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# DAWG FIGHT

## G-DAY EDITION



PHOTOS/STAFF

# NOTES TO NAILED IT

 Google Gemini

## Tradition meets change

### G-Day could reveal alternate look for Georgia football

Riley Baugh

G-Day has always been about more than a spring scrimmage. It is a first look, a controlled glimpse into what Georgia football might become in the fall. And this year, it may double as something else entirely: a uniform reveal.

Head coach Kirby Smart made that possibility clear in a press conference on March 17, when he said the Bulldogs could wear white helmets if subscriptions to Georgia Athletics' new third-party fan engagement platform, Glory Glory, were to triple. The timing has only fueled speculation that Georgia's annual spring game could be the stage for a long-awaited alternate look.

The helmets themselves aren't entirely new. Georgia's equipment staff teased the design on social media, and recruits have worn them in photo shoots, but they have yet to appear in a game setting. Since the 1960s, Georgia has built its identity around the red helmet, a constant that has become as recognizable as Sanford Stadium itself.

**“If it takes changing the uniform to get people fired up, then I'm at the wrong place.”**

KIRBY SMART | HEAD FOOTBALL COACH

Georgia's silver britches carry just as much weight. First introduced under head coach Wally Butts, who started as head coach in 1939, the pants were designed to complement the bright red jersey and quickly became a defining part of the program's look. By the early 1950s, the phrase "silver britches" had taken on a life of its own, showing up in cheers, on banners and even on vests worn by fans proclaiming, "Go, You Silver Britches."

That is what makes the idea of an alternate look so intriguing.

White helmets, or even an all-white uniform, would not just be a cosmetic shift; it would stand in contrast to everything Georgia has historically been on the field. It would be clean, modern and noticeably different from the red-and-silver combination that has defined the program for generations. For some, it would signal a willingness to evolve with the rest of college football. For others, it may feel like a departure from what makes Georgia, Georgia.

#### The history of alternate uniforms

Alternate uniforms, particularly black jerseys, exist in a strange space within the program. They are rarely worn, often debated and consistently requested by fans. Despite that demand and organized student section "blackouts" for Georgia night games, Smart has never fully embraced the idea that uniforms should drive energy inside the stadium.

"I don't think that has one thing to do with the fan base," Smart said. "I just think that's hokey-pokey. It's great for recruiting, and we may do it sometime. I'm not anti-doing it,

but that shouldn't do anything for your atmosphere."

Smart's stance has been consistent. The expectation is that the environment in Sanford Stadium should already be established, regardless of what color the team is wearing.

"Some of the best places I've played, great atmosphere, they never change their uniform, they're traditionalist," Smart said. "If it takes changing the uniform to get people fired up, then I'm at the wrong place."

And yet, history suggests that uniforms do carry weight, even if that impact is difficult to measure.

The first "blackout" game against Auburn in 2007 remains one of the most memorable moments in Sanford Stadium. Georgia's surprise wardrobe change from red to black jerseys created an immediate surge of energy, one that carried into a 45-20 win after 28 unanswered second-half points. The following Sugar Bowl win over Hawaii reinforced the momentum, turning a one-time experiment into something that appeared to be, at least briefly, a tradition.

But that energy has never been consistent. A highly anticipated game against No. 8 Alabama in 2008 resulted in a 41-30 loss after a 31-0 halftime deficit, and the mystique surrounding the uniforms faded just as quickly as it arrived.

Since then, alternate uniforms have appeared only in flashes.

Georgia wore black jerseys once during Smart's first season in 2016 in a 35-21 win over Louisiana-Lafayette, a game that did little to reestablish them as a staple. In the 2020 season, the Bulldogs introduced a redesigned black uniform with a spiked collar and block numbers, wearing those twice as well as a white throwback jersey once with limited fan capacity during the COVID-19 pandemic. The Peach Bowl win over No. 8 Cincinnati on Jan. 1, 2021, was the last time Georgia has taken the field in a non-traditional look.

#### The future

Alternate uniforms have never defined Georgia, but they never disappeared. They exist between tradition and curiosity, generating excitement without becoming expected.

That is where white helmets enter the conversation. An all-white look would feel new within a program rooted in consistency. Even though G-Day is only a spring scrimmage, it could signal a step toward alternate looks in regular season games.

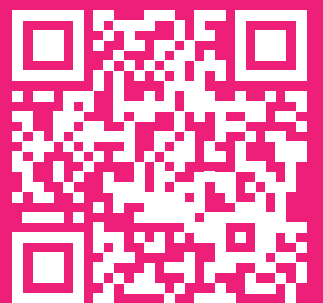
Whether that results in white helmets on Saturdays or even another blackout remains uncertain. What is clear is that even in a program built on doing things the same way, the idea of change still has a way of capturing attention.



Georgia quarterback JT Daniels throws the ball during the first half of a football game against Mississippi State at Sanford Stadium in Athens, Georgia on Saturday, Nov. 21, 2020. Georgia won 31-24. FILE/STAFF

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# Sports

## Georgia football eyes another SEC title amid difficult schedule

Romell Williams

Georgia football enters the 2026 season in a familiar position: loaded with talent, led by head coach Kirby Smart and carrying national championship expectations. But unlike some recent seasons, the path through the SEC is both intriguing and unpredictable, setting up a campaign that could define the next phase of Georgia's dominance.

### Season outlook

Georgia is coming off another elite season, continuing a run that has included multiple playoff appearances and SEC titles over the past several years. The expectations in Athens haven't changed — Georgia has a program built to compete for championships every year. However, roster turnover and a demanding schedule create just enough uncertainty to make 2026 compelling.

The offense is expected to be led by redshirt senior quarterback Gunner Stockton, who has already shown flashes of high-level play. Around him, Georgia will rely on a new wave of playmakers stepping into larger roles, a common theme for a program that reloads rather than rebuilds. On defense, players like Raylen Wilson and KJ Bolden headline a unit that should once again rank among the nation's best.

If Georgia is going to reach its ceiling, it will likely be because of that defense — a group that has consistently carried the Bulldogs through high-stakes SEC matchups.

### Breaking down the schedule

Georgia's 2026 schedule is a mix of manageable non-conference games and a brutal SEC slate. The Bulldogs open with home games against Tennessee State and Western Kentucky, which should serve as early tune-ups. Conference play, however, ramps up quickly.

At home, Georgia hosts Oklahoma, Auburn, Missouri and Vanderbilt, along with the annual rivalry game against Florida, this year at Mercedes-Benz Stadium in Atlanta. These games provide opportunities to build momentum, especially with Sanford Stadium expected to be one of the toughest environments in the country.

The real tests come on the road. Georgia will travel to Arkansas, South Carolina, Ole Miss and Alabama — arguably one of the most difficult road slates in college football. Notably, Smart has yet to win at Alabama or Ole Miss, adding extra narrative and weight to those matchups.

### Biggest games to watch

#### At Alabama

This is the marquee game of the season. Any time Georgia and Alabama meet, it carries SEC Championship and College Football Playoff implications. Winning at Bryant-Denny Stadium would not only boost Georgia's resume but also eliminate a major hurdle that has lingered during the Smart era.

#### At Ole Miss

Ole Miss has emerged as a legitimate SEC contender, and Georgia's recent battles with the Rebels have been high-scoring and intense, especially after the ending of the College Football Playoff Quarterfinal game, where the teams duked it out. This road game could swing the SEC race, especially if both teams enter with playoff hopes intact.

#### Vs Oklahoma

A newer SEC matchup that brings a formidable and intriguing game for the Bulldogs. Oklahoma's arrival into the conference adds another high-profile opponent, and this game could serve as a measuring stick for both programs. The Bulldogs defeated the Sooners 54-48 in their last meeting, the 2018 Rose Bowl.

#### Vs Florida (Atlanta)

The rivalry with Florida football remains one of the defining games on Georgia's schedule every year, regardless of rankings or location. This year's game will be played at a neutral site in Atlanta instead of Jacksonville, Florida, splitting fans and creating a postseason-like environment.

#### Vs Georgia Tech

The in-state rivalry against Georgia Tech always carries emotional weight, regardless of records. Clean, Old-Fashioned Hate isn't just tradition — it's pride. Georgia will be expected to win, but rivalry games have a way of tightening margins and creating chaos late in the season.

#### At South Carolina

This is one of the most dangerous games on the schedule. South Carolina's Williams-Brice Stadium is one of the toughest environments in the SEC, and the Gamecocks have a history of giving Georgia problems when given the opportunity to host. If the Bulldogs aren't sharp, this is a classic upset spot that could derail their bigger goals.

### Record Prediction

The 2026 season won't be easy, but that's what makes it compelling. Georgia has the roster, coaching and culture to



Georgia head coach Kirby Smart celebrates after Georgia wins the SEC Championship game against Alabama at Mercedes-Benz Stadium in Atlanta, Georgia, on Saturday, Dec. 6, 2025. Georgia won 28-7. PHOTO/KALEB TATUM



Georgia wide receiver Talyn Taylor (11) celebrates a first down during a football game against Austin Peay at Sanford Stadium in Athens, Georgia, on Saturday, Sept. 6, 2025. Georgia won 28-6. PHOTO/ETHAN GREENE

compete for everything again. The difference between a good season and a championship run will come down to a handful of road games — and whether the Bulldogs can once again rise to meet the moment.

While Georgia will not have to face some scary SEC opponents such as Texas, Texas A&M and LSU in 2026, there are still speculations that the tests on Georgia's schedule are enough to prevent it from reaching its goals.

Losses could come from the brutal road slate, with Ole Miss standing out as the most likely opponent to hand Georgia its lone defeat in 2026. However, Georgia should still position itself for an SEC Championship berth and another College Football Playoff run.

**Prediction: 11-1 (8-1 SEC)**



Georgia tight end Elyiss Williams (10) celebrates with teammates after scoring a touchdown during the season opener against Marshall at Sanford Stadium in Athens, Georgia, on Saturday, Aug. 30, 2025. Georgia won 45-7. PHOTO/KALEB TATUM



Georgia players celebrate after winning the SEC Championship game against Alabama at Mercedes-Benz Stadium in Atlanta, Georgia, on Saturday, Dec. 6, 2025. Georgia won 28-7. PHOTO/KATHERINE DAVIS

## NUMBERS TO KNOW: G-Day

# #10

### Tight end Elyiss Williams

In a position group stacked with talent, Elyiss Williams stands out for his size and ability. Listed at 6-foot-7 and 255 pounds, Williams' frame could dominate not only in the spring matchup, but in the 2026 season. He began to carve out a role last season, but this spring is about expanding on that. Georgia has long relied on tight ends as a centerpiece of the offense, and Williams has the skills to take on a bigger share of that responsibility. If he continues to round out his game, especially as a blocker, he could move from a situational weapon to one of the most impactful players in the offense.

### Running back Chauncey Bowens

Chauncey Bowens has worked hard to make a name for himself in a crowded running back room at Georgia. Last season, Bowens took advantage of his early opportunities, appearing in 12 games, finishing with 103 carries for 526 rushing yards and six touchdowns, while also adding 14 receptions for 82 yards. Heading into 2026, Bowens will be wearing a new number, switching from No. 33 to No. 5. Bowens said this change is to honor former Georgia legend Garrison Hearst, who wore No. 5 during his time in Athens in the early 1990s. The switch reflects both a personal connection to Georgia's history and a fresh start as he looks to take on an even bigger role in the Bulldogs' offense this season.

# #7

### Safety Khalil Barnes

This spring serves as a homecoming for transfer Khalil Barnes. Arriving after three years at Clemson, the Athens native who once played at North Oconee High School chose to return for his senior season. G-Day will be a great chance to evaluate how he will fit into the Bulldogs' program and how he can impact an already strong, competitive defense. In his 2025 season with the Tigers, he recorded 40 tackles and multiple pass deflections across 10 games. G-Day gives Barnes a chance to compete for a starting spot at defensive back, likely alongside junior standout KJ Bolden.

### Defensive tackle Elijah Griffin

Another youngster drawing attention this spring is Elijah Griffin, whose physical frame has already made a significant impression. At 6-foot-4 and 310 pounds, Griffin brings immediate size to Georgia's defensive front, along with the strength to compete in the interior. As a freshman in 2025, he appeared in all 14 games, finishing with 22 total tackles, one sack and one forced fumble, flashing confidence early on in his career. Griffin's combination of strength, size and skill give him a really high ceiling and gives him the opportunity to become one of the most impactful linemen on the Bulldogs' roster. If he can do consistently what everyone saw him do last season, Griffin's potential is unlimited.

# #5

### Linebacker Raylen Wilson

For Raylen Wilson, G-Day is less about earning a role and more about becoming one of the core leaders on the Bulldogs' defense. After a standout junior season in 2025 that included 74 tackles and 2.5 sacks, Wilson will look to set the tone before the fall season begins. As head coach Kirby Smart continues to evaluate a defense with new faces, Wilson will be a steady player who can reliably anchor the group. His ability to communicate and recognize plays will be just as important as his impact on the stat sheet.

### Wide receiver Talyn Taylor

With the Bulldogs losing star receivers Zachariah Branch, Colbie Young and Dillon Bell, Georgia will be looking for a new go-to option in the passing game. One of the top candidates is Talyn Taylor, a redshirt freshman who showed potential despite a shortened 2025 season due to injury. In his limited playtime, Taylor recorded two catches for 28 yards in six games, but his impact goes beyond the stat sheet. A former five-star recruit and one of the top receivers in the country coming out of high school, Taylor showed elite speed and the ability to stretch the field, while also contributing on special teams early in his career. Taylor's 2025 season was overshadowed by a critical drop against Alabama, but with a full offseason and growth in spring training, Taylor has the chance to take on a larger role, and a breakout could play a major part in that success.

# #5

# #90

# #11

By Layla Nicholson

# London Humphreys prepares for larger role in Georgia football's offense

Zach Pascuzzi

Consecutive seasons ending in Sugar Bowl defeats and no College Football Playoff victories have left Georgia wide receiver London Humphreys unsatisfied.

"It's not a good feeling, but only one team can end on a win," Humphreys said. "It just gives us another goal to reach at, another opportunity where we can learn from the mistakes and what we did wrong."

If the two-time defending SEC champion Bulldogs are to rediscover the postseason version of themselves that won national championships at the end of the 2021 and 2022 seasons, Humphreys will need to feature in a larger and more consistent capacity this upcoming campaign.

Georgia's wide receiver room underwent significant upheaval in the offseason following several crucial draft declarations. Gone are stars like Zachariah Branch, who declared for the NFL Draft after setting a program record with an SEC-leading 81 receptions, as well as other key contributors like Noah Thomas, Colbie Young and Dillon Bell.

Although the Bulldogs were facing significant departures at nearly every position, restocking the wide receiver core seemingly was not a high priority. Only one wide receiver was acquired from the portal, as Isiah Canion traded Georgia Tech for its in-state rivals.

The lack of activity suggests that head coach Kirby Smart is content enough to leave the burden of replacing Georgia's most productive receiving weapons on returnees like Humphreys, who will be a senior in the 2026 season, as well as the 2025 and 2026 recruiting classes.

Humphreys expressed gratitude for the lessons he learned from some of Georgia's departing players and emphasized that he will now take over the role of mentoring the younger players on the roster.

"They taught me how to lead, how they carried themselves," Humphreys said. "My role turns into teaching the young guys how to do it, how to take care of their schoolwork and their work on the field as well."

Humphreys had high athletic expectations to live up to in his family. His father was an All-American pole vaulter at Auburn, and his mother was an All-American decathlete at South Carolina.

A three-star prospect out of Nashville's Christ Presbyterian Academy, where he also played baseball and ran track, Humphreys recorded more than 1,000 receiving yards in each of his last two high school seasons.

Then, staying local and committing to Vanderbilt, he was a member of the SEC All-Freshman Team during his first collegiate season. Humphreys was one of just three freshmen in the conference that year with four or more receiving touchdowns, and he caught a 49-yard touchdown pass on the opening drive against his future team, when the Commodores faced the Bulldogs.

Across two seasons at Georgia, he has racked up five touchdowns and 520 receiving yards. Arguably the biggest highlight of his Bulldog career thus far came last season in his home state, when, against the Volunteers in the third game of the season, Humphreys caught the 28-yard game-tying touchdown from quarterback Gunner Stockton with just over two minutes remaining in the fourth quarter. Georgia went on to win that game in overtime, 44-41, its ninth straight victory over Tennessee.

Humphreys affirmed Georgia's aim of producing more explosive passing plays next season.

"That's one of our goals," he said. "Spring ball is a great time to take those shots. The more practice you have, the more comfortable the quarterback and receivers feel with that stuff."

He also said that his connection with Stockton, now in his second season starting as Georgia's quarterback, has grown stronger.

"Last year we were both working to fill bigger roles," Humphreys said. "[Now] I can help him control the offense."

Apart from boosting the team's explosiveness and playing clean football, the Bulldogs have one other vital objective to meet in the remainder of their spring practices and on G-Day, according to Humphreys.

"We have a young team," he said. "So first would just be the connection and growth factor of the team, in total."

As one of the most experienced voices in a reshaped receiver room, Humphreys' development could play a defining role in how far Georgia's offense can go this season.



Georgia wide receiver London Humphreys (16) catches the ball for a touchdown during the second half of a game between Georgia and Texas at Sanford Stadium in Athens, Georgia, on Saturday, Nov. 15, 2025. Georgia won 35-10. PHOTO/KALEB TATUM



Georgia wide receiver London Humphreys (16) runs with the ball during a game against Florida at EverBank Stadium in Jacksonville, Florida, on Saturday, Nov. 1, 2025. Georgia won 24-20. PHOTO/KATHERINE DAVIS

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Georgia inside linebacker Justin Williams (19) hypes up the crowd during a game against Florida at EverBank Stadium in Jacksonville, Florida, on Saturday, Nov. 1, 2025. PHOTO/KATHERINE DAVIS

# Justin Williams steps into leadership role for Georgia linebackers ahead of G-Day

Evan Waldman

By his third year in Georgia's defense, Justin Williams is no longer learning; he's leading. The junior inside linebacker has grown into a key piece of the Bulldogs' defense this spring, playing faster and more confidently as he takes a larger role in the middle of the field.

Williams doesn't have to think through every read or adjustment; instead, he is able to play as a veteran in the system. In one of college football's most demanding defensive schemes, the Conroe, Texas, native is showing his experience and growth as spring practice ramps up.

"Being in year three, you feel like you've been through it all," Williams said. "You've been through so much and you kind of know what to expect, so you just go out there and have a lot more fun and be able to play faster."

That comfort has come with a shift in responsibility as the linebacker group continues to change every year. After losing leader CJ Allen to the NFL Draft, Williams will likely be at the forefront of the middle of the field as he is a part of the core expected to lead Georgia's defense.

Williams racked up 36 total tackles, four tackles for loss and one pass deflection in 14 games last season for the Bulldogs.

With linebacker being a crucial position on the field due to constant communication and decision-making, Williams will look to use those years of development behind veteran players to become a leader in the locker room.

"I've definitely seen growth in the aspect of being in the film room more, being a leader, attacking the reps," Williams said.

The shift has been intentional as Williams has leaned into the small details this offseason, emphasizing film study, communication and consistency, the traits that often define Georgia's most trusted defensive leaders.

Head coach Kirby Smart has identified Williams as one of three players who will anchor the middle of the defense this season.

"I think [Raylen Wilson] is going to shoulder more of that load along with [Williams] and Chris [Cole]," Smart said. "That's where the leadership of your defense comes from — that middle group."

That leadership role is something Williams has embraced this spring, both verbally and through his approach in practice. Rather than focusing solely on his own development, Williams has also taken on a role in helping set the tone for the linebacker room.

"As far as a linebacker room, we've just been attacking every

day," Williams said. "This is the most excited I've been for a linebacker room and we had a great one last year, so that says a lot."

That excitement stems in part from the chemistry the group has built. In a defense that relies heavily on communication, trust between players is essential.

"I think the connection [is our strength]," Williams said. "We talk a lot about the connection and being able to be with these guys for so long ... It's always exciting to be with my guys."

As Georgia continues through spring practice and G-Day approaches, Williams' development stands out as one of the clearest signs of how the defense is evolving. While the Bulldogs will feature new contributors this season, the expectation remains that the unit will operate at a high level, particularly in the middle of the field.

Now, with a stronger grasp of the system and a growing leadership presence, Williams is positioned to play a central role in maintaining that standard. For a player who once focused on learning his place within the defense, the next step is to take charge.

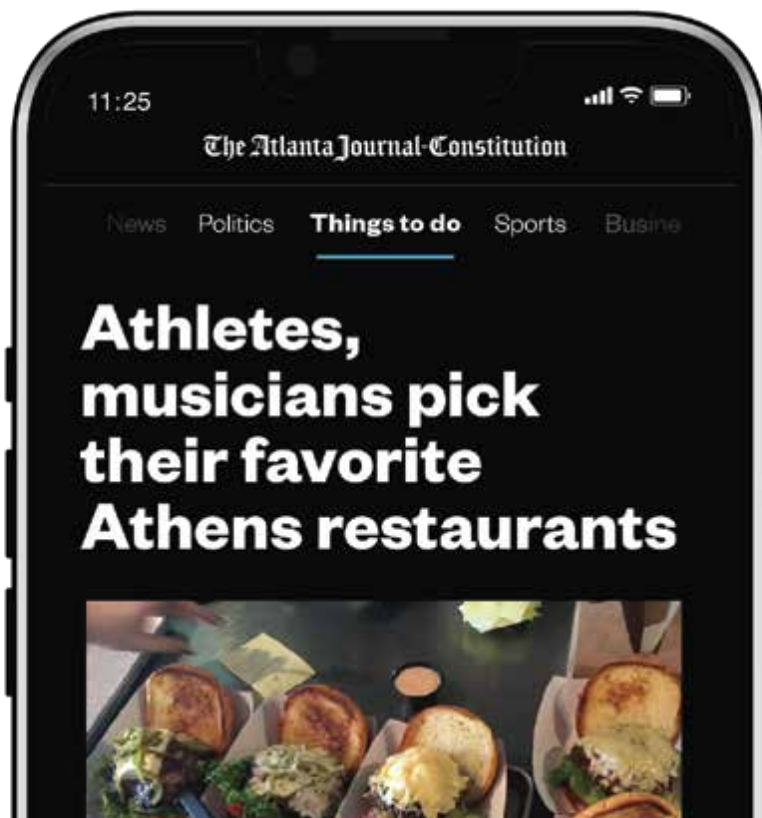
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## CORRECTIONS

As a student-run news organization with the mission of training journalists, we know that mistakes happen and we do our best to correct them as quickly as possible. On the March 26, 2026 edition on page B3 there was an incorrect date on a photo caption. We regret this error and it has since been corrected online. If you spot a factual error, please let us know by sending a correction to [editor@randb.com](mailto:editor@randb.com). Corrections to items in print editions are published in the next possible print issue. Corrections for online-only articles are posted at [redandblack.com/corrections](http://redandblack.com/corrections).

## OPINION Why the end of G-Day might be near

Ben Kule

When Kirby Smart was first hired as Georgia football's head coach, he made one simple request of his fans — show up for G-Day.

"The easiest thing in recruiting is when your fanbase is united and everybody is pulling in the same direction," Smart said. "That's what we need, that's what we want, that's what we expect."

In that same speech delivered to fans during a Georgia basketball game on Jan. 23, 2016, he issued a challenge: fill all 93,000 seats in Sanford Stadium for his first spring game. The fanbase answered.

The 2016 G-Day game was not only just a shift to a new era of Georgia football, one that would bring two national championships, four SEC championships and counting. It also rewrote history. The sold-out crowd made for the largest attendance for a spring game in SEC history, a record previously held by Alabama when Smart served as its defensive coordinator. To this day, only Ohio State has ever brought in a larger spring game crowd.

In the decade since, however, attendance has steadily declined, a trend not only seen by Georgia, but by most teams

across the country. Despite a one-off spike in 2018 after the Bulldogs reached the national championship game, attendance was down to just 52,630 the next year. Even with a decline of over 40,000 fans, partially explained by light rain in Athens, Georgia still had the sixth-largest crowd of any 2019 spring game.

Attendance rose to 68,022 in 2022 after the COVID-19 pandemic canceled the 2020 spring game and limited the 2021 game's capacity. Then, fan presence at the game nosedived. Last year's G-Day was not televised, theoretically prompting fans to flock to the stadium, but it instead saw a crowd of just 35,033, by far the lowest since Smart's hiring.

Georgia has not reacted to this decline in any way by persuading fans to attend. In fact, it appears to be doing the opposite. While students can still attend free of charge, tickets have typically cost fans \$10 since 2021, with no sign of that price reducing.

In addition, many Power Four programs scrapped their spring games altogether. Smart flirted with the possibility of halting G-Day as an annual occurrence, calling the event "year-by-year."

Last year, numerous key players such as Monroe Freeling

and Christen Miller were held out as they recovered from offseason surgeries. Recent G-Day scrimmages have felt less like a best-on-best game between teammates and more like a practice where Smart and his staff put their backups to the test, with spectators only watching due to tradition.

While it can be seen as an opportunity for fans to see players who could be breakout stars or unsung heroes in the season to come, the surge in the use of the transfer portal suggests that many players are likely to seek opportunities elsewhere, leaving Georgia if not given ample playing time or an acceptable NIL package.

Ultimately, the combination of declining attendance, shifting roster dynamics and broader trends across college football indicates that G-Day is no longer the cornerstone event it once was.

In 2016, the excitement around G-Day was so high that even Atlanta-based rapper Ludacris came to perform. Now, the spectacle is a shell of its former self, and fans have essentially been given no reason to look forward to it. Unless Georgia finds a way to reimagine the event, G-Day runs the risk of being phased out entirely, leaving college football fans in a long offseason lull until early September.



Georgia tight end Ethan Barbour (9) in action during the second half of the annual G-Day spring football game at Sanford Stadium in Athens, Georgia, on Saturday, April 12, 2025. PHOTO/ETHAN GREENE

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# Katherine Davis

## Chief Photojournalist

### How has your coursework at Grady College prepared you for your role at The Red & Black?

My coursework at Grady helped prepare me to cover a really wide variety of topics and situations. Although I was often pushed way outside of my comfort zone in my classes, it helped me feel prepared and more comfortable when doing coverage for The Red & Black. It also helped make me better at pushing myself to try new things when I'm working or brainstorming story ideas.

### What has been the most rewarding part of serving in a leadership role at The Red & Black?

I have really enjoyed seeing and contributing to what goes on in a newsroom besides just reporting, and I have found the managing and editing side of the work fascinating. I also really value the leadership, teamwork and professional skills I have gained from being in a working newsroom and the relationships that I have built with my peers and coworkers.

**Major:**  
Journalism

#### Position Description:

I photograph a wide variety of assignments, including sports, events, news, local politics and special projects. I try to average at least two to three photo assignments a week and fill in coverage gaps for both print and digital when needed. I am also responsible for producing a semester-long photo story.

*At Grady College, we are proud of our students who learn the core values, ethics and skills of journalism in our classrooms, then apply them to writing and visualizing features in The Red & Black. This is one in a series of profiles about our student leaders who serve The Red & Black.*



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# Before UGA

## The Indigenous lands beneath a land-grant institution

Maia Popa

As the birthplace of public higher education, the University of Georgia has served students since its first classes in 1801. But a troubling history still haunts the institution.

On Jan. 27, 1785, Georgia approved the establishment of the nation's first state-chartered university: the University of Georgia. To fund the endowment for the university, the Georgia General Assembly allocated over 40,000 acres of Muscogee land to be leased and sold. After Georgia's readmission to the Union following the Civil War, UGA became a land-grant university in 1872 under the Morrill Act of 1862, receiving funds from land sales to expand its curriculum.

As a Morrill Act institution, UGA has been guided by the three traditional land-grant missions: increase access to higher education, develop practical fields such as agriculture and contribute to economic development.

While land-grant universities are known for their commitment to public service, students, academics and researchers also highlight the history of Native American dispossession stemming from their establishment.

Mary Wright, a junior marketing major with Native American heritage, said that it's sad that the history of the university being built on Native American land often goes unacknowledged.

"I love going to UGA. I love the school. I love the history with it. There is so much deep-rooted history that when it is acknowledged, it's a beautiful thing," Wright said.

### What is a land-grant university?

A land-grant university is a higher education institution that has been designated to receive the benefits of the Morrill Acts of 1862 and 1890, or the Equity in Educational Land-Grant Status Act of 1994, according to the Association of Public and Land-Grant Universities.

The Morrill Act of 1862 gave each U.S. state between 90,000 and 990,000 acres of public land to create endowment funds for land-grant universities.

According to a December 2023 paper from the UGA Center for Integrative Conservation Research, 97% of the public land distributed came from the dispossession of 250 Native American nations, totaling 10.7 million acres, often by coercive and violent means.

The Morrill Act originally aimed to promote economic development through agricultural, mechanical, military and classical education, allowing working class individuals to obtain a practical education.

But according to Michael Banerjee, a Ph.D. candidate in jurisprudence and social policy at the University of California, Berkeley, universities received land grants before and after the passage of the act.

"The eye-popping 10.7-million-acre figure actually underestimates the size of university land grants — by at least 4,079,369.20 acres, collectively a landmass larger than Connecticut," Banerjee wrote in a recently published paper. "This is because, by 1862, land-grant universities dotted the American landscape. And land-granting didn't end with the Morrill Act."

# 97%

of the public land distributed came from the dispossession of 250 Native American nations, totaling 10.7 million acres, often by coercive and violent means

### The forced removal of Native Americans

Prior to UGA's founding, James Wright, Georgia's royal governor, supported a 1771 "land for debt" deal in which members of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation and Cherokee Nation gave land to the British Crown to settle trade debts.

Georgia's final colonial border was surveyed in 1773. While the Muscogee and Cherokee lost land in the Broad River Valley as a result, the Muscogee kept the fertile and highly sought-after Oconee valley.

According to Steven Scurry, a local Athens historian and a co-author of the December 2023 CICR paper, many Georgians felt entitled to land after defeating the British in the Revolutionary War.

"The colonials ... viewed Native Americans as nominally allies of the British, so their thinking along these lines is that when we defeated the British, we defeated their allies," Scurry said. "The Native Americans didn't take that view. They saw themselves defending their own interests during what they experienced as a civil war between southern loyalists and southern patriots."

Scurry and Laura German, a professor of anthropology at UGA and a co-author of the CICR paper, highlighted how many Native American cultures have connections of belonging and kinship with their land.

"We don't own the land. We are not from the land. We are of the land," German said, describing how this relationship differs from Western ideas of property and ownership. "Their whole identity is wrapped up in one place."



Milledge Hall at the University of Georgia in Athens, Georgia on Monday, March 30, 2026. PHOTO/EVAN FRILINGOS

The 40,000 acres of Muscogee land — that was leased and sold to fund the creation of UGA — were spread across plots located "all over," including counties in Georgia and South Carolina, according to Scurry.

Scurry and German said the lease and sale of that land inspired the land-grant university model that existed before the Morrill Act.

"[It was] a prototype that would be adopted by or used in the Morrill Act," Scurry said.

### A Muscogee loss: The founding of UGA

Following the Revolutionary War, Georgia elites wanted to establish a university to educate the next generation, so Abraham Baldwin crafted a plan to develop UGA.

William Few Jr., a founding member of the Board of Trustees alongside Baldwin, obtained 9,000 acres of Oconee land where the old university and downtown Athens are now located.

Due to the Oconee War — a border war between Georgia and the Muscogee — university construction and operations were delayed until 1801.

In 1790, the federal Treaty of New York outlined a border between Georgia and Muscogee land and recognized Muscogee sovereignty over territories west of the Oconee River. Following that treaty, the Muscogee delegation gave up Oconee River forks.

This loss devastated the Muscogee. "[The Muscogee] described it as having their hearts torn from them and thrown away. So there was something singular about the Oconee Valley that was almost reverential for the Native Americans," Scurry said. "It wasn't real estate, so part of the story here is how land became real estate."

After the Oconee border was surveyed according to the 1790 New York Treaty, a Board of Trustees committee selected 633 acres of former Muscogee land as the site of the university.

### A history of dispossession

Many Board of Trustees members, including Baldwin, John Milledge and James Jackson, represented Georgia in negotiations leading to a deal to remove Native Americans from Georgia after UGA's founding. In the Compact of 1802, Georgia traded its claim to lands west of the Mississippi and Alabama in exchange for the federal government eliminating Native Americans' claims to land within Georgia's borders.

"[The Compact of 1802] added a provision ... that Georgia was going to finally relinquish what it could never actualize. You see the maps: Georgia goes to the Mississippi. Never a reality. That was Native American country," Scurry said. "Georgia surrendered its claim to territory west of the Chattahoochee River ... it's what Georgia looks like today, more or less."

As a result of the Compact of 1802, around 5,000 Cherokees migrated west as increasing land speculation led to the dispossession of Muscogee and Cherokee families in Georgia.

Other Board of Trustees members promoted forcibly taking land from Native Americans in other ways as well. As Georgia governor, Peter Early raised 2,000 troops to protect commissioners marking Muscogee land cession boundaries in 1814 and actively supported Andrew Jackson's federal campaign against the Muscogee, which forced them to give up 22 million acres of land. Wilson Lumpkin, a Georgia state representative who served on the House Committee on Indian Affairs, helped pass Jackson's 1830 "Indian Removal Act."

### Community impact

Due to the "land-grant mission," many land-grant universities engage in community outreach programs to impact the local communities and states they serve.

Jason Gordon, an associate professor of community forestry in the Warnell School of Forestry and Natural Resources at UGA, described "three columns" of the mission of land-grant universities: conducting research or creating "new knowledge," educating young resident students and outreach: transferring knowledge to non-resident students across the state.

"It is a system that is designed to integrate new knowledge ... with ways of extending that knowledge, getting that knowledge out to the population that benefits society," Gordon said.

Describing it as "uniquely American," Gordon said the land-grant university system has effectively carried out this mission.

"I've worked a lot internationally, and I believe there's no other system that has been as successful and beneficial in terms of those goals [as] our land-grant system has been in this country," Gordon said.

Gordon said that UGA's state-mandated land-grant mission supports an extensive outreach program and fosters a direct link to Georgia communities, allowing the university to receive feedback on which issues need further research.

An example is the UGA Cooperative Extension, which spreads research and knowledge to residents around the state through extension offices that house personnel in all 159 counties, supporting Georgia's agricultural and economic wellbeing.

The national Cooperative Extension Service, established in 1914, expanded land-grant outreach programs to educate rural Americans about new agricultural practices and technologies.

“ [The Muscogee] described [land removal] as having their hearts torn from them and thrown away.”

STEVEN SCURRY | LOCAL ATHENS HISTORIAN

Gordon also emphasized how the land-grant mission allowed UGA to expand research across the state. UGA's Tifton campus helps do research on coastal plain agriculture to address the needs of residents in south Georgia.

### A lack of formal acknowledgment

UGA administration has not issued a formal land acknowledgment, nor do they require specific colleges or departments to issue one.

But, various UGA colleges and departments have acknowledged the university's land history. The Institute of Native American Studies (INAS) developed a land acknowledgment with the help of the Tribal Historic Preservation Offices of the Muscogee Nation of Oklahoma and the Eastern Band of Cherokee, according to James Owen, the assistant director of INAS.

"The University of Georgia is located on the traditional, ancestral territory of Muskogean speaking and Cherokee peoples, as well as other Native communities who were forcibly removed from these lands. The lands occupied by the University throughout the state of Georgia were places used since time immemorial by Indigenous people to sustain their culture and legacy of lived relationships, stewardship, ceremony and resistance," the acknowledgement reads. "We respect, honor and recognize these Native peoples as the original caretakers, who continue to thrive and to sustain sacred connections to their ancestral lands and waters."

SEE BEFORE UGA PAGE B3



A street sign on S. Lumpkin St. in Athens, Georgia on Wednesday, April 1, 2026. PHOTO/EVAN FRILINGOS

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Dave Martin and Lexi Torres address the crowd during Hendershot's All Day Fest in Athens, Georgia, on Tuesday, March 31, 2026. The event was a farewell to Hendershot's owner Seth Hendershot after he decided to sell the business. PHOTO/KATHERINE DAVIS

## “A storybook ending” Hendershot's remains open with ownership change

Alexia Rule

Seth Hendershot went on a walk with his wife Jennifer Hendershot in November 2025 to consider their future and whether or not his 15-year-old business venture still fit into it. For the first time in his life, he felt burnt out. His immediate thought was to close his locally-beloved coffee shop, Hendershot's, by the end of the year.

Hendershot said he decided to pursue his real estate license so he could step away from Hendershot's and support his wife's endeavors, as well as have more free time to play music.

When Hendershot's official Instagram announced that they would be closing, Hendershot said he immediately received calls from seven people interested in buying the business, an experience he described as “overwhelming and lovely.”

That same night, a long-time friend, Dave Martin, approached him about buying Hendershot's with his partner Lexi Torres. After the three of them met for lunch, the decision was made within days.

“It's the best possible outcome. I could have never imagined it working out so well,” Hendershot said. “I'll be able to

leave this place in great hands ... All the stars are lining up.”

The new owners plan to introduce matinees, jazz camps, menu translations, educational opportunities, interior design updates and an already established coffee club subscription. Meanwhile, Hendershot's will continue hosting jazz jams, collaborating on products and retaining the trademark name as the store moves forward under new ownership.

Martin shared that Hendershot's is easily his favorite place in Athens and that owning a community-centered small business in a city where he has spent many years “made sense in so many ways.”

“We want to be here for the community the way Hendershot's always has been,” Martin said.

The entire staff, Hendershot said, was overjoyed when invited to stay on the team. Martin said he has long-standing, organic relationships with them because he's always been around the shop, along with performing in Hendershot's take on “The Rocky Horror Picture Show” in October 2025.

He remembers the “profound musical experience” he felt after hearing Hendershot's band, Good Grief Trio, play live in 2024 following the loss of his stepfather. He aims to honor him with this new venture as another small business leader.

“That's really when I just became head over heels, enam-

ored with Hendershot's,” Martin said.

Originally from Atlanta, Torres built over a decade-long career in technology on the West Coast before returning to Georgia during the pandemic, where she now runs two creative community spaces: Land Family Home in Monroe, Georgia, and her new acquisition: Hendershot's.

“Hendershot's is a bright light,” Torres said. “You can feel it in the community here. It gives people hope. It makes people feel connected. It reminds us that art is resistance and it can change the world for the best.”

As Hendershot steps away and the new owners take over, he expressed the joy he felt in the transition to a team that works closely and well together. He reflected on this adventure as at times humbling, but with every experience and relationship built around the business contributing to his life.

“I'll look back on my life later on, when I'm an old man, and I think I'll feel enriched,” Hendershot said. “I did have an amazing run and I was able to help other people have good runs as well.”

Hendershot's remains open on Prince Avenue and according to the founder himself, “will live on in this community for years and years to come.”

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BEFORE UGA FROM PAGE B1

Owen says that while land acknowledgements are important, taking tangible action to support Native American communities are also necessary.

"I believe the heart of the issue lies in the reality that without programs supporting Native American students and communities which would back up the intention of a land acknowledgement, it is nothing more than words," Owen said in a statement to The Red & Black. "Effective support programs take time, awareness, education and collaboration."

According to Owen, INAS offers training for the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA), which ensures the protection and return of Native American ancestral human remains and artifacts. UGA is one of a small handful of public university programs that offer this.

"UGA's NAGPRA committee and Archaeology team are leaders in the Southeast and U.S. in terms of repatriation and collaborative efforts — which also support our land acknowledgement as more than just words," Owen said in the statement.

UGA also offers presidential in-state tuition waivers for tribal citizen students, giving in-state tuition to students who are federally recognized members of the Cherokee and Muscogee tribes, specifically those from Oklahoma, North Carolina and Alabama. INAS secured this in coordination with UGA's President's Office, according to Owen.

UGArden, a student community farm that is part of the Office of Sustainability, has also published an official land acknowledgement.

Wright says that UGA's lack of a formal land acknowledgement is "disheartening."

"[Native American removal] is a fact that could be acknowledged more instead of being cleared away," Wright said. "Just kind of acknowledging that native students, Indigenous students and the people that they had removed made the school very much a possible reality for other students on campus."

Wright said that the lack of acknowledgement of Native American dispossession is normal in her day-to-day life.

"It is sad that a lot of what these Indigenous tribes had to go through has built a lot of what we have now," Wright said. "It's sad because it feels like almost a burden. I have had to explain to a lot of people a lot of this information."

UGA's campus is home to various monuments dedicated to its original founders, many of whom have ties to Native American dispossession, like the statue of Abraham Baldwin that sits in UGA's North Campus.

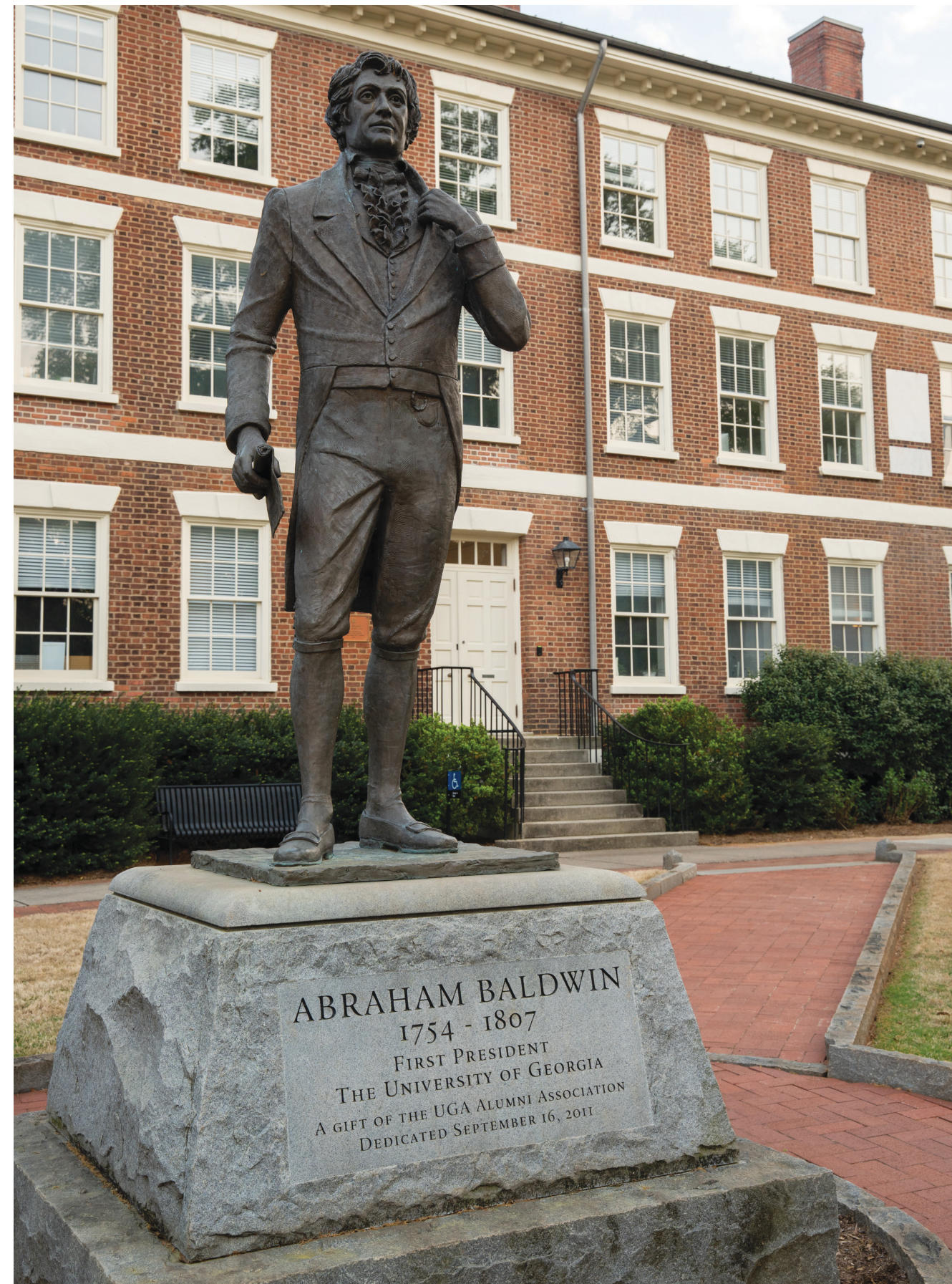
But UGA is also home to the Native American Student Association (NASA), which aims to foster community among Indigenous students and allies. NASA supports the land acknowledgement developed by INAS.

"We work hand-in-hand with INAS and their statement represents our sentiments," NASA said in a message to The Red & Black.

According to Banerjee, many land-grant universities have not done enough to acknowledge how they acquired land.

Banerjee argues that the first step toward acknowledgement is trust. Universities with troubling histories like UGA can begin enhancing public trust through honest self-examination, he said.

"One way to enhance trust is to show people, the public and public authorities that we can tell the truth about ourselves if we are to call ourselves truth-seeking institutions," Banerjee said. "I think that we ought to be able to turn that investigatory, truth-seeking lens, spirit, ethos on ourselves, and we ought to be able to look into these matters, even if they might raise troubling questions."



A statue of Abraham Baldwin sits in front of Old College Building at the University of Georgia campus in Athens, Georgia on Monday, March 30, 2026. Baldwin was the university's first president. PHOTO/EVAN FRILINGOS

# Rec Room Books

## Where vintage charm meets modern reads

Cara Eldridge

Rec Room Books opened in downtown Athens on Jan. 30, bringing a bookstore stacked with new and used books to the area. The store sits underneath Jittery Joe's Coffee at 297 1/2 E. Broad St.

Since opening day, the shop has had consistent foot traffic despite its minimal advertising, co-owner of Rec Room Books Ian McCord said. Currently, the signage consists of one chalk board outside its front steps, making Rec Room Books a hidden gem.

"There's big shoes to fill, as far as just a downtown bookstore goes," McCord said.

Rec Room Books sells approximately half new books ranging from popular, trendy reads to local independently published books and half used books, oftentimes given by customers who drop them off for used book credit.

"I really wanted to have full price, new, hard-to-find books mixed in with affordable classics," McCord said.

The new and used books are intermixed seamlessly on the shelves; a penciled-in marking differentiating the used books from those that are currently untouched.

McCord thinks it's best to sell not only under-the-radar independent press books, but also to be able to sell affordable, used books to students and adults experiencing financial strain, especially in a college town.

"You can't compete with the box stores being an independent store, but you have the choice to sell stuff that they don't," McCord said.

So far, Rec Room Books has been a hit, McCord said. Opening day was packed full, and sales have stayed consistent.

"I am noticing every week a little bit more at the end of day, sales getting bigger and bigger and bigger," McCord said.

Almost every book they opened the store with has been sold and replaced.

"Weekly, I've been rushing to refill the shelves, which is not what I expected," McCord said. "That's not a complaint, but it has kept me on my toes."

**“You can't compete with the box stores being an independent store, but you have the choice to sell stuff that they don't.”**

IAN MCCORD | CO-OWNER OF REC ROOM BOOKS

New books arrive daily: either stacks of used books or shipments directly from publishers.

"A lot of the independent publishers are looking out for independent booksellers because they know that they're the ones that are pushing, fighting the good fight for them," McCord said.

The owners value supporting local authors and businesses. They've hosted book readings and flash poetry in addition to collaborations like Athletic Brewing Company literary trivia. The community-driven approach is a reflection of McCord's Athens roots.

McCord moved to Athens in the late '90s and embraced the local music and social scene.

"I have this penchant for dives, like dive bars and house parties and house shows," McCord said.

Rec Room Book's location was previously the smoking area for Espresso Royale Caffe. McCord knew it as a "hipster" spot.

"I've loved the weirdness of the brick layout," McCord said. "It kinda makes no sense, it all goes halfway up the wall through both rooms."

David Parajon, the owner of restaurant The World Famous, is the other co-owner and a passionate reader. Parajon saw the building opening and said he thought there needed to be a bookstore downtown.

They quickly reached out and were able to turn the place into their own in just a few months.

"A night before he called me, I was not planning on opening a bookstore," McCord said. "It was kind of thrown together really quickly, and that's part of the fun of how it adds to the quirkiness."

The underground book shop is uniquely lit by antique lamps including an overhead globe light, and decorated with various paintings and prints, a colorful clock and quirky bookstoppers like a broken space heater.

"I think it kind of captures Athens as a whole. There's a lot of rustic buildings here," customer and sophomore University

of Georgia student Asritha Pallaki said.

The entire place looks like a '70s or '80s home basement or "recreation room," hence where the shop acquired its name.

The name 'Rec Room' is a double entendre; it signifies its look as a vintage "rec" room and the act of recommending books.

McCord and Mikey LaFave, another book seller at Rec Room Books, stick little pieces of paper with a short message to allure the readers, which they call "shelf talkers."

The store is divided into labeled genre sections. The most popular are the fantasy, horror and romance sections. Other shelves include cookbooks, theater, romantasy and a children's section.

While it is almost exclusively a bookstore, they offer greeting cards to go with books and "Very Good Puzzle," a local company that uses mostly Athenian artists to create 100 to 1000 piece puzzles.

McCord hopes Rec Room Books is inviting and an exciting "secret little find" downtown even in a fast-paced digital time in the world.

"The amount of positive energy that's been coming in the doors, and then also positive energy that has just been leaving with stacks of books, or even people that didn't find a book ... just kind of relieved everything," McCord said. "It's been a very, very positive experience so far."



Ian McCord, owner of Rec Room Books, poses for a portrait at Rec Room Books in downtown Athens, Georgia, on Wednesday, April 1, 2026. PHOTO/ANSLEY KELLY

## Georgia's steady table-setter Ryan Black embraces final run

Romell Williams

There's a calm that comes with experience, a rhythm only time can teach. For senior second baseman Ryan Black, that rhythm has finally slowed the game down.

After transferring from UT-Arlington ahead of the 2025 season, Black enters his second and final year with Georgia baseball not trying to do too much.

"I mean, going into my fourth year of things, it's kind of just really slowing everything down," Black said. "I've been through it before, just coming here, being in this great environment, it really slows everything down for me."

Through the Florida series, Black owns a .441 on-base percentage and .564 slugging percentage with six home runs and 17 RBIs, production that reflects his role at the top of Georgia's lineup as much as his ability to drive the ball.

For Black, success starts long before contact.

"I know my role is to get on base," he said. "That goes into swinging at the right pitches, taking balls, swinging at strikes

and just sticking with my plan."

His approach is built on discipline at the plate, as Black has drawn 23 walks this season, consistently working deep counts and forcing opposing pitchers to show their full arsenal early in games.

Black's leadership style isn't loud. It doesn't come with constant chatter or emotional speeches. Instead, it's rooted in consistency.

"Leadership for me is really just going out there and doing it by example," Black said. "I just like to let my actions speak."

That approach has resonated inside a Georgia clubhouse that has leaned on experience throughout the season. Head coach Wes Johnson has seen the difference firsthand, especially after a 2025 season where injuries limited Black's consistency.

"He's gonna play," Johnson said earlier this season. "He was up and down last year, but I thought his at-bats had been really good, and that's what we expected to see from him."

Now healthy, Black has become a stabilizing force at the top of the lineup — a player whose value isn't always measured by power numbers, but by presence.

Few players embody Georgia's offensive identity quite like Black. In a lineup filled with power hitters, his job is to set the tone and extend innings.

Junior third baseman Tre Phelps sees that impact every game.

"A great table setter," Phelps said. "He's always on base, always in deep counts, always finding a way to have a great at-bat."

That ability to grind through plate appearances doesn't just benefit Black, it fuels the hitters behind him.

"When he gets on, we know what we can do," Phelps said. "He's just a dynamic guy on both sides of the ball."

Black's versatility extends beyond the batter's box. While primarily a second baseman, he's capable of moving across the field when needed, a trait that highlights both his athleticism and baseball IQ.

Defensively, Black prides himself on simplicity.

"[It's] really just [about] getting outs," Black said. "Not getting too sped up, knowing who my runners are, how hard the ball's hit and just processing it that way."

It's a mindset built on awareness, understanding game situations and reacting immediately. Whether it's turning a double play or adjusting his timing based on a runner's speed, Black's reliability has made him a key piece of Georgia's infield.

For Black, 2026 isn't just another season, it's the last chapter of his college career. And with that comes urgency, as Georgia has narrowly missed a trip to the College World Series in Omaha, Nebraska two years in a row.

"I just want to continue to win," he said. "I'll be playing every game like it's my last."

That mentality mirrors the identity of a Georgia team that, in Black's words, is "pretty scary." A combination of power at the plate and strength on the mound has made the Bulldogs a contender. But for Black, it always comes back to one thing: competing.

As the season pushes forward, Black's focus remains simple: win every pitch, every at-bat, every moment. Because for a veteran who has seen the game from every angle, there's only one goal left.

"Just win everything."



Georgia junior Ryan Black (2) prepares for the pitch during a baseball game between Georgia and Oklahoma at Hoover Metropolitan Stadium in Hoover, Alabama, on Wednesday May 21, 2025. Oklahoma won 3-2. PHOTO/MADY MERTENS



Georgia junior Ryan Black (2) tosses his bat during a game between Georgia and Texas A&M at Foley Field in Athens, Georgia, on Saturday May 17, 2025. Georgia won 7-5. PHOTO/MADY MERTENS



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## Highlights from the Spring 2026 FDSA Fashion Show



PHOTO CREDIT: EVAN FRILINGOS (1, 2, 3, 6, 8), AMELIA DURDEN (4, 5, 7)



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## OPINION The College Square redesign project

### Investment in local infrastructure strengthens community

Mattea Brown

For centuries, town squares have been essential to city life. They provide a space for communities to gather, share public opinion and support local businesses. However, since the settling of Athens in 1801, the city has lacked this central feature — until the College Square Redesign project.

David Lynn, director of planning and outreach for the Athens Downtown Development Authority (ADDA), explained that the redesign project dates back to the 1970s, when city leaders wanted to reshape this two-way intersection to attract more downtown business due to competition with the Georgia Square Mall. However, because Athens is built on a hill and buildings are compact, the opportunity to invest in greenspace proved to be a challenge. These plans did not fully come into fruition until the space was temporarily closed during COVID-19 pandemic in 2020.

“The [ADDA] was aggressive to change that environment to make it look more like a plaza. We took our ideas to the commission with a novel funding idea,” Lynn said. “Instead of the typical capital project being funded from the general fund, we offered to pay it out of a portion of parking revenue.”

Town square areas set themselves apart from the common strip mall for their walkability and for being a place for local business, inviting both residents and students, becoming a “handshake” between a university and downtown life.

“Prior to the construction starting, we began a public engagement process, not only with the county commission, but targeted stakeholders and the general public,” Lynn said. “We met with the merchants on College Square, along with university folk and the general public.”

Especially during the school semester, the student population drives the downtown economy. According to Lynn, nearly 10,000 students live downtown, but economic vitality does not rely solely on the students. The College Square would also attract tourism, especially during football season. When a significant amount of the student population leaves during the summer, downtown Athens hosts events like AthFest to invite a space for residents and students alike to support local businesses, artists and musicians.

“We’re trying to make downtown an attractive and economic as well as social district,” Lynn said.

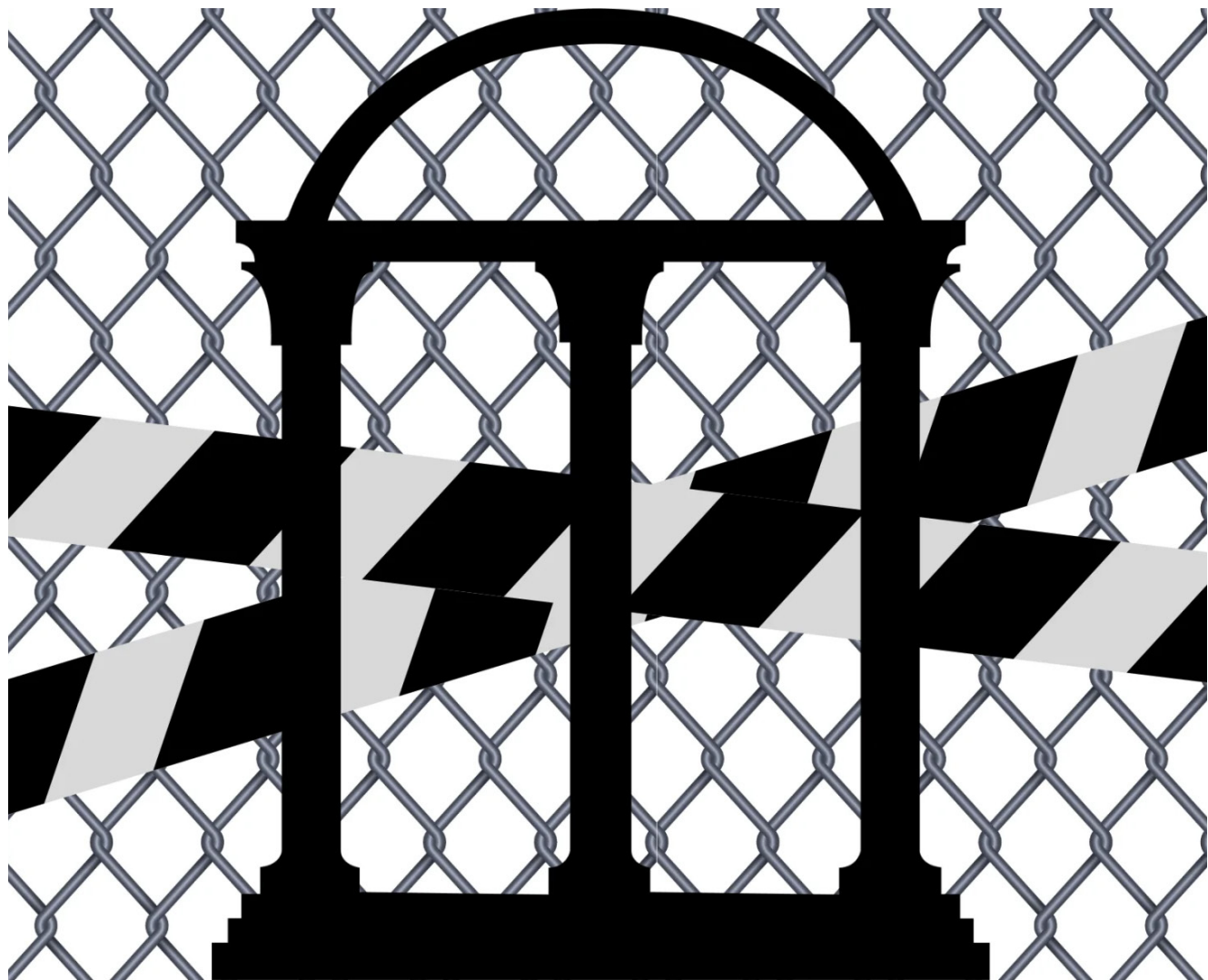
With any infrastructural upgrade to an area comes a rise in prices for the surrounding areas. If the project proves to be a success by drawing in more people, then commercial areas become more valuable. This could lead to concerns about gentrification since improving spaces can push out current lower-income inhabitants.

Richard Martin, an associate professor of real estate at the University of Georgia, focuses on analyzing the trends of gentrification over time. Martin sees the project more as impacting commercial gentrification rather than residential, but he does not expect there to be a huge impact.

“The residential [population] there are students, so you’re not dealing with non-students who live downtown,” Martin said.

According to Martin, investing in central city revitalization versus investing in other areas of inequality are contributions to different areas of investment. The consistent challenge that Athens-Clark County faces is finding a way to meet the needs of students and residents while creating long-term spaces that are not just practical but also aesthetic.

“You’re not going to make the in-town neighborhoods affordable,” Martin said. “That ship has sailed. That affordable housing is going to be away from the center. I would



GRAPHIC/RYLEE TOOLE

prefer a strong center; it keeps the city compact and less [suburban] sprawl. But that battle needed to be fought 50 years ago.”

There will always be sections of the city that are more or less affordable than others, but investing in a project that improves the flow of traffic can create a sense of interconnectedness. The city becomes not just a place of necessity where residents buy groceries or occasionally go out to eat, but a place where citizens would rather be to socialize, work a part-time job or engage in cultural events.

The benefits of aesthetic investment are endless. According to the broken windows theory, well-maintained areas can lead to social cohesion, reducing crime. Investments into murals and gardens can provide spaces that can be used for educational opportunities. Enhancing the flow of the city also leads to a more sustainable environment, encouraging people to walk or bike instead of driving.

The College Square redesign is a step toward creating more ‘utopian’ spaces in Athens and the surrounding area. These are spaces I have recognized as prioritizing walkability, sustainability, and economic growth. Wire Park, in Watkinsville, Georgia, is one of the best examples, reshaping an old industrial into a place for local business, including adding the li-

brary, building apartments in that area and providing walking trails. The abandoned clock factory, Westclox, seems to be yearning for the same vision, although the project currently lacks momentum.

Cities looking to invest in their own beautification projects should follow the example of responsibly allocating funds, promoting sustainability and participating in a process that balances public and stakeholder input. Policy-makers should continue to prioritize infrastructure that connects both affordable and high-value areas. Beautification should not be seen as an excessive investment, but rather a choice that supplements solving other issues like crime and improving quality of life in more ways than just one.

And who else invested more in beautiful infrastructure than ancient cities like Athens, Greece, after which our city is named? In this way, the ancients prioritized the same things which we should value: recognizing that beauty, as well as truth and goodness, promote a more just society. After all, if you want to know more about a city, look not at what they say about themselves, but what they create.

Mattea Brown, sophomore journalism and classics double major



GRAPHIC/JACK HESPRICH

## OPINION “Looksmaxxing” trend displays how obsession with appearance is seeping further into society

Josephine Thomas

If you’re active on social media, you’ve probably had the term “looksmaxxing,” come across your feed. Looksmaxxing, a term that has roots in the involuntary celibate, or “incel,” community, is related to maximizing one’s appearance, or becoming as attractive as one can. It is guided by specific ideal measurements of physical appearance and anatomy, attempting to achieve specific measures of attractiveness. Methods can range from simply adopting a new skincare regimen to more extreme practices like injecting unregulated substances into one’s body.

Stumbling upon this content, you may be intrigued, frightened or just downright confused. This phenomenon invites further engagement — it is a rabbit hole of concepts and practices that have brought an avalanche of controversy. But why are these extreme appearance standards only now gaining notoriety when the lens of obsession has been moved towards men?

We as a society, particularly the younger cohorts, have long shown an investment in retaining and adjusting our appearances. As a preteen, teenager and young adult, I have noticed how much of myself and my female peers’ attention is focused on critiquing our own appearances. This began to manifest as a relatively normal interest in finding hairstyles, makeup routines and wardrobes that best suited our individual appearances

and preferences. Yet, over time, even when a satisfactory appearance is achieved, many women still do not feel completely confident. For many of us in modern society, there is a deeply instilled idea that perfection, while impossible, is something to be sought — even though you will inevitably fall short, you should still attempt to get as close as possible.

Actions such as sleeping in waist trainers, undergoing plastic surgery and engaging with pages that encourage becoming as thin as possible through unhealthy methods, such as ones found on “Skinny-Tok,” have become dominant sectors of social media. These extreme measures have since been commodified as a trend. The fact that medical procedures can become trends is indicative of a society deeply sick with an appearance-based obsession. Now, the normalization of extreme appearance enhancers has further permeated the gender divide, as shown by the growth of the looksmaxxing community.

Men are being subjected in greater numbers to a normalization of obsessive practices aimed to improve appearance mirroring ones pushed upon women for years. The looksmaxxing community’s recent and swift shift from subculture to mainstream exposure displays that standards for men’s appearance, fueled in part by toxic masculinity, are radically and rapidly changing. This seeps subtly into mainstream culture in the form of non-invasive techniques like “mewing,” then began to accelerate in intensity as looksmaxxing influencers, such as Braden Peters, more widely known as Clavicular, began to build

platforms surrounding the issue. Now, obsessive destructive standards not only just exist for men and women — they are becoming rapidly normalized. So, when did we start to go too far?

Humanity’s continuously growing obsession with appearance is indicative of a greater desire for control, an overconsumption of social media and an attempt to maximize personal circumstances.

Feeling a lack of control can feed into stress and overwhelm people, a feeling that is all too common among teenagers and young adults. Young adults are reporting higher stress levels, and social media has become a common means of escape. This allows individuals to have a higher chance of not only engaging with content that makes them feel insecure about their appearance, but also stumbling upon ways to cope and “improve” one’s own looks.

It is not inherently unhealthy to care about your appearance. I believe that this is a natural effect of being a human with awareness of and control over your own presentation. However, it is crucial to stop before conflating awareness with insecurity; routine with obsession; self-care with looksmaxxing. Being too invested in altering your appearance can permanently damage your body and contribute to further dysmorphia.

Josephine Thomas, sophomore journalism major

## VOCES ESTUDIANTILES

### Estudiantes latinos de UGA discuten los temas más importantes al votar

Matthew Carr, Traducción: Nathan Valles

Mientras los candidatos demócratas y republicanos en todo Georgia continúan compitiendo por el apoyo popular de cara a una temporada de elecciones de medio término crucial y polémica, los márgenes de éxito se han vuelto cada vez más estrechos. Es probable que el éxito dependa de qué candidatos puedan hablar de manera más auténtica sobre los temas que afectan a los principales grupos de ciudadanos. La comunidad latinoamericana en Estados Unidos es uno de los grupos de votantes más grandes e influyentes del país, y su apoyo será fundamental para asegurar la victoria electoral en estados clave como Georgia.

Con esfuerzos de deportación sin precedentes, una mayor participación de Estados Unidos en países de América Latina y una retórica divisiva en torno a la comunidad latina, hay múltiples temas que sin duda influirán en cómo voten los ciudadanos latinos en noviembre.

The Red & Black preguntó a estudiantes latinos qué temas eran más importantes para ellos al votar y cómo los candidatos pueden involucrarse con la comunidad.

Visit [redandblack.com](http://redandblack.com) for the English version of this article and for more Spanish translated journalism.

#### Luciano Lira Ruiz

**ESTUDIANTE DE SEGUNDO AÑO DE ECONOMÍA**

“[Es importante que los candidatos] tengan en cuenta las diferentes circunstancias que presenta la comunidad latina cuando se trata de cosas como el estatus migratorio y la situación económica, y asegurarse de que no estén pasando por alto esas luchas latinas”, dijo Lira Ruiz. “Así que simplemente tener eso en cuenta y luego realmente escuchar a la comunidad”.



#### Ana Valencia

**ESTUDIANTE DE ÚLTIMO AÑO DE CIENCIAS POLÍTICAS Y ASUNTOS INTERNACIONALES**

“Siento que no hay suficiente interés [por parte de los candidatos] en acercarse a los votantes latinos más allá de lo superficial”, dijo Valencia. “Creo que es importante tener un acercamiento directo a la comunidad, hablar nuestro idioma y también tener una comprensión cultural de cómo funcionamos como personas”.



#### Jacky Branca Galicia

**ESTUDIANTE DE SEGUNDO AÑO DE ECONOMÍA**

“[Busco] a alguien que se preocupe por los derechos humanos morales de todas las personas, especialmente de los inmigrantes”, dijo Branca Galicia. “Hacer que la educación y el voto sean accesibles para quienes tal vez no escuchan tanto sobre ello”.



#### Piero Iturrizaga

**ESTUDIANTE DE TERCER AÑO DE ECONOMÍA**

“Es importante investigar a un candidato y buscar a alguien que, al hablar, lo haga con inspiración y con políticas en mente, en lugar de alguien que minimice las cosas y tenga otras intenciones con sus palabras”, dijo Iturrizaga. “Mientras los candidatos puedan representar bien a los latinos y tengan en cuenta principios latinos, como la familia y la cultura, creo que un candidato que haga eso sería excelente”.



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