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Thursday, May 7, 2026

GLORY GLORY GLORY GLORY



A graduation cap is laid on the ground in front of the Arch at the University of Georgia on Monday, May 4, 2026, in Athens, Georgia. PHOTO/KALEB TATUM

NOTES TO NAILED IT

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Preparing for UGA spring 2026 graduation

Everything you need to know

Caroline Feagin

Caps, gowns and hundreds of crying parents will soon fill Sanford Stadium and Stegeman Coliseum as graduate and undergraduate students prepare for the spring 2026 commencement ceremonies, marking the end of their time at the University of Georgia and the beginning of a new chapter in their lives.

The Red & Black has compiled information on UGA's spring 2026 undergraduate and graduate ceremonies, including location, parking, times and more.

When and where is graduation?

The undergraduate commencement ceremony will take place Friday, May 8, at Sanford Stadium. The ceremony will begin at 7:30 p.m., with graduates encouraged to arrive by 6:45 p.m. and doors opening at 5:30 p.m. Guests can enter through gates 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 9, while graduates will enter through gate 10. Tickets are required for all graduates to sit on the field at the ceremony, but are not required for guests to attend.

The graduate ceremony will take place Thursday, May 7, at Stegeman Coliseum. For master's and specialist degree students, the ceremony will begin at 10 a.m., with doors opening at 8 a.m. For doctoral students, the ceremony will begin at 2:30 p.m., with doors opening at 1:30 p.m.

Clear bag policies are in effect for both the undergraduate and graduate ceremonies.

Where do I park?

Parking for both ceremonies is free and available on a first-come, first-serve basis.

For undergraduate commencement, suggested parking areas are Hull Deck (W05), South Campus Deck (S11), East Campus Deck (E04) and the Performing Arts Center Deck (E20). For the graduate commencement, suggested parking areas include South Campus Deck (S11), Carlton Street Deck (S15) and Foley Field Lot (S14).

Tate Center Deck and lot E12 are reserved for designated participants in the undergraduate commencement ceremony. Similarly, McPhaul Lot (S10) and Coverdell Lot (S16) are reserved for designated participants in the graduate ceremony.

What items can I bring?

For both ceremonies, attendees are permitted to bring bags that are clear plastic, vinyl or PVC and do not exceed 12" x 6" x 12", one-gallon clear plastic freezer bags, small clutch bags that do not exceed 4.5" x 6.5" and diaper bags following clear bag policy rules. Bags that contain necessary medical items must be inspected or approved at a designated gate.

Attendees may also bring food that fits inside the permitted-sized bags, beverages in sealed plastic bottles, umbrellas, cameras, video recorders and strollers.

Backpacks; diaper bags; wrapped gifts or packages where the contents are not visible; alcohol; glass and aluminum containers; tobacco; large items such as banners and balloons; and amplification equipment, like bullhorns or megaphones, are prohibited from both ceremonies.

Where do I sit?

Undergraduate students will sit on the field. Only those with wristbands — which can be obtained after scanning your ticket — will be allowed to sit on the field.

Graduate students will be seated by degree, with doctoral students sitting in the doctoral graduate section with their hooding professors. Seating charts will be available one week before commencement.

Who are the speakers?

DJ Shockley, former Georgia and Atlanta Falcons quarterback, will deliver UGA's spring undergraduate commencement address. Blake Witmer, a senior public relations major, will deliver the student address.

Meg Amstutz, dean of the Jere W. Morehead Honors College, will deliver the address at the graduate ceremony.

What are the keepsakes?

Digital programs will be available for both ceremonies with lists of graduating students and summary programs will be handed out featuring the order of events. Printed copies of the full commencement program for undergraduates and graduates can be requested on a Google Form found on the UGA's Commencement website.

Diploma frames can be purchased from the UGA Bookstore and online from Jostens.

Where do I get my diploma?

Students will be issued printed diplomas through mail to their provided address and an electronic diploma through their UGA email account. These will be sent out approximately eight to 10 weeks after graduation.

What are the disability accommodations?

For the undergraduate ceremony, parking for guests with disabilities is available at the East Campus Deck (E04), where an ADA accessible shuttle is available to transport guests to the stadium. Drop-offs are not allowed near the stadium. For the graduate ceremony, parking is available in the Hoke Smith Annex lot (S12) next to Stegeman Coliseum.

Wheelchair-accessible seating for the undergraduate ceremony can be reserved online. Limited mobility seating is available in the first few rows of 100-level sections. There are no reservations for disability seating for the graduate ceremony, and wheelchair seating will be on a first-come, first-serve basis located along the top row of the lower level

of Stegeman.

Captioning will be available at both ceremonies. Attendees are encouraged to bring their own wheelchair, as on-site wheelchairs are not available for either ceremony.

The undergraduate ceremony will be broadcast live on YouTube on UGA's Commencement homepage.

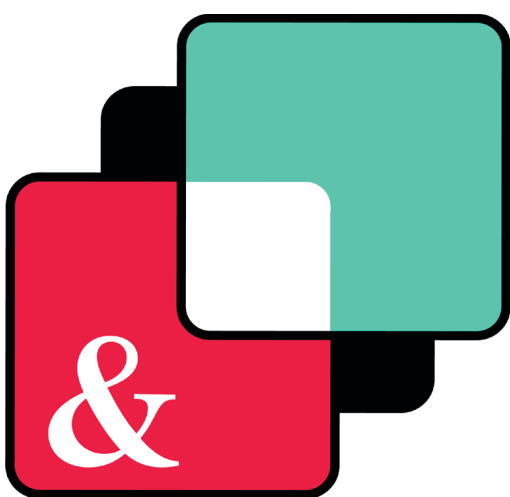


A student turns her tassel during the University of Georgia's Spring 2025 Commencement ceremony on Friday, May 9, 2025, at Sanford Stadium in Athens, Georgia. PHOTO/LANEY MARTIN



Two students celebrate during the University of Georgia's Spring 2025 Commencement ceremony on Friday, May 9, 2025, at Sanford Stadium in Athens, Georgia. PHOTO/LANEY MARTIN

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UGA senior navigates motherhood

Emma Gladd

Being a college student is stressful regardless of outside obligations. Balancing schoolwork, employment and a social life can be difficult.

Alicia Jarvis, a senior management information systems major, manages these demands while also raising her 2-year-old daughter.

"It definitely took a period of accepting that fact that my life would change, but I knew it's a blessing," Jarvis said. "I knew it would change for the better and make me a better person."

Before Jarvis had her baby, she lived a "normal student life" and was heavily involved in campus organizations, including being president of the UGA Product Management Club.

"I was just really focused back then and just really locked in," Jarvis said.

After her daughter was born, she realized her priorities needed to change so she could organize her time around her baby.

"I just knew I have to set my priorities straight and just kind of lock in and start building my career. Not so much joining a bunch of random clubs and more so being very intentional about what I'm doing," Jarvis said. "Once you become a mom, it clicks for you, and then you just kind of change how you, I guess, go about life."

Jarvis works as a project management intern for the University of Georgia's Auxiliary Services, where she aims to work 20 hours a week. She enjoys getting to work on different projects, and, after graduation, will work full-time for Truist Bank in Atlanta as a leadership development program analyst.

"I'm very excited," Jarvis said. "This job has definitely

helped set me up for that job."

Every day can look different for Jarvis, but for several days of the week, she said she spends over nine hours working, attending class and commuting.

Jarvis' busy schedule keeps her away from her daughter for the majority of the day, making the time she gets to spend with her in the evening more meaningful.

"I think it's very important that we have that time together the rest of the day," Jarvis said. "Because, obviously, she deserves it. She deserves my time and presence and things like that. I try to include her in every way I can, so that we can

“Once you have your family’s support, you can really be your best self, be the best mom you can be.”

ALICIA JARVIS | UGA SENIOR

spend every moment of that time that I'm home together."

Along with managing her time for her daughter, coursework and job, Jarvis believes in the importance of self-care.

"I obviously think that it's also important to have that time for yourself," Jarvis said. "I try to manage my time well enough so that I am able to show up for my daughter and then also take care of myself at the same time."

Growing up, Jarvis danced competitively and for her high school, but took a break when the stress of college courses caught up with her. A while after her daughter was born, she had more free time to pursue dance again through classes at UGA.

"I found my love for dance again," Jarvis said. "It was really good for me mentally, physically, everything. It was just a self-care thing for me ... It helped me balance schoolwork and internship stuff and motherhood."

For Jarvis, having a support system behind her has been the most important thing in her journey. Her parents and her partner's parents have both been there for her as she navigates motherhood.

"Once you have your family's support, you can really be your best self, be the best mom you can be," Jarvis said. "You can achieve a lot of things that you can't achieve by raising your kid alone."

Her mother, Monica Jarvis, said she was initially worried for her daughter's future academic life and career.

"Our first reaction was concern about her studies and making sure that she wouldn't change her plans or her future and make sure that she was gonna be an independent person," Monica Jarvis said.

Jeff Jarvis, Alicia's father, said he is proud of her development as a mother and how she remained dedicated to her studies after giving birth to her daughter.

"Alicia was super strong, even going into [her] ninth month, I mean attending classes and really not using the pregnancy as an excuse at all," Jeff Jarvis said. "So afterward, I didn't have any concerns based on how she did going up until the delivery."

Alicia Jarvis said she takes pride in everything she has been able to achieve.

"I wouldn't have imagined I would have been able to do this before having a daughter," Alicia Jarvis said. "Having a daughter just gives you that motivation, that purpose, a drive, so it's just completely changed my life for the better."



Senior management information systems major Alicia Jarvis poses for a portrait in front of Snelling Dining Commons at the University of Georgia in Athens, Georgia, on Wednesday, April 15, 2026. From January 2025 to April 2026, Jarvis worked as a project management intern with UGA's Auxiliary Services. After graduation, Jarvis will work full-time for Truist Bank in Atlanta. PHOTO/LILY KATE AKINS



2-year-old Alena Romero Jarvis looks towards the camera while her mother, Alicia Jarvis, begins reading her a book at their home in Cumming, Georgia, on Saturday, April 25, 2026. In addition to reading, Alena enjoys playing with her cats, going to the park, dancing and playing kitchen. PHOTO/LILY KATE AKINS



Alicia Jarvis and her daughter, Alena Romero Jarvis, pose for a portrait at their home in Cumming, Georgia, on Saturday, April 25, 2026. Alicia, a senior management information systems major at the University of Georgia, became a mother in December of 2023. PHOTO/LILY KATE AKINS

'Hope for the future' Meet UGA's spring 2026 commencement speakers

Sophia Hou

The University of Georgia's spring 2026 graduation ceremonies will feature DJ Shockley, Blake Witmer and Meg Amstutz as speakers. The undergraduate ceremony will be on Friday, May 8 at 7:30 p.m. and the graduate ceremony will be on Thursday, May 7, with the master's and specialist's ceremony at 10 a.m. and the doctoral ceremony at 2:30 p.m.

DJ Shockley

Shockley, a football broadcaster and a former Georgia and Atlanta Falcons quarterback, will deliver the spring undergraduate commencement address.

Shockley, who led UGA to an SEC championship as starting quarterback in 2005, was named the Most Valuable Player (MVP) and the FCA Bobby Bowden Football Player of the Year. After graduating from UGA with a degree in speech communication and rhetoric, Shockley was drafted by the Falcons in 2006. The first Georgia player to be selected by the Falcons since 1994, Shockley played for the Falcons for four years.

Since retiring from professional football, Shockley has been a successful sports broadcaster as the sports director for Fox 5 in Atlanta, winning three Emmy awards and co-hosting various shows, including "Atlanta Falcons: Rise Up Weekly" and "Inside The Locker Room."

Shockley lives in Atlanta with his wife, Portia, and their two children. He is a supporter of the Fragile X Foundation, which promotes advocacy, research and treatment for Fragile X syndrome.

Blake Witmer

Witmer, a senior graduating in May with a bachelor's degree in public relations and a minor in studio art, will deliver the student address at the undergraduate ceremony.

Witmer said she feels honored to represent her classmates after being selected by UGA's Student Government Association (SGA).

"It's definitely still surreal," Witmer said. "I'm really excited to get to close the chapter for the class of 2026 ... I do feel a lot of responsibility to represent my class well, and I hope that they enjoy what I have to say."

While at UGA, Witmer has served as a UGA orientation leader, a New Student Orientation marketing intern and a Digital Dawg for UGA Marketing & Communications. She created and hosted the "Easily Entertained Podcast" and completed two public relations internships in New York.

Witmer described her involvement in First-Year Connect as one of her most impactful experiences at UGA. Connect is one of SGA's first-year programs designed to empower students through servant leadership and professional development. Witmer, who has served as a Connect peer leader and program director, expressed appreciation for the strong community she found through the program.

"The highlight of my college experience has been getting to form really genuine friendships that have turned into chosen family over my time here," Witmer said. "I don't know if there's a specific moment or memory, so much as it's just all the incredible people that I've been able to meet and the memories I've been able to make with them."

Leading up to graduation, Witmer reflected on her growth through challenges and successes during her time at UGA.

"I think the people that are the most successful at UGA are

the ones that put themselves out there, and the worst thing that can happen is that you fail, and you learn something from that too," Witmer said. "Don't be afraid to try and fail. No one's laughing at you, no one's worried about it as much as you are."

After graduation, Witmer intends to pursue a career in public relations and communications.

Meg Amstutz

Amstutz, dean of the Jere W. Morehead Honors College, will deliver the spring graduate commencement address.

Amstutz, who previously co-chaired UGA's Commencement Committee, said delivering her first commencement address is particularly meaningful.

"[Commencement] is the best day at the University of Georgia," Amstutz said. "It is just truly so special for the families — for the students themselves, obviously — but I really think it's a family day, and for me to be selected as the commencement speaker is something that I'm very honored to have received."

Amstutz highlighted the significance of a graduate education, expressing pride in students as they advance their work beyond the classroom.

"It takes drive and ambition to say, 'I'm going to seek a graduate degree, I'm going to spend the time and energy studying a subject in-depth that I'm passionate about,'" Amstutz said. "Every graduate student, whether they're pur-

suing a master's degree or a doctoral degree, has faced adversity along the way, and they've overcome that."

Amstutz graduated from Centre College with a bachelor's degree in English before receiving her master's and doctoral degrees in English and American Literature from Washington University.

Amstutz joined the University System of Georgia in 1997 and spent 16 years in UGA's Office of the President, including six as chief of staff. She later served as associate provost for academic programs and chief of staff in UGA's Office of the Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost before joining the Morehead Honors College in 2022.

In addition to managing daily operations at the honors college, Amstutz oversees the Center for Undergraduate Research Opportunities and the Foundation Fellowship, UGA's top academic scholarship. She holds the Jere W. Morehead Distinguished Professorship and has taken on several other roles and initiatives throughout her time at the university.

Looking ahead to commencement, Amstutz emphasized graduates' continued growth and potential as they leave UGA.

"I want them to take away confidence in the education that they've received, hope for the future, joy in having finished their degree and just an appreciation for lifelong learning," Amstutz said. "They will always be learning, no matter where they go or what they do."



Blake Witmer poses for a graduation photo in front of the Herty Field fountain at the University of Georgia in Athens, Georgia, on Friday, Nov. 21, 2025. PHOTO COURTESY/OLIVIA COPPOLA

Congratulations on behalf of The Red & Black

CLASS OF 2026



ASHTIN BARKER

You are such an amazing young woman who makes us so proud! Congratulations on your graduation! We know you are going to change the world! We love you so much! **Love, Mom, Dad, & Tre**



RILEY BAUGH

Congratulations to our son on earning his degree from the Grady College of Journalism with a minor in political science. It has been so exciting to watch you follow your passion for writing. We can't wait to see what the future holds. We are so proud of you, Little Buddy.
- Mom & Dad



NORIN BORTZ

Norin Bortz will be graduating with a BFA in Graphic Design and a minor in Studio Art. She served as The Red & Black's Guides & Magazines Layout Editor.



BRIAR BUNDY

I joined the Red&Black the first semester of my freshman year as a contributor for the culture desk and have since worked as a news contributor, mayor and commission beat reporter, politics reporter, and recruitment manager. In the fall, I will be attending American University Washington College of Law to receive my law degree specializing in International Law.



KATHERINE DAVIS

We are proud of you! You found your passion and took advantage of every opportunity to grow, learn, and have fun. This journey has helped you become a confident, strong, and determined young lady.
Love you, Dad and Mom



ALEXIS DERICKSON

This milestone is a reflection of your hard work and dedication. We are so deeply proud of you! Wherever life takes you our love and support will follow- keep shining!



EVELYN DOUCHES

Congratulations, Evelyn, UGA Class of 2026!
We love you! D, M, S, K, A and P!



MCKENNA EDWARDS

McKenna is graduating with her bachelor's degree in journalism, minor in women and gender studies and certificate in news literacy and will begin her master's in journalism this upcoming fall.



SOPHIA EPPLEY

We are so proud of our daughter, Sophia, for her many accomplishments over the past four years. She has exceeded all expectations with hard work and dedication. She has a passion for telling important stories and we cannot wait to see the positive mark she leaves on the world. **Congratulations, Sophia! We love you.**



KAYLEE FOREHAND

We are so proud of you! "You are braver than you believe, stronger than you seem, and smarter than you think." – A.A. Milne



GUINEVERE GRANT

Four years felt like pages turning too quickly. UGA and The Red & Black filled them with meaning, growth and stories I'll carry long after this chapter closes.



TAYLOR GREAVES

Taylor Greaves, Journalism and International Affairs major with minor in Law. Senior Social Media and Video Editor



Congratulations on behalf of The Red & Black

CLASS OF 2026



GABRIELLE GRUSZYNSKI

Watching you graduate with a double major in English and journalism is a profound joy. You've mastered the power of words with such unwavering grace and humility. As you head to law school, we are endlessly proud of your brilliance, your drive, and the incredible woman you've become. Congratulations!

We love you, Mom, Dad, and Jillian



ALEXA LEWIS

Congratulations on earning your Biology degree! Your hard work and dedication is inspiring. Wishing you continued success as you begin the next exciting chapter of your journey. We are endlessly proud!



SAMANTHA LICHTER

Samantha, you have a very bright future both professionally and personally. There was never a doubt that you would become the successful person you are today! Congratulations! - **Mom, Dad, and Kiki**



ALLISON MAWN

Thank you to The Red & Black for an amazing past few years. I wouldn't have wanted to spend my college years anywhere else.



OLIVIA MCGAHEE

I am graduating with a degree in English and a minor in Communication Studies. While at UGA, I was a part of the English Honors Society and Stillpoint Literary Magazine. In the future, I plan to attend grad school for English in hopes of teaching.



CAROLINE NEWBERN

The Red & Black has changed my life for the better. Long live student media and the power of the free press!



GABRIEL OBLETON

As Gabriel graduates from the University of Georgia, we are incredibly proud of the young man he has become. His time photographing for The Red and Black allowed his passion, discipline, and storytelling talent to truly shine, and we're excited to see where this next chapter takes him.



CARMEN OLEKAS

This chapter went by fast! I am proud and feel so grateful we are in this story together. Lead with your heart, Monkey and know you are so very loved!



EMMA PETERSON

Emma is graduating with a bachelors of arts in both journalism and political science, and a certificate in news literacy. After graduation, she is attending Columbia University to get her masters of science in journalism.



ALEXIA RULE

My time with The Red & Black allowed me to know Athens deeply and I am forever moved by the stories I heard from locals and shared through this wonderful newsroom.



CLARY WATSON

Congrats, Clary! We're so proud of everything you've accomplished over the past four years, and we can't wait to see all that lies ahead for you in the years to come.



Opinion

Signing off

A final farewell from newsroom leadership

Clary Watson, Gabrielle Gruszynski and Katie Guenther

As the spring semester comes to a close, graduating seniors reflect on their time at the University of Georgia. From late study nights to energetic football games, our four short years in the classic city are precious. It is from their time spent expanding knowledge and interacting with the world that students feel ready to attack the day everyday with a mind to lead and a heart to serve.

The Red & Black echoes this sentiment. As a student-run newsroom independent from UGA, we thrive on our ability to connect our professional development with real-world impact. Countless hours spent editing articles or fun times in print productions are where experience is gained and friends are cherished.

Which is why when our steadfast newsroom leadership turns the page on their collegiate chapter, we look back on their time with The Red & Black with fondness and excitement for what they'll do next.

Clary Watson, Managing Editor

I joined The Red & Black in October of my freshman year, and I remember walking into the newsroom feeling like I should turn around and walk back out.

As an out-of-state cognitive science major, I arrived at UGA not knowing anybody and possessing zero journalism experience. Surrounded by seasoned student reporters, I felt like an outsider pursuing a hobby.

I started as a contributor, just trying to figure out how to write a decent story. Then, I became a breaking news reporter, learning how to move faster and trust myself a little more. From there, I stepped into digital news editor, then news editor — each role asking a little more of me than the last. Now, finishing my time as managing editor, I look back at that quiet freshman and barely recognize her.

At first, it was small things: getting a story published, figuring out how to ask better questions, learning how a newsroom actually works. Then it became staying late, talking with people after meetings, slowly getting to know the faces that once felt intimidating. Somewhere along the way, it stopped feeling unfamiliar.

What I didn't expect was how quickly the people I got to work with would come to matter to me. The friendships I've made here are the kind that come from being in it together — deadlines, stress, the occasional chaos and the amazing moments where everything somehow works out. Those are the things that will stick with me long after graduation.

The Red & Black taught me a lot about writing and leadership, but more than that, it gave me a sense of stability and belonging when everything else in college still felt new.

Looking back, I'm so glad I didn't let those early nerves make me turn around. I didn't arrive with all the answers, but I've realized that the best parts of this experience happened simply because I kept showing up.

Gabrielle Gruszynski, Deputy Editor of Standards & Practices

When I was growing up, my parents used to sit me down and force me to read "Amelia Bedelia" books against my will.

I'm not too sure what I expected, as my mom is a speech-language pathologist, with a Ph.D. in autism studies, and my dad is a pilot and currently serves as an aviation flight inspector for the Federal Aviation Administration.

Education and language have played huge roles in my life. Even though I loathed "Amelia Bedelia" time as a toddler, I think it planted the seeds for one of my greatest passions: storytelling.

When I came to UGA, I had a clear career path in sight: study English and broadcast journalism, and become the next Katie Couric.

Though life has a funny way of thwarting your most ironed-out plans. My freshman year was difficult, to say the least.

Joining The Red & Black, however, was my silver lining. Contributor. Audience Engagement Editor. Assistant Opinion Desk Editor. Opinion Desk Editor.

Each of these roles has taught me invaluable writing and leadership skills that I have taken into my current role as Deputy Editor.

Of course, this role hasn't come without its learning curves.

When I first started in the newsroom, I thought good communication meant always having something to say; feedback, advice, an answer. But I've learned that the most meaningful conversations happen when you listen first.

Listening is at the foundation of my role as deputy editor. Whether I'm meeting one-on-one with a staff member or interviewing someone for a story, I try to focus on understanding what they're really saying before I jump in.

Listening with empathy has helped me ask better questions and build genuine connections with my peers in the newsroom.

For me, listening goes hand-in-hand with what I consider The Red & Black's dual mission: to train democracy's next generation of journalists and to cultivate lifelong relationships. My time as deputy editor has taught me a third lesson.

At the heart of this organization are its people. The stories we tell matter. But the people who tell them, and the people we tell them for, matter even more.

In many ways, my early lessons in "Amelia Bedelia" have come full circle.

After graduation, I will attend William & Mary Law School to pursue a career in First Amendment law or criminal prosecution, with a specialty in violence against women cases.

Regardless of where that path takes me, I'll carry the same values The Red & Black has taught me: to listen with intention and to honor those behind each story.

If you're reading this and considering taking a leap of faith, let this be your sign. Whether journalism is your calling or not, there is a place for you here — and I'm eternally grateful to The Red & Black for helping me find mine.

Katie Guenther, Editor in Chief

If you told me in high school that I was going to be a journalist, I probably would have asked you what that meant. I put "journalism" down as my major because it sounded more serious than English and all I knew about my career goals was that I would probably enjoy writing.

I got to UGA and saw everyone around me seemingly already in a million clubs. In a fit of comparison-induced anxiety, I joined The Red & Black almost immediately. It turned out to be the best decision I've made in college.

Publishing my first article, getting my first positive feedback from a source and receiving my first hate mail were all memorable moments that made me love journalism in their own ways. The people I've met doing this work — sources, student journalists and mentors — profoundly impacted me and shaped who I am today.

But what will stick with me beyond graduation the most is my year as editor in chief. I was given the incredible opportunity to lead a newsroom of some of the most talented, creative and dedicated student journalists in the country, and I learned so much from it.

Leadership, as it turns out, is a lot like reporting. You ask questions and you listen. You practice empathy, and fairness. And it can't happen without a team to back you up.

I owe a huge debt of gratitude to everyone who has been on the leadership team with me: Gabby, Clary and fall managing editor Zach Leggio. Even more so, I'm grateful for all the student journalists, photographers and creatives who make The Red & Black a place worth striving for. It's been an incredible place to call home for the past four years, and I'm so grateful I got the chance to serve it.

STUDENT VOICES

UGA graduating students reflect on their favorite memories and future directions

Josephine Thomas

As the end of the academic year approaches, the University of Georgia's class of 2026 is gearing up for spring graduation. Students participating in the graduate commencement ceremony will congregate in Stegeman Coliseum on May 7, 2026, while undergraduate students will take their turn a day later on May 8, 2026, in Sanford Stadium.

Although the stories of many graduating students took

place across the same campus, their futures will take them in a plethora of directions. Their chapter at UGA may be concluding but this is just the beginning. Hopefully, students' time here were marked by many memories of involvement, education and enjoyment that they can remember moving forward.

The Red & Black asked 2026 spring semester graduates to reflect on some highlights of their experience at UGA.



Daniel Vettors

SENIOR COMPUTER SCIENCE MAJOR

"A highlight of my undergraduate experience was for sure going to the football games with all my friends and family," Vettors said.



Rakshita Gorrepati

SENIOR BIOLOGY MAJOR

"I think my favorite [memories] definitely are the UGA football games. They're just so much fun. I was never really into football before I got here but it's such a good atmosphere, and going with your friends is really fun," Gorrepati said.



Ashton Hague

FIFTH-YEAR ECONOMICS MAJOR

"Probably the time that I spent with my pledge class; rushing a fraternity, definitely that experience and meeting all those people for sure," Hague said.



Bethany McRae

SENIOR ECONOMICS MAJOR

"My favorite memory would probably be [on the] fourth floor Main Library studying until 12 a.m. with my study group for law — the entire semester, we did that. That was really fun," McRae said.

PHOTOS/JOSEPHINE THOMAS

SPRING 2026 STAFF

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MANAGING EDITOR Clary Watson
DEPUTY EDITOR OF STANDARDS AND PRACTICES Gabby Gruszynski

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En Español

Estudiantes latinos de UGA hablan sobre la graduación y su experiencia universitaria

Matthew Carr, Traducción: Nathan Valles

A medida que el año escolar entra en sus últimos días, muchos estudiantes de último año en la Universidad de Georgia se preparan para la siguiente etapa de sus vidas. Al llegar al final de sus carreras universitarias, muchos seniors reflexionan sobre lo que este tiempo ha significado para ellos y muestran agradecimiento por las personas que los ayudaron en el camino.

Un grupo específico de estudiantes que se está tomando el tiempo para reflexionar esta primavera son los próximos graduados latinos. Muchos están llenos de gratitud por lo que su comunidad y su tiempo en la universidad han significado para ellos.

Sin embargo, este proceso no ha estado libre de desafíos. Muchos estudiantes latinos han encontrado difícil adaptarse a la vida en la Universidad de Georgia como minoría sin una gran representación. Muchos de estos estudiantes también provienen de hogares inmigrantes donde son los primeros en sus familias en asistir a la universidad. Esta adaptación a menudo genera temores sobre encontrar tu lugar en una institución tan grande. A pesar de estos desafíos, los estudiantes latinos han salido adelante, y muchos esperan servir como ejemplo para la próxima generación de todo lo que es posible.

“Puede parecer que las probabilidades están en tu contra, pero eso no debería impedirte querer lograr lo que te propones. Habrá momentos difíciles, pero eso es parte de la vida. Sigue perseverando y esa meta que tienes en mente será alcanzable”, dijo Eder Sánchez-Reyes, estudiante de último año de educación primaria.

“El consejo que quiero dar a los estudiantes más jóvenes es que siempre crean en sí mismos y siempre sueñen. El poder de soñar y el poder de la imaginación es muy fuerte y te llevará muy lejos”, dijo Alan Sosa-Alfaro, graduado en ciencias políticas y asuntos internacionales.

“Nunca te rindas contigo mismo porque nunca sabes de lo que eres capaz hasta que te exigas. A veces evitamos intentar hacer cosas porque tenemos miedo de fallar, pero a veces tenemos que ver el fracaso como una posibilidad para ganar”, compartió Camila Merino Correa, graduada en asuntos internacionales. “Nunca dejes de creer en ti y nunca cortes tus alas”.

Numerosos estudiantes latinos han reconocido a la comunidad latina en la universidad por brindarles un espa-



GRÁFICO/RYLEE TOOLE

cio donde se sienten bienvenidos y empoderados para vivir auténticamente.

“Me ha dado un hogar lejos de casa”, continuó Sánchez-Reyes. “Al ser uno de los primeros en mi familia en buscar educación superior, me ha dado un espacio para conocer a otros estudiantes que se identifican con las mismas experiencias, pero también me ha dado la oportunidad de orientar y liderar a la próxima generación de estudiantes.”

Como líder de orientación, Sánchez-Reyes ha podido influir profundamente en esa nueva generación de estudiantes. “Pude caminar por el campus y ver a tantos estudiantes prosperar en los espacios en los que dijeron que prosperarían, y eso me hizo saber que yo fui parte de su historia así como ellos fueron parte de la mía”, agregó.

Aunque la población latina en la Universidad de Georgia es pequeña, la camaradería entre los latinos ha ayudado a muchos estudiantes a sentirse más cercanos a su comunidad de lo que se sentían antes de la universidad.

“Mucha gente dice que experimenta un choque cultural al ver a tantos compañeros blancos, pero en mi experiencia, el

choque cultural fue ver a tantos latinos, especialmente latinos en la educación superior, buscando un título y queriendo superarse”, enfatizó Annette Compean, estudiante de cuarto año de biología. “Realmente se vuelve una familia porque llegas a reconocer y ver muchas caras familiares a lo largo de los años”.

La vida después de la graduación puede estar llena de muchas de las mismas incertidumbres que surgen cuando comienzas tu camino universitario. Ambos momentos están llenos de oportunidades sin precedentes para crecer y conectar con otros, pero también representan etapas como ninguna otra que hayas enfrentado antes.

Pero en medio de esta incertidumbre, es importante no olvidar quién eres y de lo que eres capaz. Los graduados deben recordar lo lejos que han llegado y todo lo que aún les queda por alcanzar.

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The Mama's Boy located on Oak Street is seen in Athens, Georgia, on Saturday, Aug. 10, 2024. PHOTO/JAXON MEEKS

8 Athens restaurants to celebrate graduation weekend

Emily Harrell

The Athens food scene has a way of becoming part of the college experience, whether it's in the form of a quick meal between classes or a long dinner that turns into the main event of the night. As graduation weekend arrives, restaurants take on the role of marking the end to a treasured season of life. From longtime staples to newer downtown spots, these restaurants offer a range of settings for students and families looking to celebrate the moment.

The Expat

1680 S. Lumpkin St.

The Expat is one of those Athens spots that offers a slightly more intimate, elevated dining experience that fits well for smaller graduation dinners or quieter family celebrations. The menu changes seasonally, but leans into Italian-inspired dishes that include seafood, pasta and vegetable-forward entrees. With a refined atmosphere, it's a place where meals feel both heartfelt and unhurried, well-suited for marking the end of a major milestone.

The Place

229 E. Broad St.

The Place has long been a go-to for Southern comfort food in Athens, especially during busy weekends such as gradu-

ation. Its menu centers on classic dishes like fried chicken, shrimp and grits and other traditional vegetable plates, offering familiarity for nearly every guest at the table. The atmosphere is relaxed and welcoming, making it a dependable option for families looking for a sit-down meal that feels casual and unforced. It's the kind of spot where the conversations naturally stretch long after the plates are cleared.

Cali N Tito's

1427 S. Lumpkin St.

The Lumpkin Street location Cali N Tito's brings a completely different energy to graduation dining, leaning into a more casual atmosphere that often feels more like a gathering than a formal meal. The menu is rooted in Latin-inspired comfort food, with Cuban sandwiches, tacos and rice bowls that are easy to share among larger groups. It's a popular choice for those looking for something affordable and relaxed during a packed weekend in Athens. The outdoor seating and lively environment makes it especially popular when the weather is warm and graduation crowds spill into the evening.

Seabear Oyster Bar

297 Prince Ave.

Seabear Oyster Bar offers a slightly more modern, seafood-focused dining experience in downtown Athens. The

menu highlights fresh oysters, shrimp, fish entrees and many options of small plates designed for sharing, making it a natural fit for groups that are celebrating together. The balance between lighter seafood dishes and richer options gives it a celebratory feel without being overly formal. Its Prince Avenue location also makes it an easy stop for groups moving between graduation events and evening plans.

Trapeze Pub

269 N. Hull St.

Trapeze Pub is a downtown staple that blends casual dining with a lively atmosphere, making it an easy gathering spot during graduation weekend. The menu includes burgers, sandwiches, salads, fries and a variety of specials. Its flexibility and laid-back setting make it a great choice for groups looking for something reliable. Its seating also allows for large tables of families and friends to be accommodated, as long as a wait time isn't minded.

Mama's Boy

197 Oak St.

Mama's Boy has become one of Athens' most recognizable brunch spots, and it's especially popular during graduation weekend when families are looking for a relaxed, celebratory meal. The menu focuses on Southern breakfast and brunch staples like biscuits, pancakes, shrimp and grits and breakfast sandwiches. It's a place built around comfort food and busy weekend energy, making it a fitting stop before or after graduation.

South Kitchen and Bar

247 E. Washington St.

South Kitchen and Bar sits in the middle between casual and upscale dining in downtown Athens. The menu features modern Southern-inspired dishes such as fried green tomatoes, steaks, seafood entrees and pasta, offering plenty of variety for larger groups. Its polished but approachable atmosphere makes it a frequent pick for graduation celebrations. During busy weekends, it often serves as a structured sit-down option amidst graduation.

Five & Ten

1073 S. Milledge Ave.

Five & Ten is one of Athens' more elevated dining options, often chosen for occasions that call for something more formal. The seasonal menu leans into Southern cuisine with carefully composed entrees. Graduation dinner at Five & Ten feels like a true sit-down event, with a slower pace and more structured dining experience, turning a meal into an intentional closing rather than just fuel for the weekend.

Graduation meals reflect how food brings people together to celebrate meaningful moments. In Athens, the range of dining options makes it easy for families and friends to gather, share a meal and mark the occasion. For many students, these are the same kinds of places that shaped their college experience, making the accomplishment feel that much more personal.



Veggie tacos and maduros from Cali N Tito's in Athens, Georgia, on Monday, March 11, 2024. PHOTO/SAMANTHA HURLEY

“

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‘A writer and an artist who cares’

UGA professor Ed Pavlić named a 2026 Guggenheim Fellow

Emma Wilson

At 18 years old, Ed Pavlić attended college to pursue a business degree. Nearly 40 years later, as a distinguished research professor of English and African American Studies at the University of Georgia, he received the prestigious honor of being named a 2026 Guggenheim Fellow.

A Guggenheim Fellowship, awarded by the John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation, is a grant gifted to scholars in the arts, humanities and sciences in honor of the former U.S. Sen. Simon Guggenheim’s son, a young scholar who died at 17. This year, Pavlić was chosen as one of 223 individuals from a pool of almost 5,000 applicants.

An unorthodox path

Despite having published 13 books and writing for more than 60 magazines focused on racial dynamics and African American life and culture, Pavlić did not originally intend to become a writer.

“It’s a long and twisted story,” Pavlić joked. “I came to all this in a very haphazard way.”

As a child, Pavlić loved math, history and physical activity. It was only later that he developed a love of literature — a love that began through his connection to characters.

“I began to be interested in characters,” Pavlić said. “It seemed like it was easier to get a close encounter with people in books than it was to get a trustworthy one with people in the world ... There was a great deal of complexity and confusion and contradiction in the world as I grew into it, and then it seemed like literary writing was a place where that stuff could slow down and sort out a bit, I suppose.”

Despite his growing interest in literature, Pavlić attended the University of Wisconsin-Madison to study economics. Growing up in a working-class family, he felt an unspoken pressure from his parents to major in business and get a corporate job, but quickly realized business wasn’t for him. Pavlić noted that joining the corporate world felt like being drafted into Ronald Reagan’s economy — an economy that had, in his opinion, abandoned values of the previous decades such as democracy, humanism and anti-racism.

One of the classes that had a lasting impact on Pavlić was an African American Studies course he took his freshman year.

“Immediately I recognized the things that were going on in that class as important, and I took them very much to my heart,” Pavlić said. “I started to, in those classes, really apply the things that were being talked about ... to what I imagined as a life going ahead, and I found a great deal of connection in that way.”

Pavlić’s intrinsic interest in this subject stayed with him throughout his college career, leading him to pursue a mas-



Ed Pavlić, 2026 Guggenheim Fellow and distinguished research professor at the University of Georgia, poses for a photo in his James Baldwin archive at UGA in Athens, Georgia on Thursday, April 23, 2026. The Guggenheim Fellowship has, for a century, supported pioneering individuals in the arts and humanities from around the world. PHOTO/EVAN FRILINGOS

ter’s degree in African American Studies before earning a Ph.D. from Indiana University. It was there, in Indiana, where everything changed.

During his Ph.D. program, he met a famous writer and Pulitzer Prize winner Yusef Komunyakaa, who Pavlić credits with introducing him to the practice of poetry.

“In a strange way, [Komunyakaa] introduced me to the practice of poetry that I was already involved in, but I wouldn’t have been able to recognize it by myself,” Pavlić said. “[He] cornered me into admitting that I was already scribbling down thoughts and things on paper ... [He told me] ‘If I can just show you where you are using these techniques already, you can form the beginnings of a creative process.’”

After years of writing poetry, Komunyakaa encouraged Pavlić to submit his works to magazines and eventually compile his poems into a book, which he submitted to several publication contests. After many submissions, Pavlić won the American Poetry Review’s Honickman First Book Prize.

“I had no idea that people had spent years setting up their connections and networks to put together this idea of a career,” Pavlić said. “I was just out there trying to explore these ideas and these experiences. I didn’t see any other place to do it but on these pieces of paper.”

SEE GUGGENHEIM FELLOW PAGE B3

USPS honors storyteller and quiltmaker Harriet Powers with new Forever stamp

Alexia Rule

The United States Postal Service released four new Forever stamps celebrating Harriet Powers, a quiltmaker from Athens who was once enslaved. Her intricate quilts are widely recognized as exceptional works of American folk art and storytelling, though only two of them are known to exist today.

Powers was born near Athens on Oct. 29, 1837 and it is believed she learned to sew as a child. Throughout her life, she completed at least five quilts. The two remaining quilts are widely referred to as “story quilts” as each of their individual panels features an embroidered moment from well-known lore or biblical stories.

Powers’ quilts are widely regarded as significant examples of 19th-century art. Created at a time when many Black artists, especially formerly enslaved women, had limited access to formal recognition or preservation, her surviving works provide insight into her life and incorporate design elements associated with West African appliqué traditions.

“[Powers is] the one who got her quilt to that fair. Nobody else did.”

JACKIE ELSNER | ATHENS RESIDENT

In 1886, Powers submitted her world-renowned “Bible Quilt,” at a local fair which is believed to have been the annual Northeast Georgia Fair located in Athens, where interested buyer Jennie Smith’s offer to buy the quilt was declined for any price.

Smith was an art teacher at the Lucy Cobb Institute, a women’s boarding school founded in 1859 by Thomas R.R. Cobb and named in honor of his deceased daughter. According to the 1889 Athens City Directory, Smith lived on the corner of Washington Street and Pulaski Street. In a state of financial trouble, Powers eventually chose to relinquish the quilt to Smith years later for just five dollars.

Smith’s executor found the Bible Quilt upon her death in 1946 and it was eventually mailed to and accepted by its current resting place at the Smithsonian National Museum of American History in the late 1960s.

The wives of various Atlanta University faculty were impressed with the quilt when Smith displayed it in the Negro Building of the 1895 Cotton States and International Exposition in Atlanta, commissioning a new quilt from Powers to be a gift for Dr. Charles Cuthbert Hall, vice president of the university board.

Jackie Elsner is an Athens local resident who taught a class on Powers’ work and history to a packed house as part of UGA’s Osher Lifelong Learning Institute (OLLI) program on March 3. She has conducted in-depth research on the

history, heritage and life of Powers with an emphasis on her geographical tie to Athens.

“That is so common for the African Americans. You had to have some white person notice you,” Elsner said. “[Powers is] the one who got her quilt to that fair. Nobody else did.”

Started in 1895 and completed in 1898, the commissioned piece sizes at 68 7/8 inches by 105 inches and survives under the name “Pictorial Quilt.” According to Elsner, it was eventually sold to a collector who “recognized that this was extraordinary” and sent it to the Boston Museum of Fine Arts to be accepted in 1964.

The quilt’s squares depict astronomical and other events that long preceded Powers’ time, indicating the depth in her awareness of “oral history,” according to Elsner. One slide depicts “New England’s Dark Day” from May 19, 1790. Another square depicts The 1833 Leonid Meteor Shower. Another square on block 11 of the bottom row depicts the Great Freeze of 1894-95, an event she was alive during. This confirms that the quilt was completed after 1895 at the earliest.

At a time when most Black Americans were denied access to formal education, quilts like hers could function as visual narratives of history and faith.

“Fabric of a Nation: American Quilt Stories” was a 2021-2022 exhibition which marked the first time both masterpieces were brought together for public viewing. They are often kept out of public view in storage at their respective locations for proper preservation and protection from light damage.



The United States Postal Service unveiled a new collection of postal stamps honoring the late Harriet Powers, who was an Athens folk artist renowned for her beautiful quilt depictions. The collection of stamps features the “Pictorial Quilt” and was released on February 28, 2026, as part of the Forever® stamps series.

PHOTO/JESSE CORSO

SEE HARRIET POWERS PAGE B3



United States Postal Service stamps honoring Harriet Powers’ folk art quilts sit atop her grave in Gospel Pilgrim Cemetery in Athens, Georgia, on Monday, April 27, 2026. Powers was a renowned African-American woman and folk artist from Athens-Clarke County, known for her quilt-making skills. PHOTO/JESSE CORSO

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'The greatest joy has been the greatest challenge'

Pompeii sets itself apart in the Athens restaurant scene

Brady Laddbush

In a familiar space on East Broad Street, something new is taking shape quietly, intentionally and with deep roots in the Athens community. Pompeii, a recently opened Italian restaurant, has stepped into the former home of DePalma's Italian Cafe with a fresh vision rooted in hospitality, local sourcing and years of industry experience.

For co-owners Brandon Highlander and Daniel Ray, the path to opening Pompeii was less about reinvention and more about timing, relationships and a shared goal they had been building toward for years.

"My goal is to try to help grow a better world to leave behind us and better people to leave behind us in the restaurant and just life in general," Highlander said.

Both owners have deep ties to Athens. Highlander has lived in the city for over a decade, while Ray moved to the city in 1997. The two met while working at Emmy Squared Pizza, where they quickly realized they shared similar ambitions.

"As we got to know each other, we realized that both of us wanted to start a business," Ray said. "We were wildly open to any kind of idea."

That opportunity came earlier this year when Dave Cappi, owner of DePalma's, approached Ray about taking over the business. Having previously worked with Ray while training bar staff, Cappi recognized both his face and experience. By February, conversations had turned into plans and soon after, Pompeii was born.

The name itself carries personal meaning. For Ray, "Pompeii" traces back to childhood of flipping through his father's art history textbooks and later visiting the city in Italy.

"It just felt general, and vague, and specific, and beautiful and classical enough," Ray said.

The early days of the restaurant were anything but typical. Pompeii opened without a sign, with a limited staff and while still waiting on its state pouring license. Despite those hurdles, the owners proudly took on the opportunity they had been given to begin.

"Here we are, two long time Athenians, long time restaurateurs, who tripped into the opportunity to take over this legacy restaurant," Ray said. "It's totally insane that it worked out the way that it did, and here we are."

Part of that transition included bringing much of the DePalma's team along. Highlander said about three-quarters of the former staff made the move, creating continuity in a space that already held meaning for many in Athens.

The shift felt natural to him to server Brady Hussion, who hopes to continue to serve and give the customers the experience they walked in for.

"I think the more we can add to opening up somebody to new experiences, the better," Hussion said.

The continuity has helped maintain a sense of familiarity while allowing the new owners to build something distinctly their own.

The menu leans into traditional Italian cuisine, shaped by chef Matthew Palmerlee, a long time friend of Ray's. The two share a history of working together at Farm 255, and touring both restaurants and punk rock bands together.

As the restaurant settles in, the menu will continue to evolve under Palmerlee.

"The idea is to drop what doesn't need to be there any longer and start letting our skilled kitchen start flexing with specials that play more with local proteins and seasonal ingredients," Ray said.

While the food is central, Highlander and Ray emphasize

that the experience matters just as much. They describe Pompeii as an elevated yet approachable space, where guests can enjoy a high-quality meal without feeling out of place.

"We want it to be a place for everyone to come and eat at any point in time, no matter how their wallet looks, or how their day is, or what they're even doing," Highlander said.

That balance extends to the service as well, which the owners see as a defining feature of the restaurant.

"I want our servers, our waiters, to be very knowledgeable, but very personable," Ray said. "I favor personality-led service rather than formal."

Looking ahead, Highlander and Ray are focused on growth but not in the traditional sense. They aren't looking to turn Pompeii into a franchise. Instead, they hope to continue creating unique, community-driven spaces.

"I want to just keep opening cool things," Ray said.

At its core, Pompeii is about people. Both those who work there and those who walk through the doors.

"I want to take care of ourselves, I want to take care of the community, I want to take care of the students and the people in Athens," Highlander said.

That philosophy is already shaping the restaurant's identity. Whether its longtime Athens residents returning to a familiar location, or first-time visitors stopping in out of curiosity, the goal remains the same: to leave a lasting impression rooted in hospitality.

"We are local, we've been here, we are for Athens, we want to continue to be for Athens and keep Athens great and individual, and that's what Athens is and that's what we hope to continue to portray," Highlander said.



Pizza sits on a table at Pompeii in downtown Athens, Georgia, on Friday, April 24, 2026. PHOTO/EVAN FRILINGOS



Brandon Highlander, left, and Daniel Ray, right, Pompeii co-owners, pose for a photo in their restaurant in downtown Athens, Georgia on Friday, April 24, 2026. Pompeii opened April 3 and serves Italian food. PHOTO/EVAN FRILINGOS



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Ed Pavlič writes in his friend's New York apartment on the upper west side in October 2025. PHOTO COURTESY/ED PAVLIĆ

GUGGENHEIM FELLOW FROM PAGE B1

"Not only was I not shy, not nervous about sharing [my poems], but I was really driven," Pavlič said. "It almost felt like a kind of performance, like if you got a song, you want to sing it."

Thirteen published books later and now teaching at UGA, Pavlič is working on a new book called "Darker than Blue: A Radical Life of James Baldwin," a biography of the 20th century writer and activist.

"From the time I was a teenager, when I was first happening upon what literature could do ... Baldwin was the first writer that really meant anything to me," Pavlič said. "So I've kind of lived my life in some connection to his, even though I never met him in person."

In addition to the connection he feels to Baldwin, his motivation for writing this biography is to provide a more accurate and detailed account of who Baldwin really was and what he went through. The Guggenheim Fellowship allows Pavlič to put this project at the center of his life.

"The first thing on my mind every day when I wake up is, 'Oh my god. How am I going to get this work done?' ... And a

thing like a Guggenheim Fellowship is, in one way, a kind of solution to that dilemma," Pavlič said. "It's saying 'For a year, ... we can make it so that you can get up and have at that first thing that's on your mind.'"

Impacting the next generation

Pavlič's passion for Baldwin is not just something he works on quietly outside of class, but one he shares with his students.

Sabrina Bradshaw, a sophomore English major taking UGA's Development of African American Literature class with Pavlič, developed a deeper appreciation for Baldwin after taking his class.

"Through this class, James Baldwin became a very important figure for me, and the things that he did and what he had to deal with, just his story is so beautiful," Bradshaw said. "This is a young African American man ... who made a way for himself, and because of that, he made a way for us and he left something permanent that we can all look to and that every American, not just African American, but every American, can look to his work and really take a lot from it."

Pavlič's impact on literature is undeniable, but his influence goes beyond his books, touching the lives of his many students.

"This recognition sends a powerful message to our students in the Franklin College of Arts and Sciences that the bold, multidisciplinary and visionary work they are encouraged to pursue here truly matters," Anna Stenport, dean of the Franklin College of Arts and Sciences, said in a statement to The Red & Black. "Faculty like Ed Pavlič show how one can shape a meaningful intellectual and creative path that is deeply engaged with the world and capable of expanding how we understand it."

“ [He teaches us about] things in history that get passed by ... Learning those things, I think, have really been my favorite moments.”

ZIA THORNHILL | SOPHOMORE PSYCHOLOGY MAJOR

"He's so down to earth, and he's very respectful and kind to students. With his accolade of awards, he does not treat people like they're beneath him," Bradshaw said. "As someone who's in the humanities and someone who is pursuing an English major, I am always super stoked and ecstatic to hear when a professor is able to do amazing research and be funded for doing this kind of stuff."

Pavlič's class has also introduced student Zia Thornhill to lesser-known Black history that tends to get overlooked in other classes.

"He gives us very specific, extensive history, and it's things that I would just never know," Thornhill, a sophomore psychology major, said. "[He teaches us about] things in history that get passed by ... Learning those things, I think, have really been my favorite moments because it's a lot of interesting facts that I wouldn't have known otherwise."

Bradshaw particularly noted Pavlič's ability to cover heavy topics without sugar-coating them, allowing for real, honest conversations in the classroom.

"We can say the word racism, we can say the words white supremacy ... He does say those words, and he calls attention to it in a time where people want to cover up the injustices that are being done to people," Bradshaw said. "This is an individual and an educator and a writer and an artist who cares and who wants to have the truth be out there and for people to see things for what [they] really [are]."

Pavlič defines himself as a writer above all else. To him, his latest project is about more than stating facts, but deriving real and important lessons from Baldwin's life.

"You read about how a great artist struggles with their lives and their work, and it makes you able to struggle with yours," Pavlič said. "It cures some illusions, that we could otherwise entertain, about how all these fancy people have it better than us and that really interesting and accomplished looking person, they probably got up there by some magic. But when you look closely ... it's not magic. It's usually a lot of hard work."

HARRIET POWERS FROM PAGE B1

More than a century after her death, recognition of Powers' work continues to grow beyond museums and academic spaces. Efforts to preserve her story have helped bring attention to her life in Athens and her lasting artistic influence. The release of a commemorative stamp from the USPS marks one of the most visible acknowledgments of her legacy.

"Slowly, she's really getting local recognition and then the stamp that was amazing," Elsner said.

The Harriet Powers Forever stamps were designed by long-time USPS art director Derry Noyes and a panel selected from Powers's "Pictorial Quilt" is featured in each of the four stamps in a pane of 20 stamps.

"I wanted the pane to look as if there were more than just four different scenes," Noyes said in the USPS description. "By changing the starting order at the beginning of each row I was able to create the impression of a multitude of scenes."

First issued on Feb. 28, 2026 in Washington, D.C., the Harriet Powers Forever stamps will always be equal to the current First-Class Mail one-ounce price.

Powers was enslaved by Nancy and John Lester. She married at 18 and had nine children with her husband, enslaved farmer Armstead Powers, who lived across the street. When emancipation finally came, the family bought four acres in Sandy Creek, Georgia, raising cotton and vegetables on their farm.

After her death in 1910, she was buried at the Gospel Pilgrim Cemetery located in Athens. Founded in 1882, this resting place of more than 3,000 people was neglected for many years. On April 19, 2006, The National Park Service officially listed the cemetery in the National Register of Historic Places and efforts are now made to preserve and spread awareness of this location.

The two sided marker at her grave reads "Bible reader," "museum collected" and "extraordinary storyteller and quilter" on one side. At the bottom, it says "we salute you," from the Women of Color Quilters Network who fundraised and advocated for its 2023 installment. The other side has her and her husband's names, birth dates and dates of passing.

"The fact that we know her birth date as an enslaved woman and the location of the people who were enslaving her is literally extraordinary... beyond extraordinary," Elsner said.

Elsner shared that some of Powers' descendants came for the unveiling of the new headstone in 2023. According to Executive Director of the East Athens Development Corporation Fred Smith, people have come from all over the country and world to see her burial place.

"That name Harriet Powers is powerful. In that world, they know her, they look up to her, they honor her," Smith said.

Smith recalls connecting with history for the first time as a moment that changed his life. He has deep interest in Athens' Black history, and the story of Powers' life, feeling that "history is inspiring and hopefully we can learn from it."

"All that has to happen in order for her story to inspire is for her story to be told," Smith said. "Whenever I tell the story, young folks' eyes brighten up. They're very interested, but they don't hear it ... when I first discovered Black history, I felt the same way."

Smith views Powers as creative and as having her own sort of "artistic genius" with quilting when she "took it to another level" by using her works to tell stories.

"I want Harriet Powers to be known far and wide. I want the research to continue because there's still plenty to learn," Elsner said. "I certainly want her descendants to learn more and more and for them to be the spokesperson for their ancestor. They are the proper voice of Harriet Powers' story."



The headstone of the late quiltmaker Harriet Powers sits in Gospel Pilgrim Cemetery in Athens, Georgia, on Monday, April 27, 2026. PHOTO/JESSE CORSO



Stamps from the Forever stamps series honoring the late quiltmaker Harriet Powers sit in Athens, Georgia, on Monday, April 27, 2026. PHOTO/JESSE CORSO

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Ashtin Barker

Creative Services Manager
Journalism Major

How has your coursework at Grady College prepared you for your role?

Grady has thoroughly prepared me to work in a fast-paced print publication environment by teaching me the importance of meeting deadlines while paying close attention to detail.

What has been the most rewarding part of serving in a leadership role?

It's been so special to have the opportunity to pass on everything I've learned. I'm thankful for the growth opportunities I've earned at The Red & Black, in addition to the support I've received.



Kaleb Tatum

Photo Editor
Journalism Major

How has your coursework at Grady College prepared you for your role?

My coursework at Grady has helped improve my understanding of visual storytelling and newsroom collaboration, which has helped when it comes to editing and producing photo coverage.

What has been the most rewarding part of serving in a leadership role?

The most rewarding part of my position has been mentoring photographers and helping them grow while working together to cover moments on campus and in the Athens-Clarke County community.



Grady College of Journalism
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Athena Studios located off of Athena Drive in Athens, Georgia on Friday, July 19, 2024. PHOTO/JAXON MEEKS

OPINION AI, nostalgia, streaming contribute to the death of cinema

Alice Iancu

At a film studio in Athens, the cameras have slowed, and technology servers may be moving in.

Athena Studios, once a staple that helped turn Georgia into a film hub, is under consideration to be turned into a data center. Georgia State Rep. Eric Gisler, representing District 121, spoke to the impending addition of the data center at the expense of former film production here in Athens.

“[Data centers] a necessary evil, the way they’ve been done to date are probably not the best,” Gisler said.

The reason for this change, to put it simply, is that there

isn’t enough activity at the studio to justify its continuation as a filming location, thus priming the precious land for a data center project. Overall, film production spending in Georgia has dropped sharply in recent years. According to the Georgia Film Office, 245 film and television productions spent \$2.3 billion as of June 2025 — nearly half of what was spent from the same period in 2022.

It’s an unglamorous replacement to the art of filmmaking. Where sets, lighting and crews once filled stages, the future now holds rows of servers — machines that don’t create art, but store it and distribute imitations.

This shift is playing out in Athens, reflecting a much larger transformation across the entertainment industry. Streaming conglomerates, such as Netflix and Paramount, have reshaped how audiences consume media, forcing legacy studios, like Warner Bros., to adapt and survive in this new media ecosystem.

Cinema is being redefined, not as an art form rooted in theaters, but as a constant stream of content, built for digital delivery.

This decision operates under the guise of the need to adapt to streaming services. In reality, this is a money game. Warner Bros. Discovery CEO David Zaslav officially signed a \$81 billion agreement effectively selling the assets of Warner Bros. Discovery to Paramount Skydance. This merge of companies will have a monumental impact on the entertainment industry as a whole. They are not prioritizing artistic risk or theatrical experience, they are prioritizing scale data and profitability.

Mid-budget and original films are slowly disappearing. Instead, we are seeing more franchises, reboots and algorithm-catered releases designed to keep viewers eyes glued to screens rather than put anything new into cinema. Studios like Disney are putting out high budget films like “Thunderbolts,” which cost \$180 Million, the live-action remake of “Lilo

and Stitch,” with a \$100 Million budget and the Snow White live-action remake costing \$300 million. Although it is much easier to invest millions of dollars into a project with characters you already know are loved, this strategy for success prompts a simple question: why put out anything new when you can guarantee viewership through loyalty to a brand?

These imitations of already loved classics are CGI ridden and hold fractions of the charm we grew up with.

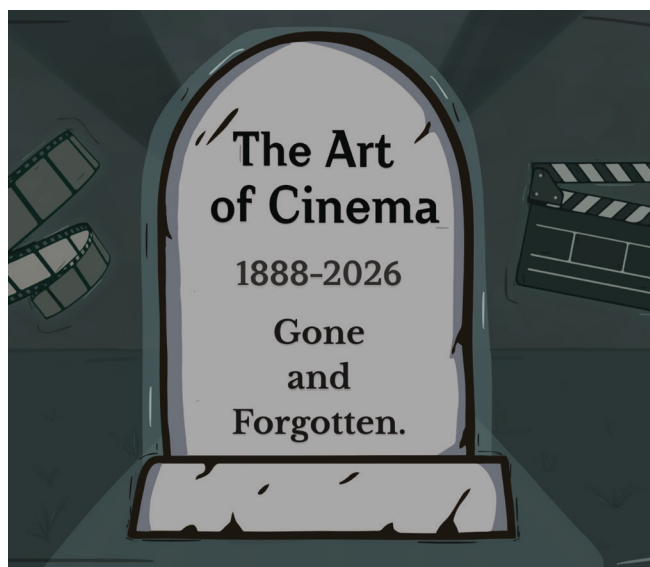
I admit I’m not immune to the draw of familiar characters and universes — I’ve been a Marvel fan since the fifth grade — but, at the end of the day, this reliance on familiarity is robbing audiences of building new relationships and viewpoints through cinema. Dependence on nostalgia may work in the short term, but in the long run it will fade and leave studios with nothing to push out to audiences. We are limiting the stories being told and feeding audiences what we think they will like.

Without the era of mid and low budget films we would have never gotten “La La Land” which was made with \$30 million, “Good Will Hunting” made on a \$10 million budget and “The Breakfast Club” made on a measly \$1 million budget. Instead, we’d be watching the 22nd iteration of “The Fast and Furious” wondering how things spiraled to this point.

This is where Athens comes back into the fold. The potential loss of a film studio is not only about jobs, but also what we value and how we consume art. A space once held for storytelling is now only used for storage.

While cinema isn’t gone just yet, if the industry continues down this path it will become something fundamentally different. It’s no longer an art form to inspire but a product to be consumed and quickly replaced.

Alice Iancu, freshman biomedical physiology and regenerative bioscience major



GRAPHIC/RUTH PACK

OPINION Stereotyping, lack of media representation causes identity struggle for multiracial people

Addie Weber

“Wasteful.” “Gweilo (Ghost).” “Ling Ling.” “Shrimp.” “Exotic.” I have been called all of these things growing up in Hong Kong and the United States. Children in Hong Kong use American stereotypes on me. Children in the U.S. bullied me or fetishized me based on my mixed “exotic” physical features. For years I was never seen as Chinese.

Despite fully immersing myself in the culture and feeling more drawn to Chinese culture over American culture, the people I met and interacted with in Hong Kong never accepted me as their own. I was too white for them.

Throughout my childhood and early adult life, I have spent my summers in Hong Kong and going to school full time in the U.S.. Although I am extremely grateful for this unique experience and the culture I have been exposed to, I cannot deny the impact it has had on both my worldview and my day-to-day life.

Never knowing what race I looked like to others — as well as how others perceive me throughout my life — made it hard for me to come to terms with my racial identity. I felt like I had to choose whether I was white or Chinese. There was one point in my life where I wished I either appeared stereotypically Chinese or had blonde hair and blue eyes so it would be easier for me to decide and fit in with others.

My experience grappling with identity may be shared among other multiracial individuals. Many societal factors, such as experiencing discrimination and certain types of physical characteristics, may shift how a mixed person identifies. One study by University of Georgia professor Vanessa Gonlin explored this concept through surveys. It found that factors that affect the identification of people of mixed-race ancestry within a “white hegemonic society” are skin tone, racial discrimination and linked fate.

“The more one feels their fate is tied to a racial group, the more likely they are to identify with that group,” Gonlin wrote.

It wasn’t until the internet decided to begin fetishizing and uplifting “Wasians” for their beauty that I fully came to terms with the idea that I didn’t have to choose one race to identify myself with, and I could be white and Chinese simultaneously — now I simply tell others I am mixed and proud of it.

From middle school to high school, I attended predominantly white institutions, and felt ugly because I looked different from everybody else. I was considered one of the weird kids; I didn’t see the world the same as everyone else; I “live under a rock” because I couldn’t talk about popular American shows or movies. But if anyone had asked me about fun things to do in Hong Kong or my favorite dim sum dishes, I’d yap their ears off.

I have dual citizenship in both Hong Kong and the U.S., yet I am not accepted by Hong Kongers because, as I have experienced, some of them despise Americans. I recall a time I attended a summer class in Hong Kong and we learned about

sustainability. The data they displayed revealed that the most wasteful country that year was the U.S. All heads turned to look at my sister and I, as though we were the reasons for the lack of sustainability of an entire country.

On the contrary, when I traveled to a neighboring region in China called Shenzhen, the shopowners were intrigued by American culture, and, based on how they spoke of America, were very misled on everyday life in the U.S. They assumed we were very violent and even asked if I’d ever been in a fight.

Based on these experiences, I see how rooted society is in stereotyping others — a prevalent issue across the world that targets people based on their physical appearance and nationality.

If I had grown up with shows or news stories that represented more mixed people, I think I would have felt more comfortable with my identity. Even now, I feel that there is a lack of coverage about it. The 2020 census revealed a notable increase in the number of mixed races reported. Despite the increase in multiracial babies, there is still a lack of coverage about it. I feel like, if there was more coverage, multiracial

people would feel more comfortable with their identities, and less likely to feel like they need to conform to one race or nationality over another.

What makes this slew of stereotyping ironic is that people are exposed to different worldviews, cultures and perspectives everyday. Not everyone lives a traditional life, blindly follows popular culture or shares the same values. Some people’s values are rooted in their family’s culture that could have originated on the other side of the world.

Being mixed has made me more open minded to people with different cultural perspectives. While I have been hurt by stereotyping, I now try to see where people different from me are coming from before assuming they match their stereotypes. In an ever-changing, increasingly diversified world, this practice may be useful in alleviating misunderstandings.

Addie Weber, sophomore journalism and Chinese language and literature major



GRAPHIC/RYLEE TOOLE

A shared heritage

2 Clarke Central athletes bond over soccer and culture

Kristopher Wilhelm

Clarke Central boys soccer turned in another successful season, winning all of its regular-season games both in region and non-region play.

The team rode that wave of momentum to the top seed, where they dominated their first-round matchup before a 5-1 lose to Gainesville ended the team's state title bid. But within this No. 1-ranked AAAAA team and their spectacular run is a special bond that transcends all of sports — friendship.

Xavier Reyes Torres and Argenis Rivero Negrette are two juniors and key contributors for Clarke Central. Reyes primarily plays left wing for the Gladiators and typically starts each game. Rivero, on the other hand, doesn't usually start each game, but came in off the bench for the team at right wing, providing crucial minutes for the Gladiators.

"[Reyes has] been a big role player for us," head coach Chris Aiken said. "He comes off the bench almost every single game the entire, and that's a hard role to come into because you might not play for 25 to 30 minutes, and then when you get in, a lot's expected of you to contribute quickly."

While Rivero and Reyes have largely different roles on the team, they do share a lot in common, which has caused them to become close friends.

Reyes, who is from Venezuela, moved to Athens more than three years ago after a brief stay in Colombia. He immigrated in eighth grade and started at Clarke Middle School. Rivero came to Athens the same year after living for a short time in Panama, but is also from Venezuela.



Argenis Rivero Negrette, left, and Xavier Reyes Torres, right, pose for a portrait at Clarke Central High School in Athens, Georgia, on Monday, April 27, 2026. PHOTO/KALEB TATUM

stay with my grandparents, so it was difficult not seeing her every day," Reyes said. "The situation was pretty hard — food-wise, money-wise and education-wise, there was just a lot of chaos at that time."

Rivero expressed the same sentiment.

"For me, it was bad, because my parents had to move to Panama and I stayed one year with my grandpa, so it was hard," Rivero said.

But despite the economic challenges in Venezuela, Reyes and Rivero are proud of where they're from. On Clarke Central soccer's media day, the team had a photo shoot where the duo posed with the Venezuelan flag together.

"It means culture, it means memories, it means family, it means food, it means happiness, it means pride — it means everything for me," Reyes said when asked what the flag means to him. "That's what we wanted to do at media day, just because we wanted to show that we're proud of being Venezuelans."

The two still keep up with Venezuelan culture while living in the U.S., and they hang on to pieces of their heritage, like Venezuelan dishes pasticho and pabellón. Reyes said the two also listen to reggaeton often and Rivero said he enjoys Venezuelan rapper Neutro Shorty.

They bond over soccer as well, not only playing together but also watching professional matches. Rivero's favorite club team is FC Barcelona, while Reyes' is Real Madrid, two big

rivals in the Spanish professional league La Liga.

"We've had a lot of conversations. When Barcelona loses, I make fun of him, and when Real Madrid loses, he makes fun of me. It's pretty fun," Reyes said.

On the pitch, the two have become quite close as well and last month they shared a special moment in their 9-1 win over Madison County on March 30. After Rivero subbed into the game, Reyes assisted him, sending a pass to Rivero, who was on a sprint to the back post and finished it for a goal.

"I felt happy," Rivero said when asked about the goal. "Not only because I scored the goal, but because [Reyes] did the assist and we're such good friends."

Their connection extends beyond the field and into their daily lives.

"[Our friendship] has grown because we get to see each other basically every day. I give him rides ... we have classes together, so we get to talk a lot, have fun and make jokes," Reyes said. "The fact that we play different wing positions, it's actually great because I get to pass him the ball and he gets to pass me the ball, so it's a little bit of a connection in that sense."

Throughout Clarke Central's postseason run, Reyes and Rivero remained focused on the same goal. But no matter how far the Gladiators advanced, the connection they've built will carry beyond this season.

“ It means culture, it means memories, it means family, it means food, it means happiness, it means pride — it means everything for me.”

XAVIER REYES | CLARKE CENTRAL JUNIOR

Both moved to the U.S., alongside their parents, for a chance at a better life, with more financial and societal stability.

"To be honest, it was pretty hard [in Venezuela] because my mom had to go to Colombia for a better life, and I had to

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