

The road to the North Carolina primaries

As the voting deadline nears, Elon Votes provides resources for residents

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The deadline to register to vote for the North Carolina primaries is approaching fast. Friday, April 13, is the last day to vote in the North Carolina statewide elections on May 8.

Since the 2016 election, the Republican party has gained control over the state and federal government. The Democratic party has been working to gain more control, and the primaries are a way for more state representatives to be elected.

But currently, in the North Carolina General Assembly, the House holds a Republican majority of 75 to 45. This means the legislature as a whole can override Democratic Gov. Roy Cooper's vetoes, causing issues with balance of power in the state.

In 2017, the North Carolina General Assembly overturned 10 of Cooper's 13 vetoes. According to the North Carolina Veto History and Statistics, this marks the second-most vetoes that have been overridden in a single legislative year.

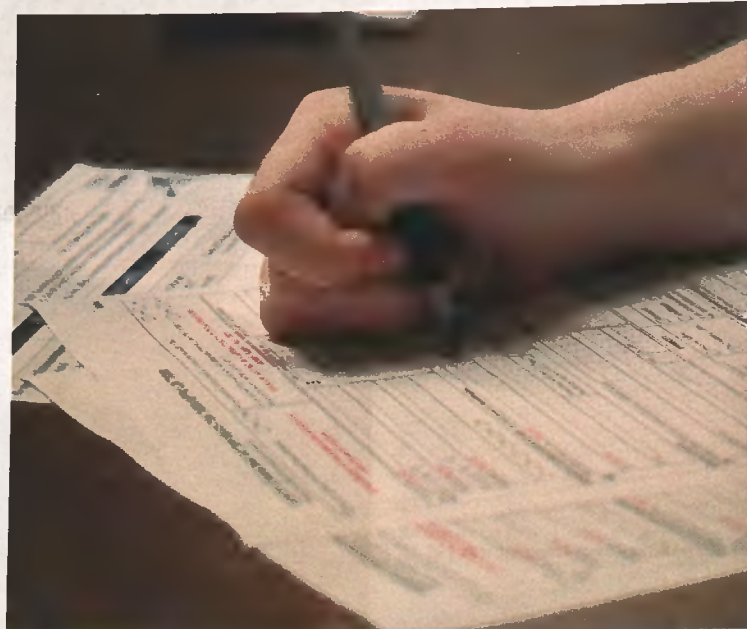
Primaries are happening all around the nation from May to mid-September. But students don't seem concerned about their representatives running in the primaries.

According to an Elon Poll survey conducted in February, 48 percent of college students can identify their House representative, and 17 percent can identify their state senator.

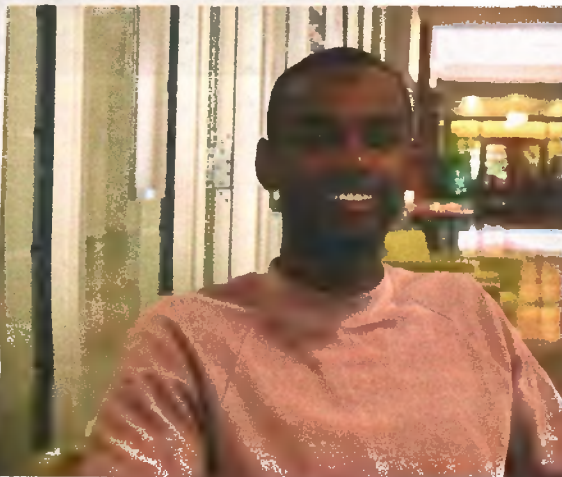
Elon University provides on-campus resources for students to help them register to vote. Junior Thomas Armooch is an ambassador of Elon Votes, encouraging students to become civically engaged and informed.

"They founded this organization to help give access to people who haven't been able to vote ... and also just make it a larger issue at college campuses to make sure students are aware of their right to vote," Armooch said.

Elon Votes helps students by partnering with TurboVote, a one-stop voting web-



MAGGIE BROWN | POLITICS EDITOR



Above: Students can register to vote on the North Carolina State Board of Elections' website.

Left: Junior Thomas Armooch, Elon Votes coordinator, wants to promote student voting.

site for students from all different states.

Armooch said if college students want to vote but are looking to vote for elections taking place in their home state, they can submit an absentee ballot either online or through the mail.

North Carolina holds semi-open primaries, which means if a voter registers to vote with a party affiliation, then they have to vote for different members only within that party. On the day of primaries, they are given a ballot with members of only one party, rather than seeing both the Republican and Democratic representatives.

But the reason why many

college students tend to shy away from voting is not because of their location or the voting process; it is often because they are not informed about who is running.

Sophomore Robert Maruca said he is not voting in this year's primaries.

"I have not followed the election races and do not feel knowledgeable about the candidates to make an educated vote," Maruca said. "Many people choose not to vote because they do not feel represented by those candidates running for office."

Despite this, youth voting in the primaries seems to be increasing. In North Carolina

in 2008, it was estimated that 15 percent of voters were students; in the 2016 primaries, the number of students increased by 9 percent, according to the Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement.

Armooch disagrees with Maruca and said the only way to create policy change is through voting.

"Making sure that you understand you have this right to vote and use it to influence change. ... If we say we want to make changes, the best way, in my opinion, is to go out and vote to change the people in office who aren't the best decisions," Armooch said.

Odyssey co-director departs after five years

Esther Freeman, a central force behind Odyssey scholars, leaves a lasting impression on Elon's campus

Abby Gibbs

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When freshman Julie Averette answered the phone last spring, she couldn't believe her. Elon had been her "first choice" since middle school, and now she would be able to attend, courtesy of the Odyssey scholarship. The scholarship offered to students seeking financial assistance from diverse backgrounds, is only awarded to 20 students per year.

"I hung up and started running around my house and screaming. It was so exciting," Averette said.

But the path to her dream school would not be easy for Averette during her first year at Elon. Being a first-generation student from the neighboring town of Graham, Averette found it difficult to balance both her home and school lives.

"I struggled with going back home in the beginning of the semester. My family wants to see me



THE PROGRAM WILL CONTINUE TO GROW, AND I HAVE NO DOUBT THAT IT WILL CONTINUE TO BE SUCCESSFUL.

ESTHER FREEMAN

ODYSSEY PROGRAM CO-DIRECTOR

I live so close, so why not?" Averette said.

However, Averette realized she wasn't the only one in her situation when she met Esther Freeman, the co-director of the Odyssey program.

"She's someone who can relate to me because she also was a first generation student who went to a university really close to her home," Averette said. "Her family ... expected her to come home the time, and I feel like we had that connection and I could share a lot of things with her, and she would understand."

Freeman, who is relocating to Atlanta with her family this month, has counseled dozens of Odyssey scholars like Averette who come from diverse situations. In an email, Freeman wrote that she plans to continue to counsel students in her own coaching and consulting business, Empowered Campus.

"As a Board Certified Life, Career, and Business Coach, I am focused on coaching high school students, college students and recent graduates," Freeman said. "I work with clients to apply strategies that are proven to build confidence, find commitment in being their authentic selves and improve the mindset overall."

Her departure disappointed Averette, who "wanted to get to know her," but Freeman acknowledged the Odyssey program's continuation of providing resources to support Odyssey scholars in their endeavors.

"The program will continue to grow, and I have no doubt that it will continue to be successful," Freeman wrote.

Alluding to Dr. Angela Duckworth's keynote presentation at Spring Convocation April 5, Freeman wrote that Odyssey scholars "have an enormous amount of grit."

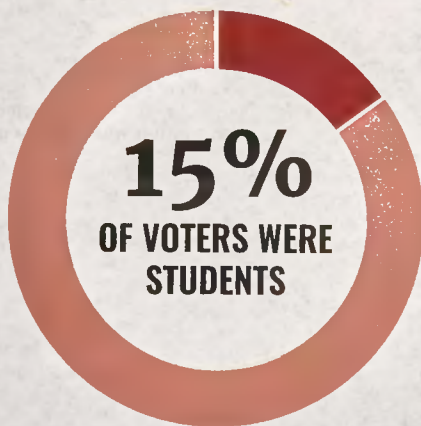
One of the ways the Odyssey program is expanding is through the increase of scholarships offered to students. While endowments for some of the scholarships fluctuate every couple of years, the program is offering 30 new scholarships to students for the 2018-2019 academic year.

Averette was touched by the program's willingness to devote school resources through providing financial assistance to low-income families.

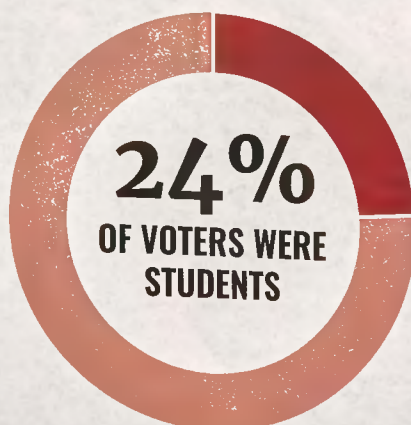
"I think it just shows that they want diversity. They want everyone to come to Elon, not just the people who can afford it," Averette said. "Just to know that Elon has such a broad mind and open-mindedness, it makes me feel like I can call this place home."

Marcus Elliott, the former co-director of the Odyssey program, will direct the program beginning the next academic year.

2008 PRIMARY



2016 PRIMARY



SOURCE: The Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement
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