

# Students begin quests for political leadership

Samantha King  
Assistant News Editor

As the end of the year comes to a close, most students begin to reminisce about the past year, the ups and downs and stress about end-of-term exams.

Junior Nick Ochsner and senior Jeremy Teetor are not like most students. While they, too, are busying themselves with finals preparation, both students have announced plans for major campaigns in the Republican and Democratic Parties, respectively.

Ochsner will be running for Chairman of North Carolina College Republicans, as the underdog of the race, when most

of the opposing incumbents represent much larger schools, such as University of North Carolina or Duke University.

As both a senior and the chairman, Ochsner would have very little free time, but his adviser and mentor, Richard Landesberg, assistant professor of communications, said this would not be a problem.

"(Ochsner) is incredibly passionate about whatever he does," Landesberg said. "He is so involved in so many important things that I'm not convinced when he sleeps or eats, but that's what he thrives on."

This is not Ochsner's first stint in the political arena. He has been deeply

involved in state-level politics since his freshman year. Just last year he was the treasurer of the North Carolina College Republicans and managed Jack Sawyer's campaign for Secretary of State.

"A lot of students are involved with many different things and for some, their academics really suffer," Landesberg said. "But I have never seen this with (Ochsner)."

Teetor recently announced his candidacy for Alamance County Commissioner and said he hopes to win the primary in May for the Democratic Party, and then the election in November for one of the five county commissioner seats.

Deborah Long, coordinator of civic engagement and director of the Elon Academy, has known Teetor since his freshman year and believes this is just the beginning for him.

"I think he's just getting his feet wet," she said.

Regardless of the results, Teetor said he plans to continue working with the Alamance County school system to promote change. Long says regardless of a win or loss, Teetor will be heard.

"I think running for office at 22 is young," Long said. "But because he is so young, he would bring a new, important perspective. His youth would be an important asset."

## Poll shows most North Carolinians lack faith in elected officials

Sarah Costello  
Reporter

As the economy fluctuates, the unemployment rate climbs, the issue of nationalized health care looms and war is prolonged, many Americans are second guessing the actions and intentions of elected officials.

A Nov. 16-17 Elon University Poll, which surveyed 563 North Carolina residents, revealed that 73 percent of respondents think corruption is prevalent among elected officials. According to 65 percent of those polled, elected officials are more concerned for themselves than the best interest of the public, and 67 percent said corruption is becoming more common among North Carolina public officials.

"I think a lot of citizens are frustrated, and that translates to blame on elected officials because they are the ones that we've trusted in making our country better," Student Government Association President and Elon junior Justin Peterson said. "If the state of the nation is negative, I think our perception of their job would be negative as well."

The media has reported dozens of political scandals in the past few months, from the promiscuous excursions of South Carolina Sen. Mark Sanford to Baltimore Mayor Sheila Dixon's bribery scandals and the questionable actions of Gov. Mike Easley in connection with the hiring of his wife at N.C. State University.

"I think, historically, distrust in government goes back to the 1970s with Watergate," SGA Vice President Evan Davis said. "I think another issue with that is the state of North Carolina. I know there are problems with the budget and state employees."

Many North Carolinians blame elected officials for the

discrepancies in the budget and handling of finances on a state and local level. The recent recession has impacted thousands of North Carolina households, and the unemployment rate continues to climb.

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the North Carolina unemployment rate is 11 percent, increased 4 percent since October 2008.

"Right now, there's a lot of debate with state officials," said Taylor Foshee, president of College Democrats. "People think our officials in North Carolina have become complacent and have not addressed some of the pressing issues like the economy and jobs. There's not enough action for (many), especially given what we perceive to be a severe issue."

Corruption among elected officials is often widespread and heavily reported, contributing to a lack of faith and support for political leaders. Respondents to the Elon Poll are not the only ones who are wavering in their trust in elected officials.

A Nov. 30 Rasmussen Poll revealed a lack of confidence in politicians, particularly Democrats. The survey was conducted before President Barack Obama's speech on his plans for the war in Afghanistan.

Voters gave a 13-point edge to Republicans — 50 percent to 37 percent — in regard to trust in national security and the War on Terror.

"The intense frustration with government and politicians among North Carolinians could pose serious ramifications for the electoral landscape in 2010," said Hunter Bacot, director of the Elon University Poll. "Coupled with a poor economy, the midterm elections may shape up as more of a referendum on government in general rather than the typical repudiation of the party

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- Justin Peterson  
STUDENT GOVERNMENT ASSOCIATION PRESIDENT

in power."

More than half of the respondents to the Elon Poll said corruption among North Carolina elected officials is more common today than 10 years ago but most appear to trust North Carolina legislative bodies more than national legislative bodies.

"I would foresee some type of shakeup in upcoming local elections and the larger elections in 2012," Davis said. "I think it's going to be interesting how the next couple of years will play out. State politics have been dominated by Democrats, and Republicans haven't held the House or Senate in 150 years."

Davis said he thinks many North Carolinians, and Americans in general, are wary of the unfulfilled campaign promises that helped elect Obama into office.

"With the Afghanistan troop surge, many are upset about that because that's something that Obama was against," Davis said. "The economy and health care are two mainstream issues that he talked about as well as gay rights and the environment. There are a lot of campaign promises he hasn't come through on."

Despite the distrust Americans may have for political leaders, 74 percent of respondents said America has the best government in the world, and 65 percent claimed support of the United States government despite any actions in Washington.



Age: 20  
Hometown: Fayetteville, N.C.  
Major: Broadcast Journalism

**Nick Ochsner**  
Candidate for Chairman of N.C. College Republicans



Age: 21  
Hometown: Alamance County, N.C.  
Majors: Education and Teaching Fellow

**Jeremy Teetor**  
Candidate for Alamance County Commissioner

**PLATFORM:** "The No. 1 priority coming into office if I am elected would be to plan. We need to set goals, have long-time objectives. We just don't do enough of that now. As part of my platform, the first thing I'll do if elected is to call a leadership planning retreat with state elected officials. Under my tenure as chairman, (we would be) moving toward a place where we are working with the Republican Party to help elect more officials."

**CAMPAIGN:** "We plan to travel around the state to talk to schools about our message and get people excited. We're going to empower chapters that typically have not had a strong voice across the state. We want to encourage them to be more active. We will be using the Internet and new media."

**FUNDRAISING:** "We are working on a final budget. It's (going to) require more money than one would probably think for a college (campaign)."

**MOST IMPORTANT ISSUE:** "Being from Fort Bragg, military and national security are issues I care most about. But I would be happy to argue with you about anything."

*The election will be held in March at the College Republican state conference.*

**PLATFORM:** "The biggest component of my platform is education. That's going to be what will pull the county through in getting it to the new economy." Teetor said he sees the new economy in Alamance County as the post-textile industry.

**CAMPAIGN:** "Word of mouth is going to be very important for me. I really want to have a lot of one-on-one contact." He plans to use registration drives, as well as mobilizing Elon students, family members and friends. Teetor will also largely rely on word-of-mouth and door-to-door campaigning.

**FUNDRAISING:** "At the most, we're anticipating a few thousand dollars."

**MOST IMPORTANT ISSUE:** "Alamance County has really fallen behind in competing in the new economy. It's really time to get serious about supporting our schools and their initiatives to prepare the next generation for newer types of jobs and to help older generations who are stuck in the transitioning phase."

*If Teetor does not win the primary or election, he plans to stay involved and run again in two years.*

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