned at Elon to a real-world problem alongside hundreds of engineers and medical, regulatory and business professionals as they sought to protect patients from the effects of COVID-19. Although the pandemic upended

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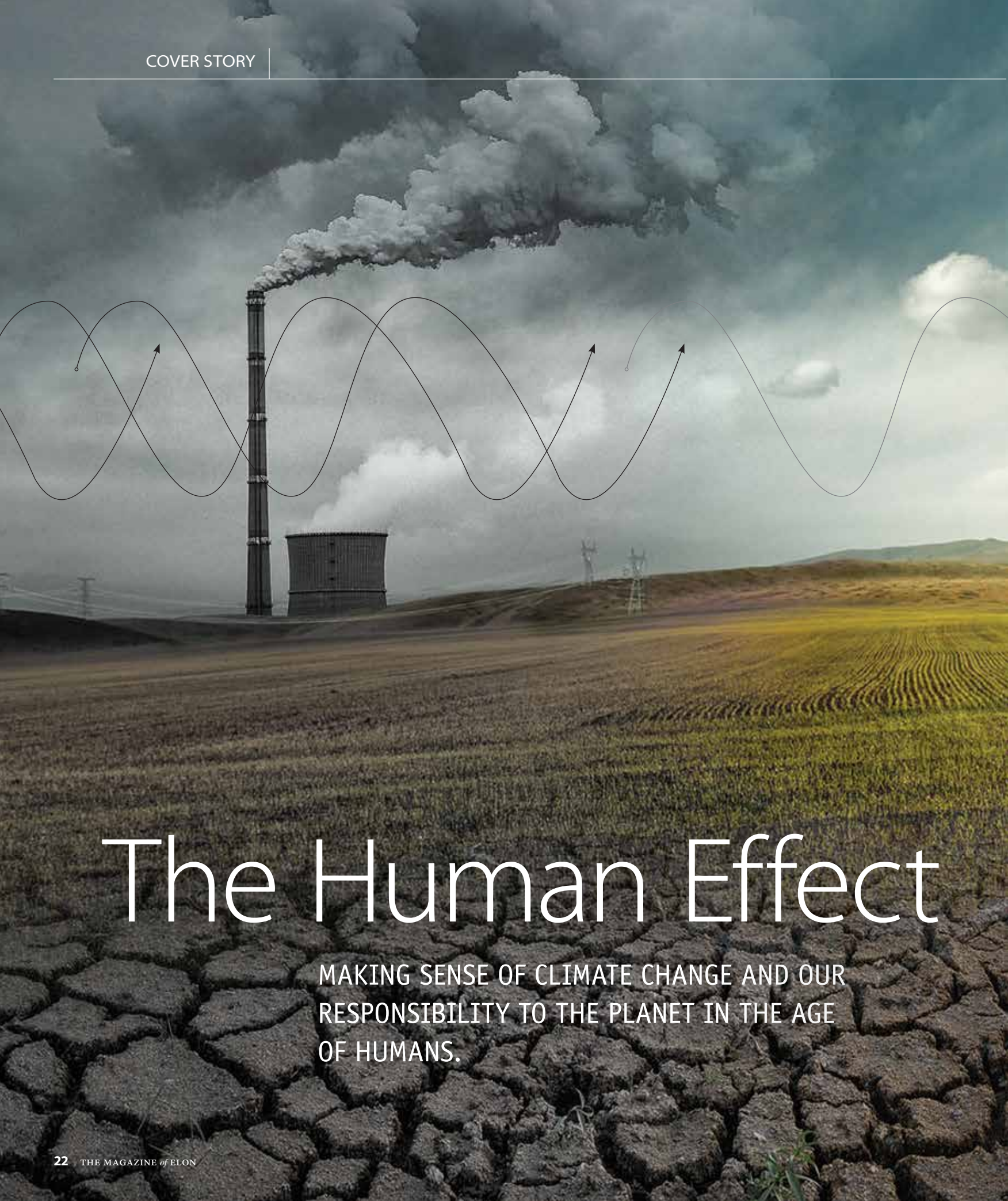
**"He's been able to pivot during COVID-19 and continue the process. I think some students might not have handled it as calmly as Griffin did."**

— Amanda Tapler, senior lecturer in public health studies

Barriss' original summer plans in India, the crisis served as a valuable lesson for the public health studies and international and global studies double major. "I think COVID-19 showed us and the world that we are a lot more interconnected than it seems," Barriss says. "What started as a limited outbreak in rural China is now dictating how I go to class and see my friends. I think it strengthens the idea that collaboration across borders and working with international communities is not a waste of resources. We need to work together."

In the face of the global pandemic, Barriss now has his sights set on completing his research and his final semester on campus. He hopes the experiences of the past four years are just the beginning of his future and the chance to make a positive impact around the world. As he continues his journey — he has been accepted into five Master of Public Health programs already — he will always remember the research experience and the seven-hour bus ride that set him on a course with endless possibilities. "Being selected as a Lumen Scholar was an incredible and humbling experience that has unlocked countless opportunities to reach my full potential," he says. ✨





# The Human Effect

MAKING SENSE OF CLIMATE CHANGE AND OUR RESPONSIBILITY TO THE PLANET IN THE AGE OF HUMANS.





BY KEREN RIVAS '04

**T**he signs are everywhere. Rising sea levels. An intense Atlantic hurricane season. Shrinking ice sheets. Microscopic plastic dust reaching remote areas of the globe. Large swaths of the planet, from Australia to Brazil to the West Coast of the United States, scorched by unprecedented fires. A rise in the number of zoonotic diseases, the kinds caused by pathogens spilling from animals to people, as human activity continues to encroach on natural habitats worldwide.

Welcome to the Anthropocene era, or the age of humans, an entirely new geological epoch that scientists are proposing to describe the period in Earth's history when humanity started having a significant impact on the planet's climate and ecosystems. And according to the United Nations Development Programme's 2020 Human Development Report, we have reached a tipping point. "We are the first people to live in an age defined by human choice, in which the dominant risk to our survival is ourselves," the report states. "It is time to make a change. Our future is not a question of choosing between people or trees; it is neither or both."





**“When you talk to college-age students, it is really promising how many want to make a change, even though we know it’s difficult to change a system that has become embedded for a long time.”**

—Amanda Chunco, associate professor of environmental studies and Japheth E. Rawls Professor

The U.N. report provides the latest call for global action on climate change. Scientists have been raising the alarm for years about the effects humans have on the environment and the future of our planet, but there is reason for hope. The recently installed Biden administration has promised to make the environment and climate change key priorities during the next four years. Then there is the gathering of world leaders later this year to discuss their countries’ progress since the signing of the 2015 Paris Agreement, which called for “ambitious efforts to combat climate change and adapt to its effects.”

But beyond policy changes, the U.N. report challenges us all to take individual and collective actions to remedy both social and planetary imbalances. “Governments and policymakers are the central actors, but people’s own will to shape their life can come together in organized ways through social movements,” the report states. “Climate change confronts us with a fundamental truth: that our individual stories are braided with the stories of every living thing on the planet and of countless lives yet to be born. Decisions taken in the next decades will shape the story of life on Earth for generations to come.”

What those decisions might be will

According to a 2020 report by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the U.N. on global forest resources, it is estimated that **deforestation accounts for the loss of roughly 420 million hectares since 1990.** Though the rate of forest loss has declined in recent years — going from 12 million hectares in 2010-15 to 10 million hectares in 2015-20 — the report found it will take another 25 years for the organization to reach its goal to halt deforestation.



undoubtedly vary. From recycling and carpooling to voting for candidates who champion climate change legislation and advocating for change in your local community, the first step is awareness. “Literacy is important. We have to talk about it,” says ecologist Amanda Chunco, an associate professor of environmental studies and Japheth E. Rawls Professor at Elon University whose research focuses on how climate change impacts wildlife. “This is how I address climate change in my science classes. I tell my students, ‘These are the facts, and this is how the facts were established, this is how we know this.’ Only then, can we talk about personal responsibility and focus on solutions and finding different ways we can make change.”

## THE SCIENCE BEHIND THE ISSUE

**E**stablishing a common ground about what causes climate change is a good place to start. Climate, Chunco says, has been changing since before humans entered the picture. She points to three main natural contributing factors: the position of Earth in space, the energy of the sun and the composition of the atmosphere. For more than 100 years, scientists have studied these factors and developed methods to predict future climate changes. They look at tree rings, measure carbon dioxide trapped in bubbles within thick layers of ice in the Arctic and record sunspot emissions to identify patterns that explain the periodic warming and cooling of the planet.

While the position of the planet and the energy of the sun show regular, predictable cycles over millennia, the forces that affect the composition of Earth’s atmosphere are more complicated, Chunco says, and have changed drastically over the past 200 years thanks in large part to greenhouse gas emissions generated by human activity. Naturally occurring sources of some greenhouse gases, like carbon dioxide emissions from forest fires, do exist. However, human sources of many greenhouse gases have dramatically increased the amount of these gases in the atmosphere in the past two centuries. Even worse, she adds, non-naturally occurring greenhouse gases like chlorofluorocarbons, which are used in refrigerants, are not only strong but also harmful to the ozone layer, which protects us from the sun’s harmful ultraviolet radiation. These chemicals, some of which can be traced back to the first Industrial Revolution in the 1800s, “are 1,300 times more potent as a greenhouse gas than carbon dioxide,” Chunco says. They stay in the atmosphere for longer periods and absorb heat more intensely, which, combined with the dramatic increase of other human-generated greenhouse gases, accelerates the warming of our planet.

Add to that deforestation and misinformation, and you have a serious human-made problem. For Chunco, the biggest threat to fighting climate change is the latter. While it’s easy to find information that downplays the role of humans in climate change, she says, it is harder to break through the noise with real scientific data. She points to the misinformation campaigns

**It’s estimated that 60 percent of emerging infectious diseases in humans are zoonotic — passed from animals to people. (Source: World Health Organization)**



by oil giants like Exxon. According to a 2015 report in *Scientific American* magazine, the company has known about the effects of fossil fuels on global warming since 1977 — more than a decade before it became a public issue. Rather than investing in alternative energy solutions, the report states, the company chose to publicly call the scientific findings “controversial” and become “a leader in campaigns of confusion,” successfully lobbying to prevent the U.S., China and India from signing the 1998 Kyoto Protocol, an international treaty on climate that aimed to control greenhouse gas.

The decades-long misinformation efforts by oil companies and other interest groups have created a mistrust of scientific data, Chunco says, something that often gets reflected along political extremes, with liberals often championing the findings of climate scientists and conservatives on the other end of the spectrum. “How do you critically evaluate information and not just accept what you want to believe?” she asks.

It’s a tall order, though not impossible.

## MAKING IT A RELATABLE ISSUE

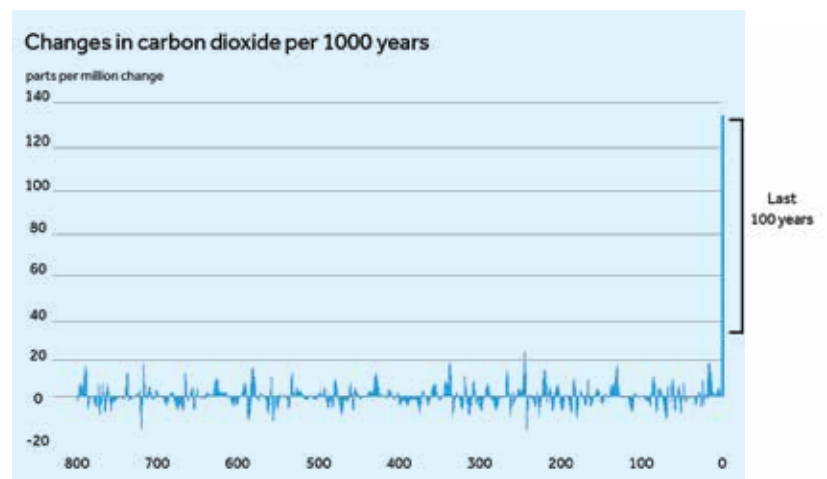
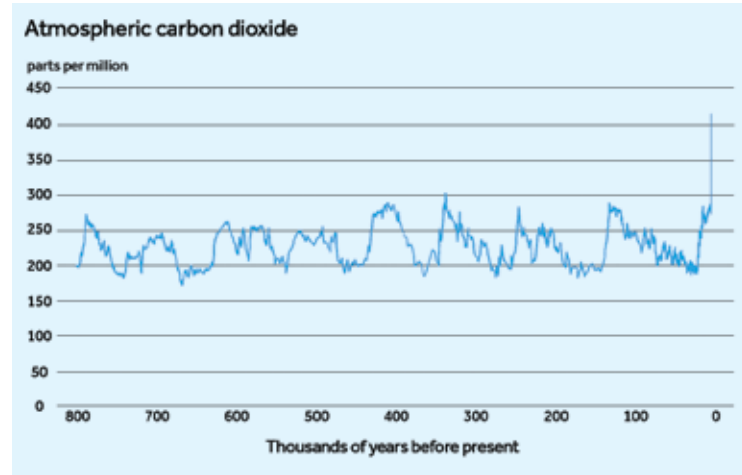
In general, Chunco says, many people don’t understand the science behind climate change or don’t want to accept it partly because it is a scary topic, and the consequences are unpleasant to think about. “People are just turned off by big problems and are not willing to address them,” she says. “If you don’t experience it personally, you don’t understand it as well.” She recalls a recent encounter with a middle-age, upper-middle-class neighbor, who didn’t see the need to care about climate change since she’s never come face to face with it in her lifetime. “It might not be a problem for you personally, but if you care about farmers, about people in developing countries and food crises around the world, you need to pay attention,” she says.

Breaking down data in a more visual way is key in helping people understand the severity of the issue, says Nathan Pool ’17. A computer scientist with a penchant for conservation and preservation of natural resources, Pool has seen firsthand how machine learning and artificial intelligence technologies have the potential to revolutionize how people interact with climate change data to develop sound



**“A lot of the world’s problems seem like a daunting thing, but seeing the way that simple math and coding can apply to that is powerful.”**

—Nathan Pool ’17,  
computer scientist



{ The first graph shows the traditional way to present data about atmospheric CO<sub>2</sub> levels over time. The second graph was created using artificial intelligence to fill the gaps in the data to more accurately present the impact over the past 100 years. } *Climate Central (climatecentral.org)*

solutions. As part of his postgraduate studies, he was part of a research team at N.C. State University that monitored water usage in farms by using live spatial temporal data analytics of satellite images. “We had the amount of water farmers were using during that period, and we were able to see whether they were over- or under-using it,” he says. After analyzing the data, they were able to figure out the optimal water utilization and water stress detection so farmers could make the necessary changes. “Data can be used for good,” he says.

Take for instance the “carbon skyscraper,” a chart created by researchers at the nonpartisan Climate Central organization in January using AI to better depict the speed of change in carbon emissions linked to human activity since the Industrial Revolution. The traditional graph uses a sawtooth pattern to indicate the levels of carbon dioxide over the past million years using direct measurements scientists collected, on average, once per 400 years or so. To fill the gaps in between observations, the traditional graph uses a line to connect the dots. The updated chart used AI to create a continuous curve, allowing us to zoom in and look at readings for every 1,000 years going back from the present. The result, wrote Benjamin Strauss, the organization’s CEO

and chief scientist, shows “just how dramatic the human influence has been — and how grave our situation may be.”

For Pool, this is one of many examples of how data can be useful in making a topic like climate change easier to understand. “A picture is really worth a thousand words,” he says. “A lot of the world’s problems seem like a daunting thing but seeing the way that simple math and coding can apply to that is powerful.”

For Greta Matos ’06, it took a trip to Asia as part of her first job out of college to fully grasp the complexity of the issue. Growing up on a 65-acre organic farm in rural Pennsylvania, the corporate communications and political science double major always felt connected to the planet. She lived off the land, so sustainable practices were second nature to her. Then, while working with factories in China as a manufacturing manager for a U.S.-based product development company, she was exposed to how “business as usual” was done, how typical supply chain negotiations were solely made based on cost, quality and timeline without taking into account the impact those processes had on the human capital and the environment. “Seeing the state of the rivers around the factories, the massive scale of impact on the environment as well as the social aspect that were invisible to the consumer in the U.S.,” she says, “for me, that was definitely a pivotal point in my career.”

As a corporate communicator, she was prepared to create a narrative that fit the company’s brand. But she couldn’t shake the feeling that she shared responsibility for contributing to the degradation of the environment. She tried changing mindsets inside the company to explore more sustainable processes, to no avail. On a personal level, the pollution in the factory cities was so severe, she developed a lung condition. “I found myself overwhelmed and frustrated with my own inability to influence change,” she says. That’s when she decided to focus on corporate transparency and accountability. She returned to the U.S. and transitioned into the social and environmental compliance industry, helping Fortune 100 companies across the spectrum develop strategies based on sustainable and ethical supply chain practices — from



**“People across the political spectrum have different opinions. . . . We need to come together to do the research and come up with solutions.”**

—Jake Tyner ’12,  
policy adviser



**A 2013 paper published in *Environmental Research Letters* found that 97 percent of climate scientists agree that humans are largely to blame for the recent warming of the planet.**

changing the ways they sourced raw materials to paying attention to human rights and environmental issues.

After five years of consulting and telling companies how to do business better, the weight of the work became too much for Matos. She needed a break. Yearning to return to life outdoors, she and her husband moved to Southern Chile in 2014, with the goal of reimagining her role in the industry while embracing opportunities to build a better, more regenerative economy. The merging of her passions resulted in two new ventures: Quila Quina, a global consulting business centered on building transparency and systems of shared value within organizations and throughout global supply webs, and CuraKuda, a company that provides outdoor experiences that build connection between people, horses and nature. “I wanted to create my own company and create that model for myself to make courageous decisions and confront the real challenges that come up when you commit, when you are aware of your own negative impacts and make a commitment to change,” she says. “It’s been a full experiment and journey. It came together in this nonlinear fashion of being an opportunity to build the foundation of a business that helps the planet and its economic resources.”

## BEING PART OF THE SOLUTION

**W**hile moving across the globe is not the answer for everyone, Chunco says it is important for people to find ways to see the relevance of climate change in their daily lives. And though there is still a political divide on the issue, she is optimistic about a green wing of the Republican Party that is advocating for policy changes. According to a June 2020 Pew Research Center report, younger Republicans, those ages 18 to 39, are more likely than older Republicans to think humans have a large role in climate change, that the federal government isn’t doing enough to combat it and that the U.S. should focus on developing alternative energy sources.

Jake Tyner ’12, a conservative policy adviser working in the U.S. Congress on energy issues, says there is plenty of evidence that suggests climate change has evolved into a bipartisan issue, particularly when it comes to supporting policy options to reduce its effects. He points to the passage in December of the year-end spending bill that included funding for coronavirus relief but also a variety of energy- and climate-related provisions, which he described as the “the most comprehensive energy bill” Congress has passed in more than a decade. “People across the political spectrum have different opinions,” he says, “from regulating through the executive branch to a free market approach.”

Tyner personally agrees mostly with the latter position — to let the private sector and the government partner to come up with innovative clean



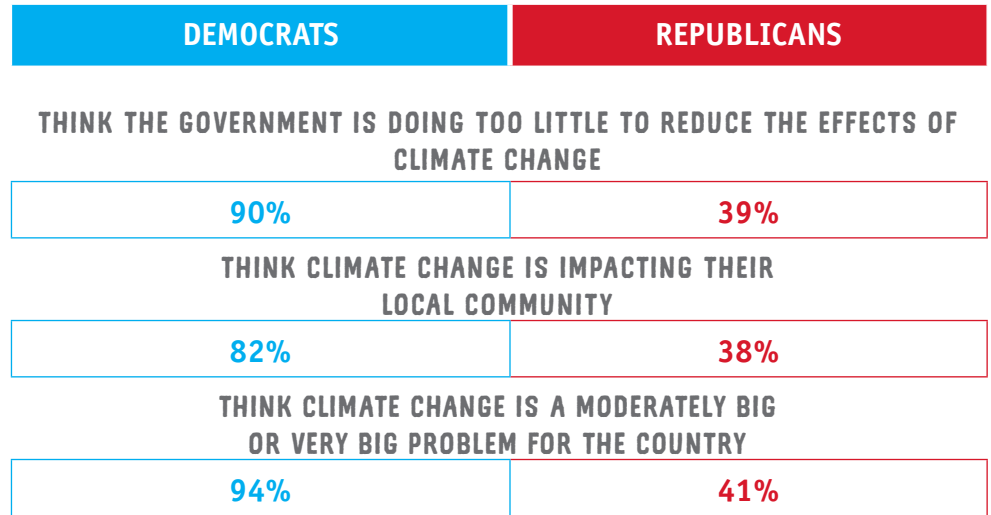
energy solutions and technologies — but says the solutions Congress will come up with will likely fall somewhere in between. “It comes down to open dialogue between individuals on the issue; all considerations must be factored into the discussion,” he says. “On the one hand, temperatures are rising. On the other, consider the energy industry and how much it contributes to the U.S. and global economy. The fossil fuels sector provides a lot of jobs in the U.S. and plays a pivotal role in our economy.”

For instance, Tyner adds, a lot of the products we’ve used during the pandemic, like masks and other personal protection equipment, are made using fossil fuels. He supports the development of renewable energy technologies but knows we are nowhere near reaching 100 percent, which means our reliance on fossil fuels for power generating will likely continue for decades to come. “We need to come together to do the research and come up with solutions,” he says. “We need to look across the board. We need a holistic approach.”

There is also the need for other countries to be invested in finding solutions, Tyner says. “The U.S. can be carbon neutral but if we don’t have a global solution, it won’t really make a difference,” he says. “It’s not an issue that considers borders. It is a global issue.” He points to efforts like the Paris Agreement and the need to get countries like China and India to take more concrete steps toward reducing their greenhouse gas emissions. While it’s not a perfect agreement, he is encouraged by the dialogue that individual leaders are having as they move forward.

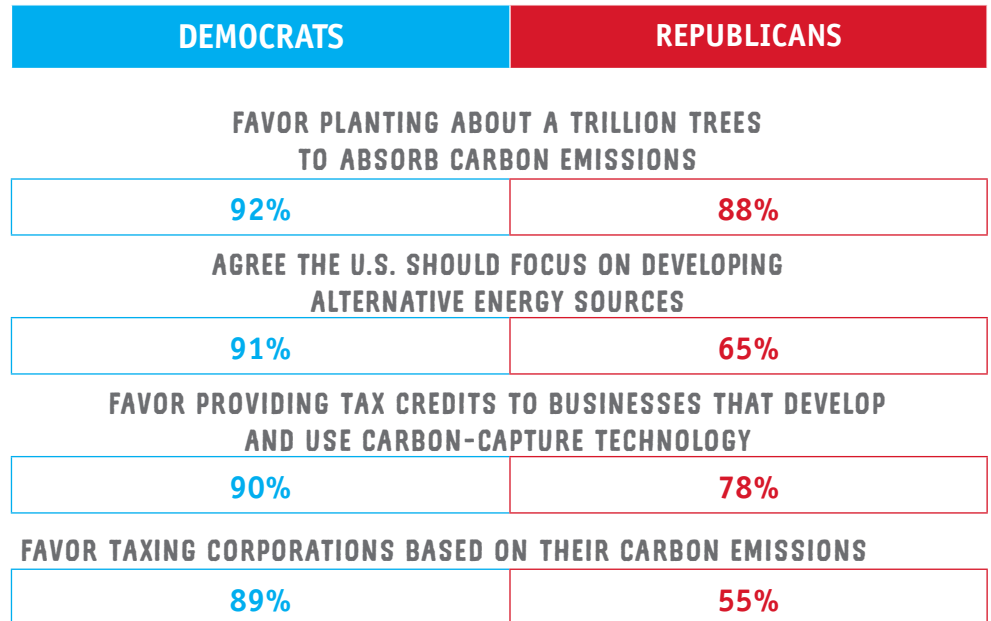
Chunco agrees a global approach is needed but doesn’t discount the power of personal accountability. She sees a lot of optimism among young people, something that gives her hope for the future. “When you talk to college-age students, it is really promising how many want to make a change,” she says, “even though we know it’s difficult to change a system that has become embedded for a long time.” There are lessons from the fight against racial inequality that can be applied here, she adds. While there is much work ahead on that front, “people

## POLITICAL DIVIDE



## BIPARTISAN SUPPORT FOR SOLUTIONS

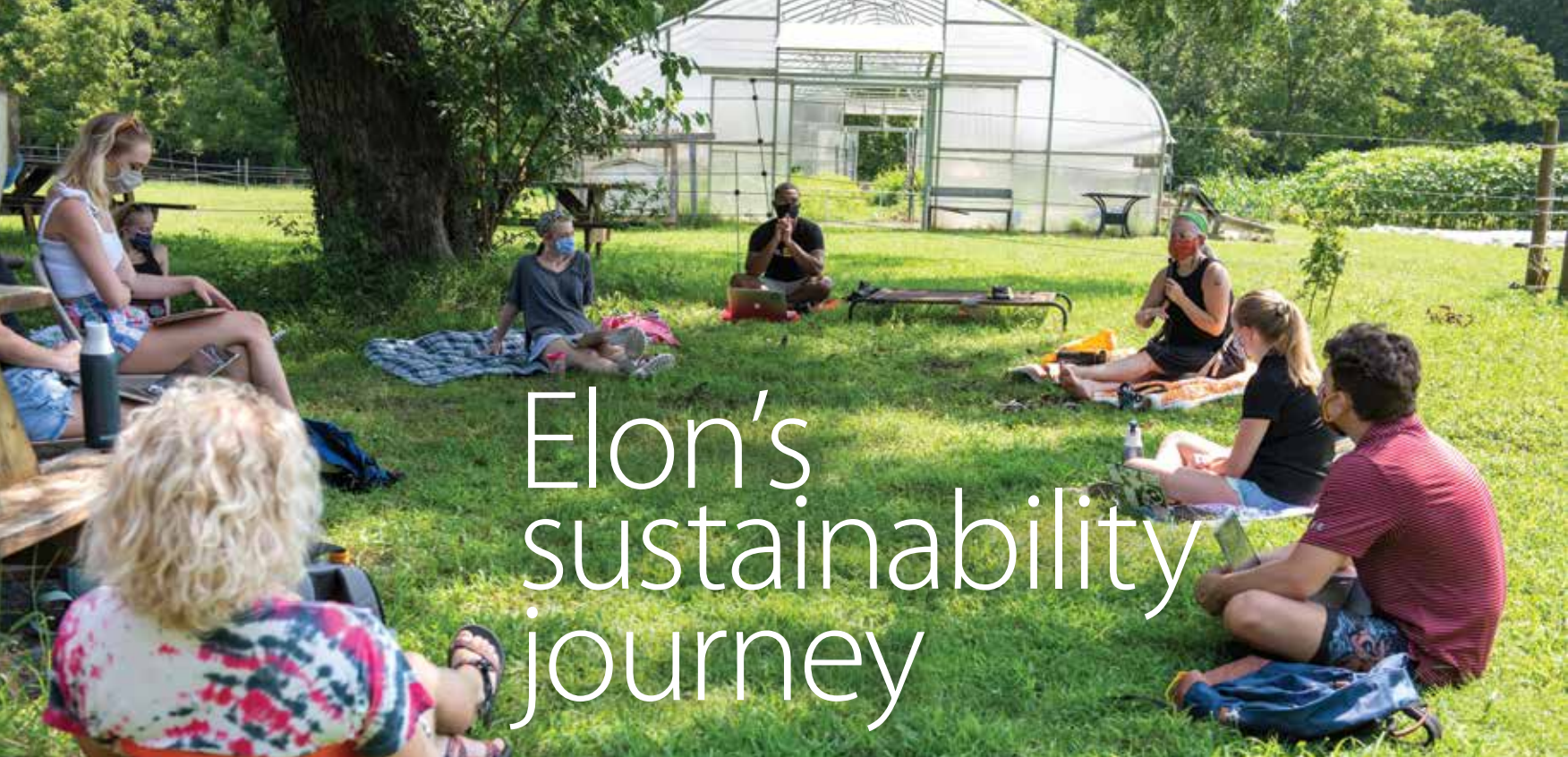
WHILE THERE MAY STILL BE A DIVIDE ABOUT THE IMPACT OF CLIMATE CHANGE, THERE IS BIPARTISAN SUPPORT FOR SOLUTIONS



Source: Pew Research Center



According to a 2016 Pew Research poll, 80 percent of liberal Democrats agreed that climate scientists should have a major role in policy decisions, compared to 48 percent of conservative Republicans.



# Elon's sustainability journey

{ Faculty Fellow for Sustainability & Associate Professor of Art & Environmental Studies Samantha DiRosa teaches a class outdoors at Elon's Loy Farm, which includes a 15-acre solar farm, responsible design studio, forest classroom & food & farming system operations. }

Just like individuals are making changes to curb the effects of climate change, institutions are making commitments of their own — and Elon is no exception. From features in buildings to resources and pedagogies in the classroom, sustainability is integrated throughout campus and campus life. “Sustainability is an institution-wide effort and a part of the Boldly Elon strategic plan,” says Elaine Durr, director of sustainability at the university. “Elon’s success in achieving its sustainability goals largely depends upon every member of the campus community taking an active role.”

There are plenty of opportunities to learn and be engaged on campus. Students can identify easy actions that lead to positive contributions to sustainability — such as looking at their transportation habits, how they dispose of waste or what they eat — through Sustainable Living Lessons and other programs and events offered by the Office of Sustainability. As part of the Sustainability Faculty Scholars program, faculty who are interested in incorporating or enhancing a focus on sustainable principles and practices in their courses are provided with support for course development. Additionally, any member of the community can take a tour of Loy Farm, which includes a 15-acre solar farm, responsible design studio, forest classroom and food and farming system operations, to learn more about those resources.

These and other efforts are guided by Elon’s latest Sustainability Master Plan, which was adopted in 2015 and maintains Elon’s goal to reach carbon neutrality by 2037, a goal established in the initial master plan in 2007. When you look at Elon’s carbon footprint, Durr says, energy consumption is the largest source of emissions at 45-47 percent yearly. That’s the reason why Elon will continue to focus on reducing energy consumption as part of its efforts. “It is something we can do right now that has a number of benefits,” she says, adding that compared to a prior four-year average, campus energy consumption per square foot has decreased 15.4 percent.

Elon’s Physical Plant and Office of Sustainability have been actively investigating ways to expand the use of renewable energy for the past two years. “Funding energy conservation projects and alternative

energy projects is an investment that pays long-term returns both financially and in carbon reduction,” says Tom Flood, assistant vice president of physical plant. Right now, there is a small solar photovoltaic panel system on the roof of Lindner Hall that provides on-site renewable energy that accounts for a small percentage of the building’s energy needs. There are also solar thermal systems that heat the water in a few residential buildings, Lindner Hall and a dining hall, as well as a geothermal system in the Colonnades Neighborhood that reduces the use of fossil fuels by supplementing the complex’s heating and cooling.

But reducing energy consumption alone is not enough to reach the institution’s carbon neutrality goal. For that reason, the university also purchases verified carbon offsets to mitigate areas where reducing emissions is not an option. Take travel associated with study abroad and Study USA, for instance. While global engagement is one of Elon’s staple experiences, it typically accounts for 26-27 percent of the university’s annual carbon footprint. To offset the impact of those emissions, Durr says Elon started purchasing verified carbon offsets for 20 percent of global engagement travel emissions in fiscal year 2019. Elon is now expanding on this effort and developing an initiative to purchase verified carbon offsets to make the entire global engagement program carbon neutral.

While there are many ways for members of the Elon community to contribute to Elon’s carbon neutrality goal, one opportunity is to join and utilize UCapture, a free green-tech platform that funds carbon offset projects. Members of the Elon community can download the browser extension at [ucapture.com/elon](https://ucapture.com/elon), which activates when they visit online partner stores. Projects funded through Elon’s UCapture program will help reduce Elon’s carbon footprint.

Elon has made great strides in its sustainability journey, but there is more work to do, Durr says, adding that she is looking forward to continuing and expanding sustainability efforts toward achieving carbon neutrality by 2037.

To learn more about Elon’s sustainability efforts, visit [elon.edu/sustainability](https://elon.edu/sustainability).



are learning new ways they can do better. We need to have those same revolutionary discussions on this topic.”

**W**e can start by feeling uncomfortable, says Matos, and understanding the role we play in perpetuating our current system. “It’s about being aware that when I buy plastic Ziploc bags, because oil is used in their production, I am contributing to the problem,” she says. “The majority of the products I buy have been touched by someone who has been forced into that labor in one way or another. I’m accountable for that. I’m contributing to that economy. We are all a part of it, and we are all connected to it.”

The point, she says, is not to make everyone feel depressed or guilty, but rather to force us to move beyond it in order to

**“We need abundance thinking and an abundance mindset in order to think beyond our existing system. We need creativity right now.”**

—Greta Matos '06, global sustainability consultant



be inspired to create a new system. If you work for a company that manufactures a product, ask how that product is made. If you are a materials scientist, endeavor to develop more sustainable materials. If you’re a stay-at-home parent, plant a garden to attract butterflies. “We need it all,” Matos says. “And if you are in a position to do something big and inspiring, do it. Now is the time to do it. We need abundance thinking and an abundance mindset in order to think beyond our existing system. We need creativity right now.” 🌱

**Want to learn more about your own carbon footprint?** Check out [footprintcalculator.org](https://footprintcalculator.org) or [carbonfootprint.com/calculator.aspx](https://carbonfootprint.com/calculator.aspx).

**The latest poll by the Yale Program on Climate Change Communication found that more than 26 percent of U.S. adults are now very worried about climate change and strongly support actions to address it, more than double the number from 2015.**

{ Greta Matos '06 & husband Alejandro founded CuraKuda, a company that provides outdoor experiences that build connection between people, horses & nature. }





{ The Adélie, the smallest penguin in Antarctica, spend their days swimming, feeding and resting on ice in the Weddell Sea, which is on the eastern side of the Antarctic Peninsula. }





# TO THE ENDS OF THE EARTH

**ELON HUSBAND AND WIFE TEAM GREG HAENEL AND SHANNON TENNANT ARE DOCUMENTING THE BEAUTY AND DIVERSITY OF NATURE AS THEY TRAVEL THE GLOBE.**

BY ROSELEE PAPANDREA TAYLOR

**I**MAGINE LANDING ON A ROCKY BEACH AT THE BOTTOM OF THE WORLD, with the cold wind cutting through four layers of clothing. It's summer on South Georgia Island. Still, there are snow-capped mountains within view and nothing but penguins — more than 100,000 — as far as you see, hear and, well, smell.

“It is really, really loud and stinky and if the wind is the right way, it's rough,” says Shannon Tennant, coordinator of library collections and associate librarian at Elon, recalling the 19-day expedition she and husband Greg Haenel, Elon professor of biology, embarked on in December 2016.

*Photos by Greg Haenel*



{ Greg Haenel, Elon professor of biology, & wife Shannon Tennant, coordinator of library collections & associate librarian at Elon, want to visit at least 100 of the world's countries & territories. Victoria Falls in Zimbabwe, Africa, is behind them. }

Starting their trip at the southernmost tip of South America, nicknamed the “End of the World,” the couple sailed on a ship named *Ortelius* with a maximum capacity of 125. The converted Russian ice-breaker held 110 passengers during the voyage that took them from sandy Argentine beaches to the Falkland Islands to South Georgia Island and finally to the Antarctic Peninsula, where, even in summer, icebergs can easily alter a planned route.

It was a trip the couple wanted to make sooner rather than later, knowing the impact global warming is having on sea ice conditions. “We spent Christmas morning with penguins,” Tennant says. “You are in this place that you will never be again at this unique point in time. It was just amazing.”

Two years later, in summer 2018, Tennant and Haenel went up to the Arctic, with hopes of seeing polar bears — they saw two from very far away — and glaciers. They’ve now been to both ends of the earth and nearly 100 places in between.

They don’t consider themselves adventure travelers, *per se*, but they are determined. They are doing their best to experience the world in person, clocking miles, making memories, keeping spreadsheets, tracking bird species and documenting the beauty of the planet with photographs. “All the different natural areas we have traveled to give me photos and perspectives that you just can’t find on Google,” Haenel says. “They definitely support my teaching.”

\* \* \*

{ Juvenile king penguins, known as “oakum boys,” have tan-colored coats that reminded sailors of oakum, the tanned cotton twine used for caulking. The coats are not waterproof so the “oakum boys” spend their first winter alone on land while their parents go out to sea to get food. }

Provisional members of the Travelers’ Century Club, Tennant and Haenel have been traveling together for at least 15 years. They are both aiming to earn membership into the club that is for people who have visited 100 or more of the world’s countries and territories. Tennant is at 92 and Haenel isn’t far behind with 86. “We are closing in,” Tennant says. “Unfortunately, COVID has hurt our ambitions. We are sitting on a lot of canceled credit with a lot of airlines.”

The couple tries for three trips a year, fitting them around the academic calendar. Haenel prefers trips that revolve around nature. Tennant likes art and history. They try to compromise, rotating interests and even working both in when they can. “Even if we do a trip that isn’t nature focused, we always hike and buy a bird book,” Tennant says.

Tennant tracks the trips and Haenel the different species of birds. He is up to 735. They saw more than 150 in Africa alone, including the countries of Zimbabwe, South Africa and Namibia. Just like with many of their adventures, the trip to Namibia meant they traveled to isolated areas where wildlife outnumbered people. (Namibia is the second least populated country in the world, second to Mongolia.) While there, they rented a 4x4 vehicle, driving on dirt roads often deserted for miles. Elephants, zebras, lions, jackals, honey badgers and giraffes were among the animals they saw during that December trip, which was right before the area’s rainy season. They spent New Year’s Eve in a cheetah conservation center. “When you are driving along here at Elon, you are like ‘Ooh, it’s a deer,’” Tennant says, recalling the male and female lions that were lying in the road in Namibia. “It was so different. It was mostly in the desert, but we did go to the coast and saw flamingos.”

Among the destinations they’ve visited are the British Isles, Spain, Portugal, Vietnam, Laos, Morocco, Chile, Easter Island, Brazil, the Pantanal, Cuba, the Caribbean and Italy. They have also ridden the iconic Orient Express, which was a dream of Tennant’s mother, who accompanied them on that particular trip. “I booked the trip. We started in Venice, rode into Paris and finished in London. It was such a luxury, and no one was murdered,” she says, referencing the Agatha Christie novel.







{ While in Namibia, Africa, Tennant & Haenel saw lions just lying in the middle of a dirt road — something you don't typically see in the United States. }

The trip to Antarctica was definitely not about luxury. “That was not a Disney cruise,” Tennant says, despite all the cute penguins that made the trip so memorable. From the Magellanic penguin, with a bray like that of donkey; to the macaroni penguin with its distinctive yellow feathered crest; to the king, the second-largest species of penguin; to the Adélie, the smallest penguin in Antarctica, there were a lot of the white-bellied seabirds that live almost exclusively in the Southern Hemisphere. “One of the things we learned on the trip is you can never have too many pictures of penguins,” Tennant says.

The terrain in South Georgia Island is considered uninhabitable, so there are no permanent residents. However, 95 percent of the world's Antarctic fur seals and elephant seals live there along with 400,000 breeding pairs of king penguins. As their boat neared the Antarctic Peninsula, navigating around the ice in the Weddell Sea, the couple witnessed the Adélie penguins in action. “They spend most of the year

{ Besides king penguins, 95 percent of the world's Antarctic fur seals & elephant seals live on South Georgia Island. }



## IF YOU'RE PLANNING A TRIP TO ANTARCTICA,

Tennant recommends checking first with the International Association of Antarctic Tour Operators, an organization that advocates safe and environmentally responsible tourism to the region.

[iaato.org](http://iaato.org)



## CITIZEN SCIENCE:

The public's participation and collaboration in scientific research to increase scientific knowledge. Interested in getting involved? There are many resources out there, but you can start by visiting [citizenscience.gov](http://citizenscience.gov), [earthwatch.org](http://earthwatch.org), [citizenscience.org](http://citizenscience.org) or [scistarter.org](http://scistarter.org).

swimming, feeding and resting on ice, so as we were cruising through all this ice, you would look down from the ship, because we were fairly high up, and see all these penguins,” Tennant says. “It was fantastic.”

A pod of humpback whales was the delight in Mikkelsen Harbor and offered an opportunity for citizen science. The pattern on the fluke, or tail, of every humpback whale is unique, just like human fingerprints, which make it possible to track a whale's travels. Travelers can post photos they have taken to a website, where the patterns are identified and cataloged. While there are regulations on how close boats can get to the whales, there was nothing to prevent the whales from approaching the inflatable boat they were on at the time. One of their fellow travelers managed to get a clear picture of a fluke.

“One of the guides was a whale biologist from Brazil,” Haenel says. “She was able to go back into the catalog and found that the whale had first been identified in 2005 off the coast of Brazil. They hadn't seen it since and now this was the first sighting all the way down in Antarctica. It was a cool piece of citizen science that we indirectly participated in.”

COVID-19 has Tennant and Haenel on a travel hiatus for now, but once it's safe they still have plenty of territory they want to cover. Tennant wants to see the pyramids in Egypt, sail the Nile and travel to Belgium. New Zealand and Australia are on both of their lists. Haenel is interested in spots even more off the beaten path. “I'd like to get to that part of Africa where we haven't been, like Ethiopia and Uganda,” he says.

And even though they've crossed off a couple of the African big five — the continent's most iconic wildlife, including lions, leopards, elephants, rhinoceroses and the African buffalo — Haenel looks forward to the day they can check the whole lot off their list. “I still want to see a rhino and a leopard,” he says. 🌿



PHOTO: NATHAN JOHNSON



# LIGHTING UP THE STAGE

BY MICHAEL ABERNETHY

## With a nuanced portrayal of rock pioneer Ike Turner, Daniel J. Watts '04 is Elon's first Tony Award nominee.

**W**iping away tears, Daniel J. Watts '04 traces the path from his first, spur-of-the-moment Broadway stage performance 15 years ago to becoming Elon's first Tony Award nominee in the fall for his breakout performance as Ike Turner in "Tina: The Tina Turner Musical."

In 2006, he was cast as a swing — an understudy of multiple roles — in "The Color Purple." Unexpectedly, Watts was tapped to fill a role in the matinee show.

He called his mother, Artez Caldwell Watts — "It's happening!" — who jumped on the first flight from Charlotte, North Carolina, but arrived in New York too late for that show. "I believe you'll be on that stage tonight," she told him.

She was right, and the show's lead actress recognized Watts' Broadway debut during the curtain call for his mother to see. "It was magical. It felt like recognition of our work," Watts says of her being in the audience. "We did it. I felt welcomed into the community. This started there."

Since then, he's played parts in nine Broadway productions, such as "In the Heights," "Hamilton" and "Memphis;" numerous off-Broadway performances, including his original productions; and recurring roles on TV series like "The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel" and comedian Tracy Morgan's "The Last O.G." This fall, the American Theatre Wing recognized his first lead performance as one of Broadway's best, nominating him for a Tony as Best Featured Actor in a Musical. "Tina: The Tina Turner Musical" is nominated for 12 Tonys in all, including Best Musical. "It's acknowledgement more than anything," Watts says. "There have been plenty of people who've done the work deserving of a Tony nomination but didn't get it. I appreciate the acknowledgement for

the work that I put in."

Tony winner Adrienne Warren originated the electrifying role of Tina Turner in London's West End. They were already friends when she recommended Watts for the part of Ike Turner in the debut Broadway run. He dug deep for the role, searching for ways to add dimension beyond a caricature of an abusive partner. "I'm not trying to vindicate him, but I do think he at least deserves a human look," he says. "Even Tina says he didn't get a fair shake" in the biopic based on her autobiography, "What's Love Got to Do With It."

Ike Turner's father was beaten and left for dead by a lynch mob, later dying from those injuries when Ike was a young child. Raised by a violent, alcoholic stepfather, he was also sexually abused by others. "There's a moment in the play when he tells it, but then he just moves on from it," Watts says. "It's something that he's still trying to work through and reconcile, but he doesn't want to use it as a crutch. I don't think he ever really dealt with it. ... When you haven't worked through trauma, you think that art might help. He was a very hard worker. He was a genius of his time."

Hard work is something Watts can relate to. In addition to being a prolific actor, he's an accomplished writer, dancer and producer. The stage chose him early. Around age 13, he was encouraged to audition for a play about a historically Black Charlotte neighborhood. He was enthralled with the expression possible on stage and captured by the stories of Black Americans around the turn of the century. "It gave me a sense of identity," Watts says. "It helped me better understand where I had come from and to dig deeper into the history of African Americans."

Involvement with summer stock theater around college students and theater professionals made him determined to pursue higher education and a career in the performing arts. His acceptance to Elon's music theatre program and its conservatory-modeled training in music, acting and dance broadened his understanding of performance and how to embody a character. "It was all about being vulnerable and



{ Daniel J. Watts '04 plays Ike Turner in "Tina: The Tina Turner Musical." PHOTO: MANUEL HARLAN }



PHOTO: NATHAN JOHNSON

“What do you have in you that the world needs that you’re sitting on because you’re scared, or you don’t think anybody values it? I promise you, there’s something somebody needs that only you can give.”

connecting with a character’s emotion and background,” he says. Elon’s requirement that every major audition for each production also prepared him for success.

“Ninety percent of the job is auditioning. You go on way more auditions than jobs you book,” Watts says. “At Elon, I learned how to audition, how to book a gig and what casting directors like. You have to understand how to best represent yourself for each show.”

It was also at Elon he first experienced the power of theater. After the World Trade Center towers fell on Sept. 11, 2001, most campus events were canceled. Performing arts faculty required students to attend a play by a visiting Shakespearean troupe. He was upset that they seemed to be ignoring a national tragedy. “It was ‘As You Like It.’ There was no set, there were no costumes, but I was enthralled. Then it was over. I had forgotten that it was 9/11,” Watts recalls. “That’s when I realized: That’s what theater does!”

He has returned to campus numerous times for performances and workshops with the Department of Performing Arts and has performed at events promoting Elon in New York City. In 2014, he directed undergraduates in “As We Journey from Mind to Mouth...,” an original piece they created. “I know what it does for students to have alumni involved with the program,” Watts says. “What I preach is that you have to offer something to the market. What do you have in you that the world needs that you’re sitting on because you’re scared, or you don’t think anybody values it? Give it. I promise you, there’s something somebody needs that only you can give.”

Watts has much to give.

Between stage roles, he’s co-written, produced and performed in a series of ongoing collaborative, cabaret-style shows featuring music, dance, spoken word and storytelling called “The Jam.” The work began years ago as an homage to his great-grandmother, who made homemade jam and gave it away. Jam isn’t refined, Watts says; it’s a mixture of fruit, seeds and pulp that add texture and flavor. “I’d rather be jam than jelly.” It’s also a fitting analogy to what he and his friends set out to achieve by blending their talents into full-length programs.

While “Tina” was still in its original run last winter, he debuted “The Jam: Only Child.” It was the first time he was the primary performer, accompanied only by a DJ. The stories and poems celebrate his heritage as a Black man and address the joys and difficulties of being raised an only child by a single mother, sometimes a latchkey kid, moving from city to city in the Carolinas. There are times he talks about therapy and reckoning with the past. It shone a spotlight on his vulnerabilities. “By putting it out there, people can’t really use it against you. You’ve taken all their bullets,” he says. “I initially did it for me, then I found out it was relevant to many people. The more personal it became, the more universal it was.”



PHOTO: MANUEL HARLAN

{ Daniel J. Watts '04 & co-star Adrienne Warren have both received Tony Award nominations for their work in “Tina: The Tina Turner Musical.” }

After Broadway and theaters shuttered for the pandemic, Watts followed this summer with three “The Jam” shows. “No More Silences,” “The Next Time is Now,” based on James Baldwin’s “The Fire Next Time,” and a revival of 2016’s “Love Terrorists — A Benefit for Orlando” focused on the Black Lives Matter movement, social unrest and the unfinished march toward equality and justice. With theaters closed for the foreseeable future, Watts is focused on screen acting and can be seen as “Felony” in “The Last O.G.” He enjoys the speed of filming and the versatility it allows actors to quickly change between projects, but he misses the electricity of the stage.

“In theater, you carry [the characters] with you. I haven’t been in the show for nine months, but Ike Turner is still right here on my shoulder,” Watts says.

He may have to get used to carrying Ike Turner with him. From here on, the billing will always read “Tony nominee Daniel J. Watts.”

“Unless I win. Then it’s ‘Tony winner Daniel J. Watts,’” he quips. “All of that sounds crazy. All of it.” ♣

*Due to the pandemic, the 74th annual Tony Awards ceremony’s date had yet to be announced as of publication.*





# INSPIRED

*to serve*



**Elon's new nursing program will provide compassionate, skilled leaders when they are needed the most.**

BY OWEN COVINGTON

**I**T IS OFTEN SAID THAT THE WORLD NEEDS ELON UNIVERSITY GRADUATES. As the university prepares to welcome the first students to its new nursing program during a raging pandemic, that need has never been greater.

Communities and health care facilities across the country were already challenged in finding enough nurses to meet the high demand for their skills and care, and the COVID-19 pandemic has pushed that demand even higher. Nurses serve as frontline health care workers who are educating the public, caring for the sick and helping the recovering rehabilitate.

And soon, some of the nurses graduating and rushing into those positions will be taking with them an Elon education and degree. The new Department of Nursing has been established within the School of Health Sciences at the Gerald L. Francis Center, and this fall will see the first students enter the four-year Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) program. The department will also be home to an accelerated BSN program for those who have already earned a bachelor's degree in another field and can earn their nursing degree through a 16-month program.

"Elon is excited to begin offering these future health care professionals an engaged and experiential education rooted in scholarship and service," says Elon President Connie Ledoux Book. "We know these graduates will go on to be leaders in their fields, caring advocates for patients and skilled practitioners in hospital rooms."

## The new nursing degree is a response to demand within the health care field,

feedback from students about programs they would like to see added and the vision outlined in the Boldly Elon strategic plan, which sets the university's priorities for the next decade. Becky Neiduski, dean of the School of Health Sciences, says initial work to examine the addition of a nursing program was reinforced by what students themselves were saying. "It was clear that not only prospective students but our current students were interested in moving on to nursing careers after they left Elon," she says. "Nursing is a wonderful opportunity to create interprofessional opportunities in the School of Health Sciences. It's such a nice fit with what we already have in the Francis Center."

After a new nursing program was included in the Boldly Elon plan, which was launched in spring 2020, "we took off the training wheels and got to work," Neiduski adds.

### PROGRAMS AT A GLANCE

The four-year BSN program allows students to satisfy all of their Elon undergraduate degree requirements while completing all nursing prerequisites and the 65-hour nursing curriculum. During their first two years, these nursing students will focus on core courses and prerequisites before moving into the nursing curriculum. Additionally, Elon has created the selective merit-based Nursing Scholars Program for undergraduates pursuing the four-year nursing degree. Students who are selected for the scholars program spend four years working closely with faculty mentors exploring the many opportunities within the field of nursing and identifying ways to advance health equity in local and global communities.



"We spent many months listening to truly understand what our community needs and how we can prepare these students to be nurse leaders."

— DEAN BECKY NEIDUSKI

The accelerated BSN program is for those who have already earned a bachelor's degree in another field of study. During the intensive 16-month program, students will complete the 65-credit-hour nursing curriculum while also completing 540 clinical hours. Both programs will prepare students to sit for the National Council Licensure Examination to become a licensed registered nurse.

The creation of the two programs has involved extensive input from not just those on campus, but from the broader community and health care industry. "We spent many months listening to truly understand what our community needs and how we can prepare these students to be nurse leaders," Neiduski says.

Students in both programs will have the opportunity to participate in experiential learning and global engagement. They



{ Located on the second floor of the Francis Center, the Interprofessional Simulation Suite allows students to practice hands-on skills with manikins, standardized patients & clients from the community. }

will experience a distinctively Elon program through courses such as "Health Care Relationships," which focuses on disparity, diversity, equity and inclusion. In the "Crucial Conversations in Health Care" course, students will learn how to effectively and empathetically communicate about difficult topics, such as death and dying. "The goal of these courses is for the future nurse to explore their own identities and understand who they are. Students will be empowered to create habits of health and mind that will make them effective practitioners," Neiduski says. "We also want them to explore and understand the identities of the patients and clients they will serve."

The programs also include an emphasis on health informatics, given how the health care industry has expanded its use of data to improve care and increase access for larger populations. "We know that big data in health care and health informatics will become an integral part of a nurse's work every day," Neiduski adds.

Book says Elon is focused on preparing students to become highly skilled and engaged nurses who are also well positioned to take advantage of opportunities to serve in leadership roles in their fields. "We want Elon-educated nurses to be prepared to step forward as leaders in health care," Book says.

### A STRONG FOUNDATION

In building the program, Elon leveraged faculty and facilities resources already in place for the university's longstanding graduate programs. One example is the hundreds of relationships with clinical sites in the local community and across the state where Elon nursing students will complete clinical hour requirements. "We knew we could build on the successes we've had and the relationships we've built in the Doctor of Physical Therapy and Physician Assistant Studies programs in the School of Health Sciences," Neiduski says.

One key resource that Elon is building upon with the introduction of the nursing programs is its Client and Standardized Patient Program now used by those graduate programs. Through this simulation program, students gain valuable hands-on experience with clients from the community who have medical conditions as well as standardized



## AN ONGOING NEED

**THE NUMBER OF REGISTERED NURSES IN THE U.S. IS EXPECTED TO GROW FROM 3 MILLION IN 2019 TO 3.3 MILLION IN 2029. DURING THAT SAME PERIOD, IT IS PROJECTED THAT THERE WILL BE 175,900 JOB OPENINGS EACH YEAR AS NURSES RETIRE OR EXIT THE WORKFORCE.**

*(Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics)*



{ Tiffany Morris, the inaugural chair of the Department of Nursing, will oversee programs & facilities like the new skills lab, which allows nursing students to hone their skills in treating patients at bedside & provides both experiential learning during laboratory sessions & simulation experiences with high- & low-tech manikins. }

patients, who are individuals trained to portray a specific medical case or condition. “The simulation program gives students an opportunity to put a face with a diagnosis, which can change how they see and treat individuals in the future,” says Nita Skillman, director of the Client and Standardized Patient Program. “It brings their textbooks to life.”

Elon is renovating existing space in the Francis Center to expand its simulation offerings. A skills lab on the second floor offers seven hospital beds with high-tech and low-tech manikins for students to learn clinical skills. The manikins can be controlled remotely by a coordinator who can program them to display certain conditions or vital signs, with faculty observing through a two-way mirror. The expanded Interprofessional Simulation Suite on the second floor of the Francis Center will include five traditional clinical rooms, like you might see in a doctor’s office, an intensive care unit room and a hospital room.

In the skills lab and simulation suite, student performance can be recorded with faculty members offering the ability to annotate videos of the students performing tasks to help them learn from the experience. “These spaces provide the opportunity for our students to try their new learned skills, to fail, to make mistakes, to try again and then do that as often as they need to before they go out and see a patient in a clinic,” Skillman says.

Nursing students will also have interprofessional education opportunities with students in the physical therapy and physician

assistant studies programs. That experience will teach them about working with other providers and as a team, Skillman adds. “You have to learn how to communicate with other health care professionals.”

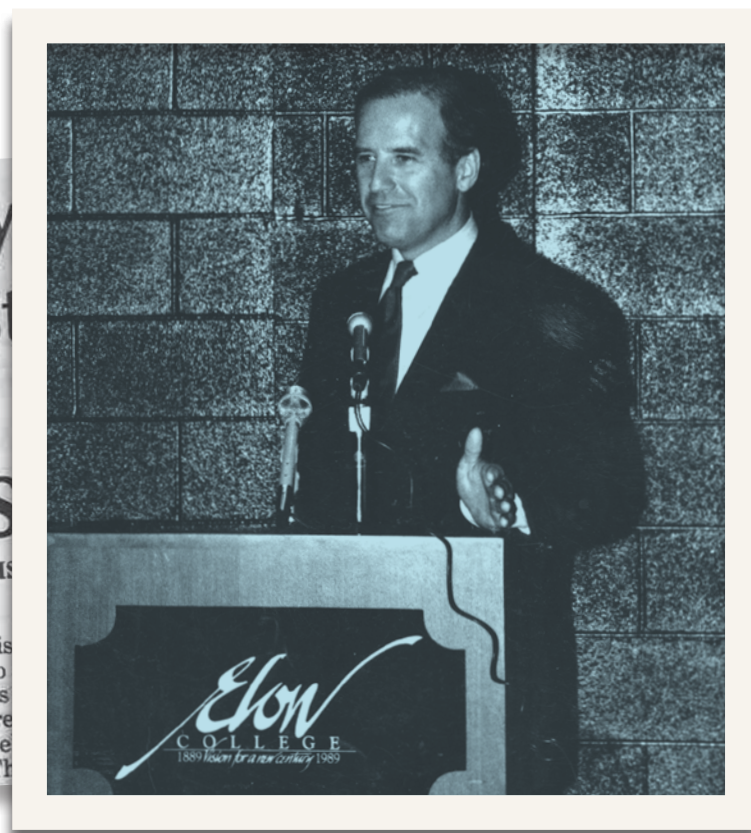
Plans call for Elon’s Department of Nursing to have at least 12 faculty members by year four, with faculty added as more students join the program. Jeanmarie Koonts was hired in July 2020 as interim department chair and served as a vital partner in the North Carolina Board of Nursing Application process. Tiffany Morris, an experienced nurse educator and practitioner, has been hired as the inaugural department chair. The university expects to have about 50 students admitted to the program each year, which would mean more than 300 nursing students at Elon by fall 2024. “This will effectively more than double the enrollment of the School of Health Sciences,” Neiduski says.

Planning for the nursing degree programs began well before the COVID-19 pandemic, but Neiduski says that seeing nurses work on the front lines to combat this public health crisis has strengthened the university’s sense of purpose in launching this new educational opportunity. “I believe that the pandemic has demonstrated for us the importance of health care workers, especially front-line health care workers,” she says. “We’re hopeful that what we are all experiencing is demonstrating to the community and society the value of these health care workers, and inspiring students to pursue careers in health care.” ♣

# The day Joe Biden visited Elon

*The year was 1988 and the crowd was small, but the future president said the discussions were ‘challenging and stimulating.’*

BY DAN ANDERSON



cratic congressional candidate Tom Gilmore before traveling to the Elon campus to give an address on foreign policy. Newspaper accounts of the evening event estimated the audience at about 50-100 people. Elon's student newspaper, *The Pendulum*, reported Biden held a news conference "to a near-empty audience." The community's attention was clearly elsewhere during the final days of the 1988 presidential race between Republican George H.W. Bush and Democrat Michael Dukakis.

Despite the small crowd, Elon President Emeritus J. Fred Young remembers Biden as pleasant and comfortable conversing with a group of students and faculty who had dinner with him at the president's home. Then, after the evening speech and

{ A visit to campus by then-Sen. Joe Biden on Oct. 27, 1988, was widely covered by local media outlets. Opposite page: After his visit, Biden sent a letter to then-Elon College President J. Fred Young & his wife, Phyllis. }

**T**he small crowd of students, faculty and staff that gathered in Elon's new McCrary Theatre on Oct. 27, 1988, could not have foreseen Joe Biden's 32-year journey to being elected President of the United States. A year earlier, the U.S. Senator from Delaware had abandoned his first run for the presidency after admitting he had exaggerated his academic record and plagiarized portions of his speeches. Then in February 1988, he suffered a near-fatal brain aneurysm and spent seven months away from the Senate recuperating.

About a month after returning to work, the 45-year-old senator was back engaged in politics, making a campaign stop in Greensboro, North Carolina, to support Demo-

a question-and-answer session with the audience, Biden lingered for about an hour in the theater, talking with Young and his wife, Phyllis. "He had the distinctive ability possessed by many successful political leaders to make everyone feel as if they had been acquainted for a lifetime and that they would be friends forever," Young recalls.

While news stories report that Biden criticized the lack of substantive debate on critical international issues during the presidential campaign, he also reflected on his personal trials in what he called "an interesting year." He said doctors told him he probably would have died from the aneurysm if he hadn't dropped out of the presidential race, and he called his campaign "a presidential debacle."

"I should have been a lot more mature when I ran for





## Presidential visits

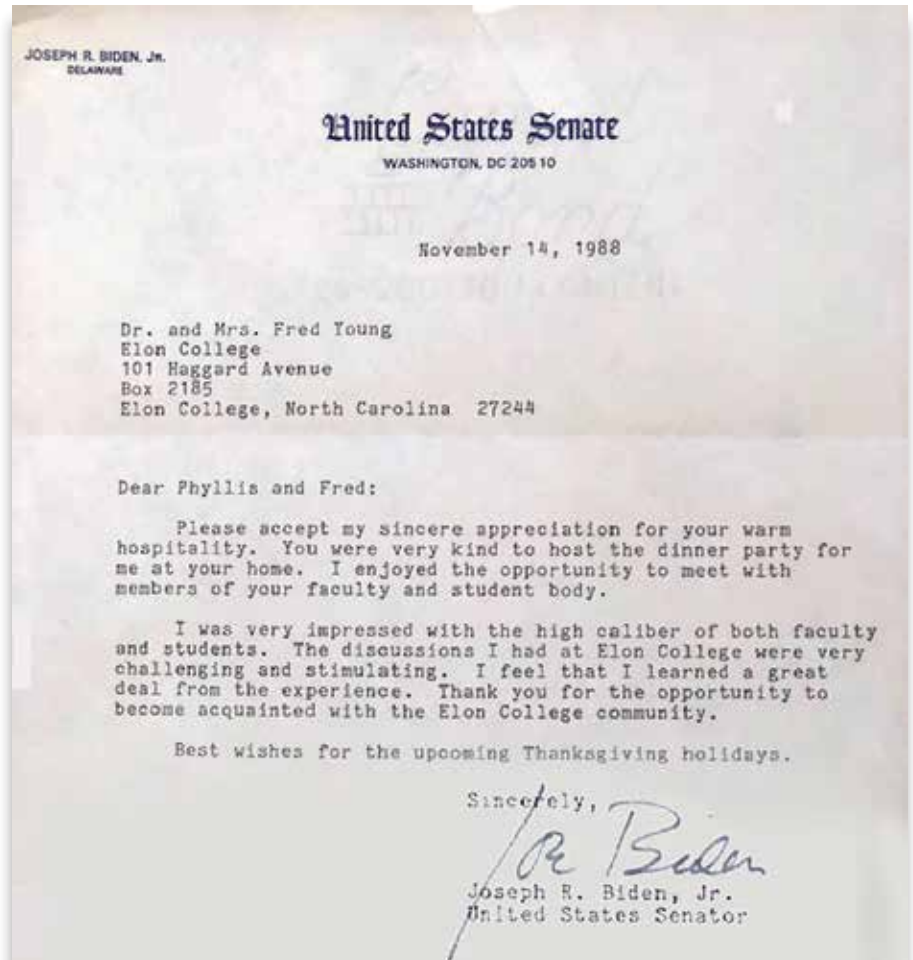
Seven U.S. presidents have visited the Elon campus since its founding in 1889.

- **Theodore Roosevelt (1904):** Stopped at the Town of Elon railroad depot for a campaign speech
- **Lyndon Johnson (1962):** Spoke at Elon's Founders Day convocation and received an honorary doctorate
- **Gerald Ford (1966):** Gave a Liberal Arts Forum address; **(1986):** Gave a Cultural Programs address
- **Jimmy Carter (1976):** Made a campaign fundraiser stop and had dinner with local Democrats on campus; **(1989):** Gave the keynote address during Elon's Centennial Convocation
- **Joe Biden (1988):** Gave a public address in McCrary Theatre
- **George H.W. Bush (2001):** Spoke at Elon's Convocation for Honors
- **Bill Clinton (1992):** Made a campaign stop in front of Alamance Building; **(2008):** Made a campaign stop for his wife, Hillary Clinton, in front of Alamance Building; **(2016):** Made a campaign stop for Hillary Clinton at Elon University School of Law in Greensboro

president," Biden said at the time. "Hopefully I came out just a little bit wiser and a little more mature. Most important, it gave me confidence. I was proud of the way I conducted myself."

President Young is happy he held onto the note of appreciation he received from Biden a couple of weeks later. "I'll get that letter framed," Young says.

"I was very impressed with the high caliber of both faculty and students," Biden wrote in the letter. "The discussions I had at Elon College were very challenging and stimulating. I feel that I have learned a great deal from the experience. Thank you for the opportunity to become acquainted with the Elon College community." ❀



## Biden leery of Soviet initiatives

By MELANIE ADAMS  
Staff Writer

ELON COLLEGE — Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev is lifting the cultural iron curtain to absorb Western technology and has led the initiative in U.S.-Soviet relations, Sen. Joseph Biden, D-Del., said at Elon College Thursday night.

Biden, speaking on foreign policy to about 100 people at the Fine Arts Building at 8 p.m., called for change in the next administration, saying the next president will have to do more than react to Gorbachev.

The Soviet Union must begin to imitate democracy in order to deal with its problems, which include a high rate of alcoholism, a low rate of manufacturing productivity and a lack of an international currency, Biden said.

Biden also outlined certain elements of foreign policy he wants Americans to understand. "Nobody seems to know what's going on. People are oblivious to what's happening," Biden said.

One element is that they acknowledge the world has changed drastically in the relationship between the superpowers and that military strength is essential. He stressed it also should be recognized that nuclear superiority has no relevance or value.

"If I can kill you 12 times instead of six is not very compelling to me," he said.

Biden also said the public needs to have a more enlightened attitude toward the Third World. Where our country's best interests lie in the Third World is the real issue, not whether a particular Third World country has the same form of government we have.

Biden, 45, a member of the Senate for 16 years, is chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee and a



Sen. Joseph Biden

Gerry Brooms/News & Record

it's one of those occasions that you look forward to," Biden said.

Biden commended Gilmore on his diverse background in and out of partisan politics, saying it would help him "figure out where the men's room is" when he gets to Congress.

He also said the 1988 election is not about incremental change.

"The next president of the United States and the next Congress will have a greater opportunity to redraw the diplomatic map of the world as any Congress and any president since Harry S. Truman," he said.

For the first time since 1917, communism is acknowledged as a poor economic model, Biden said. Gorbachev

# Lifting Elon to new heights

Dear fellow alumni,



One of my favorite things about Elon, and what I imagine is one of yours, too, is our community. When I meet someone in another city wearing Elon gear, I feel an instant connection. I love to see the passion our alumni have for our alma mater. One of my favorite days to celebrate this community is Elon Day — a day for the entire Elon community to rally together to lift up this institution we hold dear. I look forward to it every year as a chance to reminisce about my time as a student and as a collective opportunity to give back so others may have the chance to experience an Elon education.

In 2020, U.S. News & World Report ranked Elon No. 22 in the nation for alumni participation, putting us in good company with No. 19 Stanford and No. 21 Yale, and ahead of UNC-Chapel Hill and Wake Forest. Your gifts make possible the meaningful educational opportunities that set Elon students apart from their peers. Your participation in giving back matters. Gifts of

any size not only count toward the ongoing Elon LEADS Campaign and help with national rankings, but those gifts also lift Elon to new heights, propelling students forward and equipping them with the tools necessary to navigate ever-changing times. Your gifts help prepare students to be the active, engaged, creative, problem-solving citizens the world so desperately needs.

Whether you make a gift on Elon Day, give back every year as a member of the 1889 Society or are considering making your first gift today, contributions of every amount help Elon and our students continue on this path of growth and success. I encourage you to be an active member of this amazing community by finding your way to become a partner, advocate and investor. It's incredible what our community can accomplish when we come together.

**Brian Scales '96**  
President, Elon Alumni Board

## Virtually perfect



Although Homecoming & Reunion Week 2020 looked significantly different in the fall after in-person celebrations were postponed due to the

pandemic, reunion volunteers found creative ways to transition traditional on-campus events to online celebrations. More than 1,100 alumni from

Denmark to San Francisco to Chicago logged on from the comfort of their homes to participate in the 100-plus virtual events from Oct. 12–18.

Members of the Class of 1970, pictured left, celebrated their 50th reunion in a way they could never have imagined as they crossed the Commencement stage 50 years ago — by embracing new technologies to reconnect for this important celebration. In all, more than 500 alumni attended a milestone reunion event, with alumni raising an impressive \$340,490 for various funds at Elon in honor of their class reunions.

Visit [elon.edu/homecoming](http://elon.edu/homecoming) to stay updated about this year's celebration.





# HERE'S LOOKING AT YOU

## ELON ALUMNI

Throughout the pandemic, the Office of Alumni Engagement has shared stories of alumni who are doing important and uplifting work in their careers and their communities as part of the “Alumni in Action” series. The stories below highlight two alumnae who are making a difference in the lives of others.



### Bringing joy to children's hospital patients

**Mathea Jacobs '04** manages KidZone TV, a state-of-the-art, interactive production and internal broadcast studio within the Mount Sinai Kravis Children's Hospital in New York City. In this role, she brings interactive game shows, trivia, art, music, educational experiences and special celebrity guests directly to patients' rooms during difficult times. “I think it's important to create these spaces of fun and storytelling,” she says, “to give our patients and families a voice despite all the noise and to create a small community in a place like a children's hospital.”



### Enriching the lives of senior citizens

COVID-19 has changed the way residents at senior living communities interact and socialize with others, which can lead to increased feelings of isolation and loneliness. As a life enrichment associate at a senior living community, **Caroline McSwain Ryskiewich '14 G'15** makes meaningful connections that enrich the lives of her residents. “We are working

extra hard to help our friends feel connected, loved and hopeful,” she says. “Our programming has had to dramatically shift. But the heart of what we do, loving and caring for the residents, is as strong a driving force as ever.”

*Know an Elon alum doing great work related to the COVID-19 pandemic or another important cause? Send their name to [alumni@elon.edu](mailto:alumni@elon.edu).*

## RECOGNIZING ALUMNI SUCCESS



**Nneka Enurah '11**  
NAMED  
**ELON COMM**  
**Alumna OF THE Year**

More than 30 friends, faculty and staff members joined President Connie Ledoux Book on Oct. 13 to celebrate **Nneka Enurah '11**, the 2020 School of Communications Alumna of the Year. The virtual celebration was part of the school's Homecoming & Reunion Week events and meant to acknowledge Enurah's impressive young career. She serves as the head of development and partnerships for Fine Brothers Entertainment (FBE), leading branded and premium content development and packaging for television and digital platforms. Prior to that, she was director of digital development and production at Academy Award-winning actress Reese Witherspoon's Hello Sunshine, where she oversaw the production of social video and branded content for several corporate partners. Enurah is based in Los Angeles.

Check this issue's inside back cover to learn about the 2020 Top 10 Under 10 Alumni Award recipients.

## Young Alumni Council Fall Meeting



### ALUMNI HAPPENINGS

#### Wine Tasting with the Richmond Alumni Chapter

On Dec. 3, the Richmond Alumni Chapter partnered with local wine bar Secco for a virtual wine tasting. Alumni who registered for the event were able to pick up a special basket from Secco to take home prior to the tasting. The basket included samples of the featured wines, accompanying tapas and discount coupons to use when supporting the local business in the future. Thank you to all the alumni who participated in this unique virtual event, and a special thank you to Secco Wine Bar for partnering with the chapter to host this incredible experience.





The Young Alumni Council hosted its virtual fall meeting Oct. 9-10 leading into an eventful Homecoming & Reunion Week. Council members spent time with different members of senior staff reviewing updates on inclusive excellence initiatives, the Elon LEADS Campaign, board of trustees initiatives and much more. Additionally, YAC members spent time as committees providing direct insight into areas such as communications, philanthropy, admissions and professional development at Elon. Council members continue to serve as exemplary partners, advocates and investors in the university and young alumni community. They will reconvene in spring 2021.

## KEEP ELON IN THE KNOW

If you have recently moved or changed jobs, make sure to update your information at [elon.edu/alumniupdate](https://elon.edu/alumniupdate) to receive details about upcoming events in your area.

**ELON.EDU/ALUMNIUPDATE**



### Centerpiece-making with the Boston Alumni Chapter

Before kicking off the holidays, the Boston Alumni Chapter invited alumni in their area to an exciting virtual workshop. During the event, alumni learned how to assemble a centerpiece fit for a holiday gathering. Alumni left with a full centerpiece on display, ready to show off to their family and friends. The Boston chapter extends a warm thank you to all who attended.



### Strength & Stretch Class with the Triangle Alumni Chapter

On Dec. 15, the Triangle Alumni Chapter invited Elon alumni in their region to join a virtual exercise class led by Kristin Sicari '19, a local Pure Barre instructor. Kristin led the group in an energetic barre-inspired workout that helped participating alumni relax and destress from the comfort of their own homes. Thank you to all who joined this fun event!

# CLASS NOTES



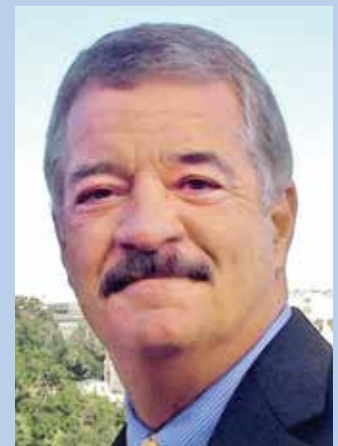
**'69** **Lee Johnson**, who served as Elon's football captain in 1967, fondly remembers fellow player **Perry Williams**, who kicked the winning field goal in the 1967 Sudan Temple All Star Game. Perry is a retired high school principal and real estate investor living in Chesapeake, Va. Lee is also retired and lives in Asheboro, N.C.

**'81** **Bonnie Gravitte** recently celebrated her four-year anniversary working as an asset manager for Community Affordable Housing Equity Corp. in Raleigh, N.C. She lives in Clayton.

**'89** **Kathie S. Niven**, who joined Greensboro-based Biscuitville Fresh Southern in 2011 and became president in early 2018, has been named the company's chief executive officer. As president, Kathie has continued the company's growth strategy and has expanded its traditional footprint into the Fayetteville and Charlotte markets in North Carolina. Nation's Restaurant News, a leading food service industry magazine, included her in its list of "2018 New Top Restaurant Executives."

**'93** Last spring, **Brian Owen** and wife Jill created Owen Medical Products LLC, a woman-owned manufacturer of disposable PPE products for medical professionals and the general public.

**Doug Durante '77** was recently awarded the International Fuel Ethanol High Octane Award for his 40-year career in the fields of energy, environment and alternative fuels. Following work in the U.S. Congress, Doug formed his own consulting company and several nonprofit companies working with ethanol, oil, auto and agricultural interests. He continues to work as a lobbyist and consultant in Washington, D.C. He also has two children who graduated from Elon. He lives with his wife, Hilary, in Potomac, Md.



The couple started the company in response to the U.S. dependence on foreign suppliers for critical medical supplies. Their facility is located in North Wilkesboro, N.C., where they live. Visit their website at [owenmedicalproducts.com](http://owenmedicalproducts.com) for more information.

**'98** **Heather Coffey** was recently promoted to full professor at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte. She teaches in the department of middle, secondary and K-12 education. Heather is also the recipient of the 2020 Bank of America Excellence in Teaching Award. The award, first presented in 1968, is given to

full-time, tenured faculty members with at least seven years of service to UNC-Charlotte. As the recipient, she will also serve as the university's nominee for the UNC Board of Governors' Teaching Excellence Award. She and husband Corwin Eversley live in Harrisburg.

**'99** In addition to leading the human resources function for many tech companies, **Karen Weeks** has recently started a coaching practice and launched a podcast, "Getting Off the Hamster Wheel." Through both endeavors, Karen advises people who feel stuck in their careers and need help finding a healthier and happier path forward.

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ALUMNI ALBUM



Bonnie Gravitte '81



Kathie S. Niven '89



Heather Coffey '98





## An Elon Love Story

BY PATRICK WRIGHT

Love has a funny way of putting you in the right place at the right time. If not for a fifth year of eligibility on the Elon men's golf team, **John Somers '14** wouldn't have been on campus for the annual back-to-school block party at the Oak Hill Village apartments. And if he wasn't at that block party, his friend Olivia wouldn't have had the chance to introduce him to her good friend Catherine, who is now his wife.

"It was all meant to be," he says.

Back then, her name was **Catherine Brinkman '14**, and since she played on the Elon women's soccer team, she and John didn't really cross paths — except for one time a few years prior.

"I laid eyes on him my sophomore year in statistics class," Catherine says. John and Catherine were the only student-athletes in the class, but nothing really came of that connection until they were formally introduced at the block party a few summers later. The two immediately hit it off that day, and John eventually built up the nerve to ask Catherine out on a date. Despite that initial spark, the couple decided a romantic relationship just wasn't in the cards. After all, Catherine was moving back to Florida soon and John was planning to stay near family in Elon after graduation.

So instead of pursuing a love connection, John and Catherine spent their final year on campus focused on becoming good friends. They spent all their time together on the weekends but never seriously considered dating. But then, just two weeks before graduation, John and Catherine finally saw what everyone around them had seen for quite some time. "We both realized we were falling in love, if we weren't already in love with each other," Catherine says. "So we just took the plunge."

The small spark they felt back in the summer finally burst into a flame that gave them the courage to take on a long-distance relationship. Their commitment paid off. They got married on Feb. 23, 2019, with their friends and former Elon teammates by their sides.

Life since that day has been nothing short of an adventure for the couple. Catherine works full time as an occupational therapy assistant while also studying full time to earn a master's degree and become an occupational therapist. John has teed off on a professional golf career, playing tournaments on the Korn Ferry Tour with the hope of soon earning his PGA Tour card.

While John and Catherine are pursuing very different dreams, they realize that reaching their goals will take a team effort — in some cases, literally. "I'm officially a Korn Ferry Tour caddy," says Catherine, who has caddied for John in several professional events, including tournaments in Cancun, Utah and Colorado. It'd be impossible for John to find a caddy he trusts more than his wife, although Catherine's learning curve was quite steep in the beginning. Take John's first professional tournament, for instance.

"She almost cost me the tournament because she didn't know to pull the flag stick out of the cup, and the ball would've hit the flag, which would have resulted in a penalty," John recalls. "Luckily it didn't."

"No," Catherine interjects. "Luckily he didn't make the shot, so it didn't matter."

Despite just a few hiccups on the course, John is happy to have his wife by his side as he chases his dream. "She's helped me a lot, and I couldn't have done the things I've done so far without her."

In their nearly two years of marriage, John and Catherine have learned a number of lessons about the importance of support, trust and communication in a successful marriage. They've also learned about the power of love, especially in a year as challenging as 2020. Most of all, they've learned just how lucky they are to have each other. "We didn't know it at the time when we were still at Elon, but everything has worked out perfectly," John says.

Today, if you walk inside the couple's Florida home, you'll find their Elon diplomas and varsity letters proudly displayed together on the wall of their living room. The wall hangings remind them of where their journey together began while serving as inspiration for future chapters of their story.

"My parents met in college and were both athletes," Catherine says. "So in my mind, this is what you dream of. You dream of going to college, falling in love, finding your forever friends. Everything we did at Elon and everything we went through is the reason we're able to be where we are now." 🍀



{ Top left: John Somers '14 & Catherine Brinkman '14 at their 2019 wedding. Above: Catherine caddies for John as he competes professionally. }

ALUMNI ALBUM



Karen Weeks '99



Sarah Emerson Notch '02



Marissa Walker Bishop '03 & son Gregory



Shawn Howard '05, James Brown & friends



Jennie Harrison Young '07, Adam Harrison & children

You can keep up with Karen at [karendweeks.com](http://karendweeks.com). She and husband **Braden Weeks '00** live in New York City with their four “furry babies.”

**'02** **Sarah Emerson Notch** was recently appointed to the Advisory Commission on Special Education by the California State Board of Education. Her four-year term began on Jan. 1. The ACSE provides recommendations and advice to the state board of education regarding research and program development. They also provide annual reports, legislative bill review and input on current issues within special education. Sarah is executive director for special education and instruction at the San Mateo County Office of Education. She and husband **Ryan Notch '03** live in Foster City, Calif.

**'03** **Marissa Walker Bishop** recently joined the board of directors for the International Foundation for CDKL5 Research. CDKL5 is a rare developmental epileptic encephalopathy caused by a mutation of the CDKL5 gene. Her son, Gregory, suffers from the disorder. Marissa and her son actively fundraise for the foundation through their project, Art for Hope Love Cure, and have even sold their artwork internationally. You can follow them on Facebook and Instagram (@ArtForHopeLoveCure) or visit their website [ArtForHopeLoveCure.wixsite.com/CDKL5](http://ArtForHopeLoveCure.wixsite.com/CDKL5). The family lives in Southbury, Conn.

**'04** **Jonathan Lindberg {MBA'18}** recently joined Propella Therapeutics as senior operations director. The privately held development-state pharmaceutical company is located in Pittsboro, N.C. Jonathan and wife **Sarah King Lindberg '02** live in Raleigh with their two children, Scotland Price and Stephen Sherwood.

**'05** **Shawn Howard** and James Brown were married on 10/18/20. Shawn is a supervisor of inflight services for Frontier Airlines. They live in Orlando, Fla.

**'07** **Jennie Harrison Young** had a busy 2020. She and her husband, Adam,

**Kristen Majcher Soth {MPT '00}** and other members of Elon's inaugural Master of Physical Therapy class were able to celebrate their 20th reunion via Zoom on Oct. 16. She wanted to give a shout out to **Yvonne Townsley {MPT '00}**, who worked behind the scenes to make the event happen. Kristen hopes classmates join the Elon MPT 2000 Facebook group to stay connected and informed about upcoming events. She is a physical therapist manager for UNC Therapy Services in Chapel Hill, N.C., where she lives.







Brian Fink '08



Chelsie Wagner Counsell '09



Ashley France-Howell '11, Ra'Shawn Howell &amp; children Langley &amp; Madison

welcomed a new daughter, Sadie Nicole, on 12/5/19. Like many other parents across the country, she began homeschooling her other children, Charlotte and Brooks, due to the pandemic. Jennie is grateful for her elementary education degree, which is helping her to provide a quality education for her children. She is also an entrepreneur, dance teacher and senior director with Pampered Chef. The family lives in Arnold, Md.

**'08** Brian Fink was part of the Tampa Bay Lightning Hockey Organization's video production unit when the team won the 2020 Stanley Cup. While Brian is no longer employed by the organization, he is proud of the team for claiming the cup. He credits his success in large part to the education

and opportunities he had while a student at Elon. Brian is currently looking for his next adventure but will always cherish the time he spent with the Tampa Bay Lightning and his championship ring, which he will receive with the rest of the team. He lives in Tampa.

**'09** After receiving her doctorate from the University of Hawaii at Manoa, **Chelsie Wagner Counsell** has relocated to Connecticut to serve as an assistant professor of marine biology at Fairfield University. • **Will Huddleston** and **Lauren Sharp Huddleston '12** welcomed son William Barrie on 11/22/20. The family lives in Severna Park, Md.

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**Elizabeth Read**, Assistant Director of Planned Giving  
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{ An aerial shot of campus from 50 years ago. }



# PASSION PROJECT HITS THE SCREEN

BY TOMMY KOPETSKIE

Liam Hall '16 reflects on how his film "Here On Out" came together thanks to Elon connections and the support of friends, family and classmates.

**T**here are a few reasons **Liam Hall '16** didn't initially

anticipate the release of his first feature-length film, "Here On Out."

First, the cinema and television arts graduate and his friends penned the film's script nearly five years ago, when he was still an Elon student. Second, a widespread release wasn't the goal then — learning was. "Distribution isn't something we even dreamed of when we set out to do the project," said Hall, a few days before his film's Dec. 15 release on Amazon, iTunes and other streaming platforms. "We just thought we would make this film for ourselves, teach ourselves how to make a feature film, do it for the experience. But then we came all this way, and this distribution deal materialized."

It was certainly a passion project for Hall and co-creators **Chris Carter '16** and **Matias Breuer**. After Hall and Carter graduated, they settled in Greensboro, North Carolina, with Breuer, a Vassar College graduate whom Hall met while studying abroad in Prague. From there, the trio reworked the script of "Here On Out" into its current form: a coming-of-age thriller that follows a group of friends as they celebrate their college graduation at a secluded cabin.

The biggest advantage that came from residing close to his alma mater, Hall said, was the built-in support system he and Carter could tap into. "We realized that we could still lean on the people we knew there — the faculty and our friends who were still in school," he said. While working on the revised script in fall 2016, the filmmakers figured the final project might take a year, maybe 18 months. "Obviously, it was a bit longer than we thought it would be," Hall said. The trio juggled different jobs during the next few years, but always considered "Here On Out" as their "side job."

Filming began in early 2017, with the film's actors — all Elon students at the time — volunteering to shoot during spring break. With such a condensed schedule, the filmmakers didn't get everything they needed, so they continued to do pick-ups, or secondary footage, over the next year. Then two years ago, Hall, Carter and Breuer headed in different directions to continue their careers, with Hall landing in Denver, working for an education tech company. As one might expect, the distance added another wrinkle. With the film in post-production, the creators collaborated remotely, tying in their sound mixer and music

composer who were based in Los Angeles. At times, the group was in three different time zones communicating across different edits.

Finally, the filmmakers headed to Los Angeles in summer 2019 for the final mixing of music and sound. With the film completed, "Here On Out" hit the festival circuit and received strong praise. The 87-minute film premiered at the FirstGlance Film Festival and captured the Audience Choice and Best Ensemble Cast awards. But just as the film began garnering accolades, the pandemic hit and halted in-person festivals across the country. Fortunately for Hall and company, the film had already made an impression and Gravitas Ventures, an independent film distributor, wanted to take on the project.

While the film wrapped up nearly a year ago, Hall was still filled with excitement for its release and appreciation for the many people who supported the project along the way. The film worked on a microbudget with the filmmakers crowdfunding more than \$17,000 for the project's budget. "We feel fortunate because we are very privileged people," Hall said. "We are fortunate to have family and friends who were able and generous enough to donate. It is support that not everyone has.

"To have our film available on Amazon and iTunes, anywhere you get your movies, wasn't something we thought would be an option for us when we started. But with it happening now, it does seem surreal." ❄



{ Liam Hall '16, Matias Breuer & Chris Carter '16 worked together on the film "Here On Out," which premiered on streaming platforms in December. }





Manisha Patel G'11



Samantha Czymbor Smith '12, Jonathan Smith '14 &amp; friends



Samantha Baranowski Story '12, Kurt Story &amp; daughter Annabelle



David Campbell '13, Rachel Southmayd Campbell '13 &amp; son Henry

**'11 Ashley France-Howell** and husband Ra'Shawn Howell welcomed daughter Langley on 9/18/20. She joins older sister Madison. Ashley is an operations data manager for the Literacy Council of Montgomery County in Maryland. The family lives in Laurel. • **Manisha P. Patel {Law}**, who was named the North Carolina Bar Association's Young Lawyer Pro Bono Attorney of the Year in 2019,

was recently named to the North Carolina Pro Bono Honor Society for providing more than 620 hours of pro bono services during the 2019 calendar year. In recognition for her service, she also received the Greensboro Bar Association's 2020 Pro Bono Award. In addition, she was appointed to the Legal Aid of North Carolina Board of Directors in September and was honored as a

member of the 2020 class of North Carolina Lawyers Weekly's Annual Leaders in the Law presented by NC Law. Manisha is a family law attorney based in Greensboro.

**'12 Samantha Czymbor and Jonathan Smith '14** were married on 8/17/19 at St. Luke the Evangelist Catholic Church in Raleigh, N.C. Elon alumni in the wedding party included **Jordan**

**Roman '15, Benjamin Stringfellow '15 and Brian Lorello '16.** Samantha is a second assistant editor for Marvel and Jonathan is an RTR technician for Panavision. They live in Fayetteville, Ga. • **Samantha Baranowski Story** and her husband, Kurt, welcomed daughter Annabelle on 10/11/19. Samantha is a public relations manager for Goodwill Industries of the Southern Piedmont. The family lives in Charlotte, N.C. • **Kasey** ▶





{ Lindsay Reeth '19 & Ryan McElhinney '19 }



## Budding **ART**-preneurship

BY ALEXA BOSCHINI '10

**P**eruse the Student-Made Store website and you'll find intricate woven wall hangings and jewelry pieces that are as much works of abstract art as they are fashion accessories, photography of campus landmarks and vivid watercolor prints, earthen pottery and cozy knit scarves. All of the goods offered on the site are meticulously handcrafted by college students.

**Ryan McElhinney '19** and **Lindsay Reeth '19** founded the Student-Made venture in December 2017 during their junior year at Elon as a space for student artists from any discipline to share their creations while learning valuable entrepreneurial skills. The first iteration of the Student-Made Store was a holiday market with 15 artists. Now, it's an online operation that spans multiple universities. "The overall mission of the Student-Made Store is to help young, talented college students trust their creative expression while also gaining support for their growing businesses," Reeth says. "We call this movement the ART-repreneur movement."

McElhinney and Reeth met at Elon through mutual friends and shared a passion for exploring North Carolina. Reeth majored in human service studies while McElhinney created an independent major called human-centered enterprise. Whenever the pair went on weekend excursions to North Carolina towns, they would stumble upon small businesses with unique handmade goods and talk to the owners about their creative process. As their interest in the local artisan community grew, McElhinney and Reeth discovered some of their classmates had their own small businesses. Those student artists all had one thing in common — they

had never sold their work to people at Elon. That sparked an idea in the pair, who immediately sought to bring these student artists together and share their work with the campus community.

Before they knew it, they had recruited 15 makers who agreed to sell their work at a holiday market on campus. When the Student-Made Store returned for a second holiday market the following year, it grew to 35 artists, 800 visitors and more than \$4,000 in sales. McElhinney and Reeth hadn't planned to continue the store after graduation. But a trip to Boone that summer reminded them why they fell in love with local makers, so they decided to move the Student-Made Store online year-round. It launched in September 2019 with 25 Elon artists. Since then, they've added artists from the University of South Carolina, the University of Washington and Appalachian State University. Collections from the College of Charleston and North Carolina State University will debut in the coming months, and they also hope to add a collection from alumni artists soon.

The pair, who now live in Boston, lost their full-time jobs at the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. But that setback turned out to be a blessing in disguise. They now run the Student-Made Store and another company that manages websites and marketing for small businesses full time. "It was clear that the store had become a way for the Elon community to stay connected while they were away from campus and unable to be together," McElhinney says. "That's what makes the Student-Made Store so unique. We are tapping into the strength of connection that college campuses so naturally create." 🌱

Learn more and shop Elon student-made goods at [studentmadestore.com](http://studentmadestore.com).







Michael Gallagher '13, Elyse Yoder Gallagher '14 & daughter Lillian Anne



Katie Russell Martin '14 & Charlie Martin



Phoebe Kot Orr '14 & Rob Orr '14

**Thornton's** debut novel, "Lord the One You Love is Sick," was released in November. The book tells the story of a small town in North Carolina dealing with the fatal overdose of a member of the community. Kasey lives in Durham with husband and fellow author Kevin Kauffmann.

**'13** **Rachel Southmayd Campbell** and **David Campbell** welcomed son Henry on 10/12/20. He joins big sister Lillie. The family lives in Charlotte, N.C. • **Michael Gallagher** and **Elyse Yoder Gallagher '14** welcomed daughter Lillian Anne on 10/17/20. Elyse works as a teacher for The Browning School. The family lives in Greenwich, Conn. • **Rachel Stanley** recently joined the Atlanta Bicycle Coalition as a fundraiser on its inaugural development staff. The nonprofit advocacy organization works toward safer, more inclusive transit across Atlanta, where she lives.

**'14** **Abigail Demarest** and **Tobin Finizio III '18 {MHE '20}** got engaged on 11/14/20. Abigail is an IT project manager for Big Rock Sports. They live in Newport, N.C. • **Katie Russell** and Charlie Martin were married on 6/27/20 at Bald Head Island in North Carolina with

just immediate family in attendance. Katie is pursuing an advanced degree from the University of North Carolina's Kenan-Flagler School of Business. They live in Pittsburgh, Pa. • **Phoebe Kot** and **Rob Orr** were married 10/24/20 at Rob's parents' house. They are thankful to Elon for bringing them together. They live in Ocracoke, N.C. • In December, **Sherri Thomas {MBA}** was named chief administrative officer for North Carolina-based Truliant Federal Credit Union. She had previously served as chief human resources and organizational development officer. In her new role, Sherri will be responsible for the strategic direction and oversight of Truliant's diversity, inclusion and equity program. She will continue to have responsibility for all of the human resource areas, recruiting, training, organizational development, community engagement, government affairs and Truliant at Work, the credit union's B2B workplace benefits program. She lives in Winston-Salem.

**'15** **Ben Koffel** and **Taylor DeFord '17** got engaged on 7/3/20 and plan to get married in spring 2022. They

also purchased a home together in Belmont, N.C. Taylor works for the Humane Society of Charlotte.

**'16** **Jessica Cervini** was recently accepted to Columbia University.

She will be pursuing a master's degree in sports management. Her program begins in fall 2021. She lives in New York City. • **Nick Foley** and Jamie Hofstetter were married on 4/21/20 at a private ceremony in Rock Creek Park, Washington, D.C., where they live and Nick works as a recruiter. They look forward to celebrating this milestone with family and friends later this year. • **Tess O'Sullivan** and Eric Roach were married on 10/7/18. Elon alumni in attendance included **Sam Allen**, **Courtney Brocato**, **Jess Grembowski**, **Allie Bennett '17** and **Nicole Osgood '17**. The couple welcomed son Brady on 11/23/19. The family lives in Beverly, Mass.

**'19** **Carly Struyk** and C. Jacob Shotmeyer were married on 9/5/20. Carly works in financial services for Eventide Asset Management. They live in Wayne, N.J. ♣



Sherri Thomas G '14

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In December, **Kelsey Harris '14** was named to the inaugural class of the Triad Business Journal's "20 in their 20s," which recognizes young leaders for success in their fields and contributions to their local communities. A standout member of the women's basketball team during her time at Elon, Kelsey now serves as assistant director of women's basketball for the Atlantic Coast Conference, which is based in Greensboro, N.C. In that role, among other things, she served as a coordinator of the ACC Women's Basketball Tournament held each year at the Greensboro Coliseum.



Ben Koffel '15 & Taylor DeFord '17

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Nick Foley '16 &amp; Jamie Hofstetter



Tess O'Sullivan Roach '16 &amp; Eric Roach



Carly Struyk Shotmeyer '19 &amp; C. Jacob Shotmeyer

## IN MEMORIAM

**Kitty Rook Bass '44 P'67,**  
Burlington, N.C., 11/13/20.

**Mary Warren Siler '45,**  
Greensboro, N.C., 11/12/20.

**Dr. Matthew J. "Tommy" Howell Sr. '50,**  
Portsmouth, Va., 10/11/20.

**Paige F. Painter '53,**  
Luray, Va., 11/28/20.

**John Thurston Jones '55,**  
Shallotte, N.C., 10/21/20.

**Kenneth Kneyl Page '58,**  
Graham, N.C., 9/23/20.

**Thomas Edward "Sheppie" Shepperson '58,**  
Hazelton, Pa., 9/29/20.

**Patsy Truitt Sharpe '59,**  
Burlington, N.C., 10/16/20.

**Faye Weaver '59,**  
Durham, N.C., 11/15/20.

**James Franklin Allen '60,**  
Wilmington, N.C., 11/8/20.

**Edward "Eddie" Allen Hughes '60,**  
Greensboro, N.C., 11/28/20.

**Theodore Webb Jr. '60,**  
Timberlake, N.C., 11/24/20.

**Jack Anders Martin '61,**  
Sparta, N.C., 11/16/20.

**George Platt '61,**  
Carthage, Mo., 8/3/20.

**Douglas Wayne Scott '61,**  
Greensboro, N.C., 9/28/20.

**William "Bill" R. Gilliam '63,**  
Elon, N.C., 10/31/20.

**Victor "Vic" Huntley Seamon Jr. '63,**  
Burlington, N.C., 10/17/20.

**Maurice Staley '63,**  
Salisbury, N.C., 11/19/20.

**Billy "Bill" Norman Nobles '64,**  
Fayetteville, N.C., 10/31/20.

**Judy Seaman Holloway '66,**  
Concord, N.C., 10/14/20.

**William James Onufrak '67,**  
Roanoke, Va., 11/16/20.

**Alice Blackmon Miller '68,**  
Graham, N.C., 10/19/20.

**Gary Wayne Morton '71,**  
Elon, N.C., 9/23/20.

**Daniel L. Hedgepeth '72,**  
Raleigh, N.C., 10/18/20.

**Dr. Dorma Earl "E.D." Holt Jr. '75,**  
Burlington, N.C., 10/16/20.

**Charles Aaron "Chuck" Nance '83,**  
High Point, N.C. 10/15/20.

**Jeffrey Bennett '98,**  
Charlotte, N.C., 12/7/20.



**Ret. Col. Frederic T. Watts Jr.,** a former political science professor and 2004 Elon Medallion recipient, died 12/21/20. Watts taught at Elon from 1972 until his retirement in 1986. He retired from the U.S. Marine Corps as a colonel in 1970 after 28 years of service.



**Shirley "Red" Wilson,** former football coach and 1995 Elon Medallion recipient, died 1/8/21. Wilson coached at Elon from 1967 to 1976 and was the most successful football coach in program history with a record of 72-34-2. He also served as athletics director.

# Celebrating Alumni Excellence

They are outstanding young alumni who have achieved high levels of success, worked to elevate their communities and served as loyal alumni role models. They are the 2020 Top 10 Under 10 Alumni Award recipients. Join the Office of Alumni Engagement and the Young Alumni Council in celebrating these outstanding alumni virtually on Thursday, April 15, at [elon.edu/live](https://elon.edu/live). Congratulations!

JAY RENO '10

**Major:** Business administration

Jay is the founder and CEO of Feather, a furniture subscription service that offers a flexible and sustainable alternative to ownership.



EMILY ADAMS '11

**Majors:** Biology and environmental studies

Based in Hunstville, Alabama, Emily is the Eastern and Southern Africa Science coordination lead at NASA SERVIR Science Coordination Office.



NICK DYER '11

**Majors:** Broadcast and news media

As director of news and stand-up at Comedy Central, Nick has worked for shows including "The Daily Show with Trevor Noah," "South Park" and "Key & Peele."



KRISTIN KOSTKA '11

**Major:** Exercise science

As an associate director of OMOP Data Networks – Americas at IQVIA, Kristin runs the world's largest observational health data network and leads the Observational Health Data Sciences Initiative.







ALEXANDRA "ALLIE"  
SOLENDER BOYD '12

**Majors:** Physics and secondary science education

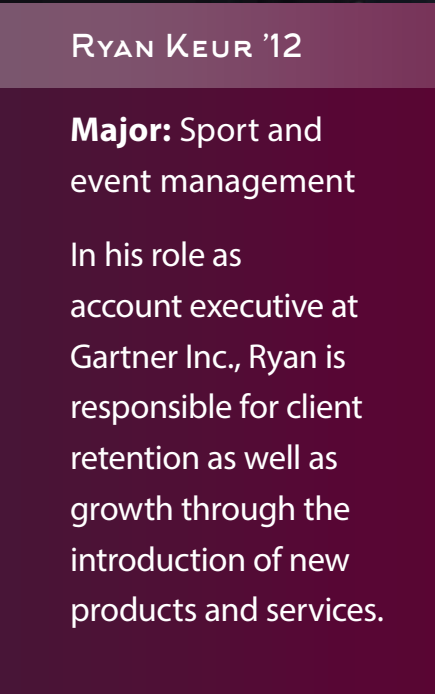
Allie teaches physics at Apex Friendship High School in Apex, North Carolina, where she built the physics program from the ground up.



ALEX DEMPSEY '12

**Majors:** Finance and accounting

Alex is an associate at Quinbrook Infrastructure Partners and a recent MBA graduate from the Wharton School at the University of Pennsylvania.



RYAN KEUR '12

**Major:** Sport and event management

In his role as account executive at Gartner Inc., Ryan is responsible for client retention as well as growth through the introduction of new products and services.



BRENNA HUMPHRIES '13

**Major:** Business administration

A management consulting manager with Accenture, Brenna leads a team that uses innovative technology to optimize clients' business processes.



FERGIE PHILIPPE '17

**Major:** Music theatre

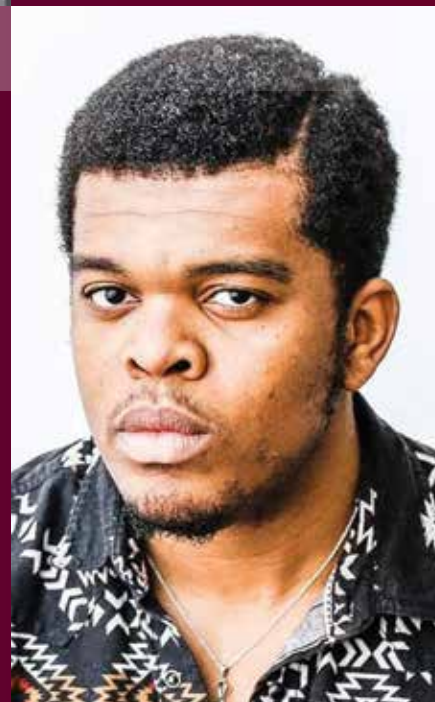
An actor, writer, director, puppeteer and host of "The Craft" podcast, Fergie plays the roles of Hercules Mulligan and James Madison in the musical "Hamilton" on Broadway.



HEATHER HARDER '14

**Major:** Strategic communications

Heather oversees communications at RSE Ventures, splitting her time between managing the CEO's brand and working with the company's extensive portfolio.



FERGIE PHILIPPE '17

**Major:** Music theatre

An actor, writer, director, puppeteer and host of "The Craft" podcast, Fergie plays the roles of Hercules Mulligan and James Madison in the musical "Hamilton" on Broadway.

# ELON UNIVERSITY

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{ First-year students Lizzie Baker, right, and Brianna Boucher try out the temporary ice rink as part of Elon's Winter Wonderland 2021 activities in January. The three-day event featured many masked and socially distanced activities to give students an opportunity to safely unwind and hang out with friends. }