



Nick Barker, a criminal intelligence analyst with the Athens-Clarke County Police Department, poses for a portrait in the newly constructed Real Time Crime Center in Athens, Georgia, on Wednesday, Oct. 8, 2025. PHOTO/ASHTIN BARKER

RTCC sparks controversy

ACCPD increases surveillance in the name of safety

Maia Capuano

As the Athens-Clarke County Police Department finishes up the final touches on their newly renovated Real Time Crime Center (RTCC), the project has drawn support and opposition from the community, and it begs the question: does it keep Athens safer?

RTCCs are data-hubs meant to make policing more proactive and efficient by providing police with live surveillance feed from multiple sources: closed-circuit television cameras, body cameras, 911 calls and more. They were first introduced into policing circles in the early 2000s in major cities such as Memphis, Tennessee, and New York City. Their goal is to organize large quantities of data and public records into one location, allowing for easier access, communication and collaboration.

Athens' RTCC will bring the number of centers in Georgia to 24. There are currently 23 established or funded RTCCs used in the state as of 2024, according to Atlas of Surveillance. Georgia ranks third in states with the largest number of RTCCs.

As the world becomes increasingly dependent on technology, RTCCs have started showing up in smaller jurisdictions. In Georgia, the city of Dunwoody and Cobb County have both implemented RTCCs, and many other cities and counties are approving funding for them.

The idea for Athens' RTCC came in October 2021 after an assault incident occurred downtown.

The investigation could have been better managed with more efficient infrastructure and resources, according to ACCPD Criminal and Intelligence Analyst Nick Barker.

In July 2023, ACCPD received their initial funding for the project.

The murder of University of Georgia student Laken Riley in February 2024 caused ACC commissioners, local advocacy groups and concerned citizens to pressure Athens Mayor Kelly Girtz to fully fund the project. The ACC Police Foundation also received an extra \$500,000 donation from QuikTrip to be used explicitly for the RTCC.

In June 2025, the ACC Mayor and Commission approved the FY26 budget, which fully funded the RTCC, allocating over \$400,000 to the center.

"I think that horrible, horrible incident made us realize we're not a little town anymore. Real, bad things do happen here," ACC District 4 Commissioner Allison Wright said.

The RTCC combines data from public records, automatic license plate readers, thousands of cameras, geological data, intelligence data and more. Private businesses and homes have the option to add their cameras into Athens' RTCC system.

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A daughter's legacy

Cathy Semeria turns grief into advocacy

Sophia Hou

Cathy Semeria understands what it means to be transformed by grief.

Nearly a decade after losing her daughter, she has learned to find meaning in her pain through ministry and community advocacy. Her recently co-authored book, "Grieve Like a Mother, Survive Like a Warrior," explores grief, healing and the search for purpose after loss.

Christina "Tini" Semeria was a student at the University of Georgia when she and three of her friends died in a car accident on April 27, 2016. While at UGA, she was active in Alpha Chi Omega, Young Life and UGA Heroes.

Known for her musical talent and compassionate spirit, friends and family recognized Tini's gift for connecting with others.

"Her heartbeat was for the least, the last and the lost," Cathy said. "She wanted everybody to know that they were seen and loved."

Tini's death profoundly impacted the UGA community. Thousands of students gathered the next day for a vigil at Tate Plaza, coming together to pray and remember the four lives lost. Her celebration of life service also drew thousands of attendees, with UGA providing transportation for students.

Cathy credited this outpouring of support as a source of comfort in the immediate aftermath of the accident.

"We knew that we weren't alone," Cathy said. "Even though it's all pretty much a blur, that first year, we knew people were praying for us. We knew people were there for us."

In the months following Tini's death, Cathy connected with the three other mothers who lost their daughters in the accident. Through counseling and regular meetups, they drew strength from their shared loss and began building a larger network of grieving mothers.

Calling themselves "Warrior Moms," the group meets on a monthly basis to provide mutual support and encouragement throughout the healing process.

"None of us are experts, but we come together, we have appetizers together, we share and everybody understands," Cathy said.

In 2022, the group began discussing writing a book with the goal of sharing their experiences to provide hope and resources to other grieving mothers.

Cathy and 13 other "Warrior Moms" spent the next few years compiling their stories into "Grieve Like a Mother, Survive Like a Warrior." The book features 14 chapters, each written by a member detailing her personal experience, along with resources for healing after the loss of a child.

SEE **SEMERIA** PAGE **A3**

First rate DJ

JoE Silva's story and return to 'Athens 441'

Caroline Newbern

After 10 years of research, JoE Silva decided he needed to finish "The Minimoog Book," detailing the history of the world's most famous synthesizer. To do so, Silva, a communications professional for the University System of Georgia and independent producer for WUGA, needed to take a break. With this hiatus, "Athens 441," also known as "Georgia's Eclectic Radio Mixtape," went off-air.

The program, originally named "Just Off the Radar," exposed listeners to music just outside of "pop culture awareness circles." Silva was inspired by the childhood experience of growing up in the 1980s, mixing cassette tapes.

"I've been here since doing basically the same thing: an hour-long program," Silva said. "I mix indie rock, modern folk music, a lot of electronic music, some Americana."

About two years ago, he gave up his spot on GPB to work on his book. For years, the network had released the show statewide every Saturday night at 11 p.m.

Recently, following the completion of the book, and with a little luck, GPB gave him his old slot again, welcoming him back with open arms.

Sailor turned DJ

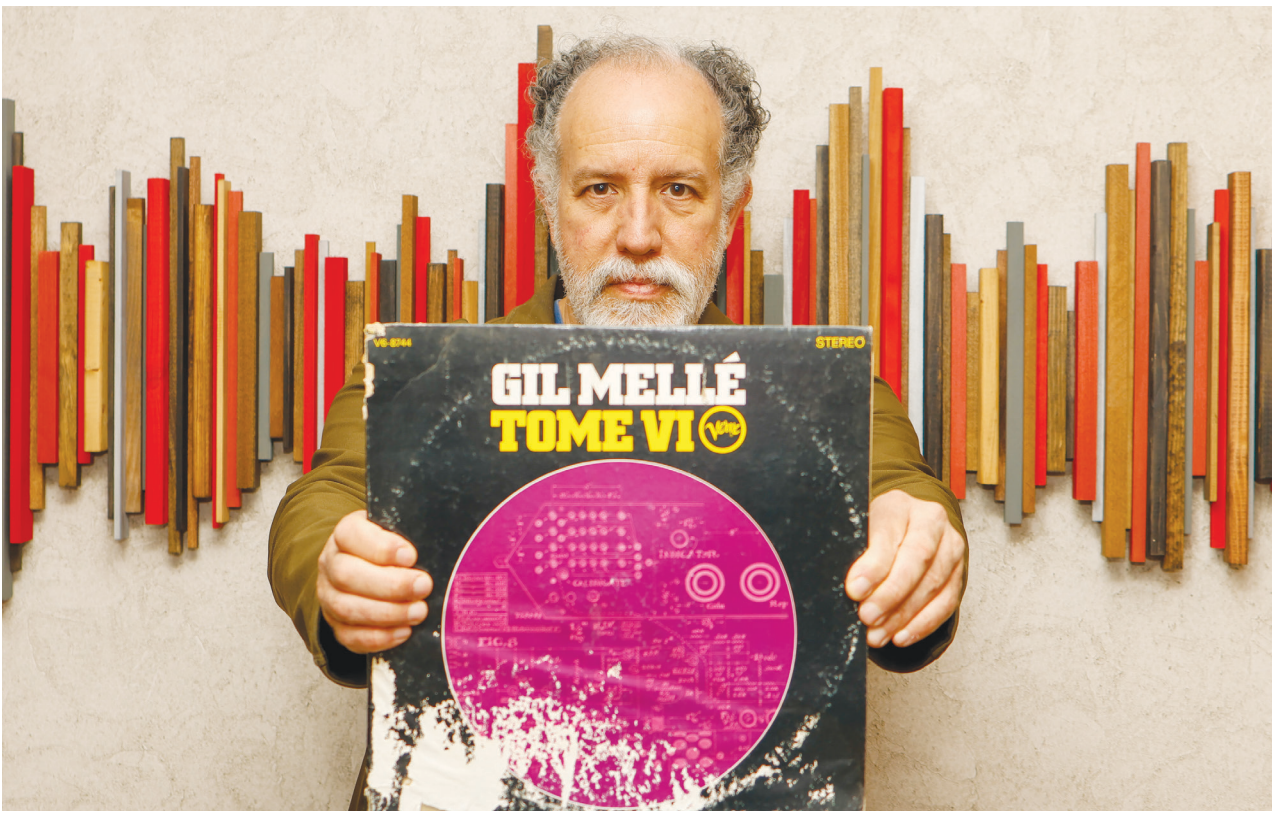
Silva was born in New York City and, at around the age of 10, he was "completely radio obsessed," carrying around and sleeping with a classic miniature AM radio. He constantly recorded songs onto a cassette player with a built in radio.

At 17 years old, just three days before his 18th birthday, he was sent to Navy bootcamp and went on to serve nine and a half years as a cryptologic interpreter.

Eventually, Silva was stationed in Key West, Florida, supporting his wife and three daughters.

"I was constantly buying the cheapest diapers I could so that I could buy records as well," he said, half-jokingly.

He'd sneak new albums into the house after buying them



JoE Silva, creator and host of "Athens 441," poses for a portrait with a record in Athens, Georgia, on Wednesday, Oct. 15, 2025. PHOTO/CAROLINE NEWBERN

— a habit that couldn't last forever. A friend of his, Manuel Michalowski, had the same problem.

"So I thought, 'Oh well, we'll start a magazine, like a music magazine, and they will just send us records for free,'" Silva said. "That's exactly what happened."

That was the start of a career in music journalism and the creation of QRM magazine, with the name deriving from the Morse Code letters "QRM," meaning "man made noise," a reference to their history in naval intelligence.

After leaving, he visited his sister, a student at the University of Georgia. That trip would become a turning point.

With four daughters to feed, he quickly realized how affordable life in Athens could be.

"Wow, burritos are really cheap here, and pizza — yeah, we can feed all of those children here," he said, laughing.

Even better, there was enough money for records.

In 1993, Silva ended his journey with the magazine and, in Athens, discovered public radio. He fell in love with it. He secured a computing job with UGA thanks to his naval experience, and pitched a program to WUGA, the UGA-operated public radio station.

"I thought, you know, maybe I could get on air," Silva said. "They didn't really have a program like the one that I was envisioning."

A decade later, in 2003, that vision became a reality when WUGA approved his show.

SEE **DJ** PAGE **A3**

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Shaping Athens' creative heart

How Serra Jaggar built Indie South

Guinevere Grant

On a breezy Saturday morning, the Indie South Fair feels like a festival of creativity — rows of tents filled with handmade jewelry, vintage clothes and ceramic mugs, all anchored by the charm of Athens' artistic spirit. At the center of it all is Serra Jaggar, the woman who turned a parking-lot idea into one of the city's most beloved markets.

"I didn't have a vision," Jaggar said. "The only vision I ever had was that I'm a creative person [and] I love other creative people. I was just fascinated by people who, frankly, were way more talented and skilled than I was. It just gave me an opportunity to be around those people in a very direct, connected way."

Jaggar's path to building Indie South, now Athens' largest handmade market, wasn't mapped out in a business plan. It began with a young woman who dropped out of college, became a mom and decided she didn't want the life she thought she was supposed to have.

A creative beginning

Jaggar first came to Athens in 1995 to attend the University of Georgia, drawn by the city's energy and music scene. Like many who arrived in town for school, she quickly found herself immersed in its culture.

After a few semesters, she left college unsure of her next steps. She began working at Guaranteed, the iconic vegetarian restaurant co-owned by R.E.M.'s Michael Stipe, surrounded by artists and thinkers who helped shape her perspective.

When she became pregnant with her daughter, the future came into focus.

"What really shaped me as far as going into something that I cared about was having my daughter," Jaggar said. "It was like, 'Oh, this is real life. This is adulthood. I have a real responsibility now.' In my mind, adults did things like, go get corporate jobs in offices. I just knew that I did not want that life."

Jaggar had sewn and screen-printed since childhood, often reworking thrifted clothes into original designs. Encouraged by friends, she leaned into what she already loved. Her first store, Remnant, opened when her daughter was just 1-year-old.

"I did not know what I was doing at all, and this was pre-social media," she said, laughing. "I couldn't even afford to get a phone line for the shop. It just taught me a lot about the responsibility involved, the fact that a lot of it isn't fun or glamorous, it's really tedious and boring."

The birth of Indie South

In 2006, inspired by the craft fairs she saw in larger cities, Jaggar decided to create something similar in Athens. She borrowed a parking lot from local landlord Joey Tatum, gathered a handful of artists and called the event Indie South Fair.

"It was a hit," she said. "I mean, people loved it. All the artists really loved it. Everybody was like, 'When are we



Serra Jaggar, owner of Indie South, poses inside her store in Athens, Georgia, on Monday, Oct. 6, 2025. PHOTO/EVAN FRILINGOS

gonna do one again?' So I immediately started planning the one for the spring."

That first show marked the beginning of what would become a staple of Athens' creative calendar. Nearly 20 years later, Indie South hosts multiple seasonal markets each year, drawing visitors from across Georgia and beyond.

Over time, Indie South has weathered economic shifts, relocations and the COVID-19 pandemic. When the spring 2020 market was canceled, Jaggar heard from countless artists who relied on the event for income.

By that December, she decided to move forward with the annual Holiday Hooray, adapting it to safety guidelines.

"It was really poignant to me to see people come together at that time, because everybody was so shaken up and scared," Jaggar said. "Just to see people be like, 'We needed this. We needed to come together and be together during this time,' the artists really needed it."

For Jaggar, Indie South has always been more than a market. It's a place where artists can sustain themselves, where shoppers can meet the people behind the products and where Athens' creative spirit thrives.

"I've had so many artists tell me, especially after artist markets, 'You just paid my bills for the next three months,'" she said. "There have been times where people have just said, 'Oh my God, this just made my whole holiday season,' so it's really about people for me."

In 2016, she expanded the pop-up market vision into a full store, opening the Indie South shop, giving local

makers a year-round presence. Inside, shelves are filled with the work of regional artists, a part of the creative community Jaggar helped build.

Shaping Athens' artistic identity

Looking back, Jaggar believes Indie South helped redefine Athens' creative landscape.

"At the time that I started it, you know, there really wasn't that [art markets] happening here," she said. "I would like to think that I've really helped build the modern makers movement here in Athens."

That inclusivity is deeply personal. Growing up in Fairburn, Georgia, Jaggar often felt like she didn't fit in. Her mother was Bohemian, and their family wasn't religious — differences that made her stand out. In Athens, Jaggar finally found the acceptance she'd been searching for.

"We welcome the people who are the freaks and the weirdos and people that are offbeat," Jaggar said. "I feel like the culture of Indie South is a culture that really values individuality over fitting in."

When asked what she hopes people feel when they walk into her shop, Jaggar smiled.

"Inspired," she said. "I hope they feel welcome. I hope that they feel like [they] found [their] tribe. That inspiration, that sense of belonging. Everybody has a little creative spark and watching other people do stuff is a way to kind of ignite that in yourself."

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Charlotte Varnum, as they discuss Johnson's new book

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The newly constructed Real Time Crime Center at the Athens-Clarke County Police Department headquarters seen in Athens, Georgia, on Wednesday, Oct. 8, 2025. PHOTO/ASHTIN BARKER

RTCC FROM PAGE A1

UGA also shares some of its cameras and record data, according to an email from James Hataway, UGA's senior director for integrated media communications.

This massive amount of data is organized within the RTCC and it is up to those working at it — currently, trained civilian staff — to use it efficiently.

“The room itself is just a room,” Barker said. “It’s not a real time crime center until people are actually working on it.”

Athens’ RTCC is housed in the back of the police department’s headquarters where their old evidence room used to be. It is fully functional and was used for the first time on Saturday, Sept. 27 for the Georgia vs. Alabama football game to keep eyes on highly populated areas. That following morning, a shooting left three teenage girls hospitalized. Barker claims ACCPD was able to apprehend the shooter within an hour because of the efficiency of the RTCC.

“I mean, this is a real win for students, and for the whole campus community, and for people that live here,” Lynn Gainous, co-founder and treasurer of SafeD Athens, a non-profit advocacy group for safety in Athens, said.

While the RTCC has drawn support from concerned UGA parents, several ACC commissioners and local safety groups like SafeD Athens, it has also faced severe backlash from community members who worry about overpolicing and racial profiling. There is also concern about the potential mishandling of sensitive information and a growing fear of a climate of mass surveillance.

Mokah Jasmine Johnson, co-founder and executive director of the Athens Anti-Discrimination Movement, wor-

ries about the potential for misidentification with facial recognition technology. Evidence has shown that AI technology has room for bias and error, especially when identifying people of color, according to the Associated Press.

A 2018 MIT study compared facial recognition software developed by Microsoft and IBM in their accuracy in identifying individuals in the following four categories: darker-skinned females, darker-skinned males, lighter-skinned females and lighter-skinned males.

All of the softwares had the most trouble accurately identifying dark-skinned females with error rates of up to 34.7%. In comparison, lighter-skin males have an identification error rate of 0.8%.

“AI systems, just in general ... can be biased,” Johnson said.

There have already been reported cases of misidentification. A Black man in Detroit was wrongfully arrested for shoplifting after police relied on facial recognition technology, according to the AP.

While ACCPD can use facial recognition technology, it is only useful in rare-cases, according to Barker.

Another community concern is the overpolicing of minority communities through the RTCC using facial recognition software and automated license plate readers inappropriately.

Barker said that the decision to place surveillance in high-crime communities is solely based on data.

Johnson does not believe these centers should be the infrastructure funded to make Athens safer. Instead, she would like more money to be diverted towards the Public Safety Civilian Oversight Board.

This board has supervisory powers over ACCPD’s policies and procedures, and is made up of residents of the county. Additionally, the board reviews complaints or incidents of misconduct against officers on the nature of race and ethnicity, according to section 3-18-3 of The Code of ACC.

Johnson said she wants the board to become a more independent and integral part of keeping ACCPD accountable. She would also like to shift the focus to preventing crime rather than surveilling it.

In general, crime in Athens has decreased in recent years, even with increases in population growth. According to data from ACCPD’s 2024 annual report, burglary decreased by 45% and motor vehicle theft decreased by 31% from 2020 to 2024. ACC has been steadily growing for the past 10 years with a roughly 9,000 population increase since 2014, according to the ACC 2024 Annual Comprehensive Financial Report.

Advocates of preventative crime solutions, including the Athens Housing Authority and the Neighborhood Leaders Program, argue that this is due to Athens’ increase in services meant to stop crime from happening in the first place.

“I feel like collectively as a community, we need to start putting pressure on the government to divert funds from supporting this center even more, and to make sure things like different social services are also being supported because those are the underlying root problems to crimes,” Johnson said.

Johnson is also concerned about transparency of rights when it comes to “this new AI type of surveillance.”

“What are our rights? How do we hold them accountable? What happens if you are misidentified? How do you get out of the system?” Johnson asked.



24-hour surveillance cameras installed in downtown Athens, Georgia, seen on Wednesday, Oct. 8, 2025. The cameras are monitored and operated by the ACCPD’s RTCC. PHOTO/ASHTIN BARKER

ACCPD has written directives posted on their website that mandate openness on their policies. One of these directives states that the RTCC does not collect information on individuals based on their race, ethnicity, religion, gender, political beliefs or other protected categories except when used as part of specifically given suspect description and information.

“They may think ‘Big Brother.’ I don’t blame them. I understand where that’s coming from. But, honestly, we don’t have the time or really want to be Big Brother,” Barker said. “The only reason why we would have a camera up is because there’s a reason for us to watch it, because there’s an active incident, or there’s intelligence that leads us to believe that there’s going to be crime happening there.”

SEMERIA FROM PAGE A1

Ripples Media Publishing joined the project in the fall 2024, and “Grieve Like a Mother, Survive Like a Warrior” was released in August of this year.

“It’s brought a lot of healing,” Cathy said. “Losing a child is a journey that is with you forever, but what’s brought me meaning is knowing that I’m helping other people.”

Cathy also travels around the country speaking to and mentoring students and women.

“I want people to realize that they don’t have to do life alone,” Cathy said. “Get into community, get connected, find your people. Don’t keep your story to yourself.”

“Get into community, get connected, find your people. Don’t keep your story to yourself.”

CATHY SEMERIA | MOTHER OF “TINI” SEMERIA

The Tini Semeria Spark in the Dark Foundation, founded by Tini’s family after her death, is a nonprofit that provides students with annual scholarships to conferences, camps and mission trips. Since 2020, it has hosted an annual fundraising 5K race.

The sixth annual Spark in the Dark 5K took place on Sunday, Oct. 5, drawing hundreds of participants and raising around \$20,000. Since 2020, the event has raised \$170,000 for the Tini Semeria Spark in the Dark Foundation.

Lauren Lamphier, a senior elementary education major, has served as the Alpha Chi Omega chairperson for the 5K for the past three years. Although she did not know Tini personally, she expressed her appreciation for the community that Alpha Chi Omega has built around Tini’s legacy.

“Getting to see the 5K grow and see everyone come support it has been so special,” Lamphier said. “It means a lot to our chapter because we all come out and celebrate the impact that she had on us year after year, and just keep her memory alive that way.”

Dave Semeria, Tini’s father, agreed, describing the growth of the event as “humbling.”

“Obviously with students there’s a turnover, but it still is strong, so you’re seeing new faces every year,” Dave said.

A month before her death, Tini wrote on her blog, “As small as a spark in the dark might be, it can be seen by all those around it. And if those sparks encourage further sparks, a tremendous light can be created and overcome any and all darkness ... There is power in one heart, just as there is power in one spark.”

Reflecting on almost a decade of grief and growth, Cathy remains committed to honoring Tini’s memory through community and purpose.

“[Tini] didn’t know she was going to go to be with Jesus at 19 years old, but she didn’t waste a minute of her time,” Cathy said. “In my pain is my greatest ministry, and I do not want to waste it.”



Attendees start the Tini Semeria Spark in the Dark 5K at the University of Georgia Golf Course in Athens, Georgia, on Sunday, Oct. 5, 2025. The Spark in the Dark 5K run is an annual event that honors the memory of Christina Semeria, a University of Georgia student who tragically passed away in 2016. PHOTO/KALEB TATUM



Cathy Semeria poses for a portrait in Duluth, Georgia, on Thursday, Oct. 9, 2025. Semeria authored a book and organized a 5K after her daughter died in 2016. PHOTO/JOELLE ERWIN



JoE Silva, a communications professional for the University System of Georgia and an independent producer for WUGA, uses studio equipment on Wednesday, Oct. 15, 2025. For about two years, he and his show, “Athens 441,” went off air. PHOTO/CAROLINE NEWBERN

DJ FROM PAGE A1

When Silva first started working in radio, he had to sort through a 2-foot high column of CDs in order to decide what music to include in the program.

“But now, everything’s digital,” Silva said. “It all comes through email.”

Over the years, as his name became known in the industry, Silva now finds his inbox flooded with content. Still, he doesn’t rely solely on what’s sent to him; he also conducts research of his own, looking into who’s coming to Athens or Georgia at large, and discovering special releases or records.

When Silva first started at WUGA, working as a part-time employee, he tried his hand at live reporting during board operator shifts.

“You run the signal, and you read the news and the weather and you press all the buttons,” Silva said. “I was terrible at it. I didn’t do it for long.”

Instead, he prefers taking his time through pre-production, spending his weekends conducting interviews and submitting material by Thursday.

After his Saturday chores, he settles down with a calendar, scanning for bands who are coming through town or the state and picks tracks that blend well. Afterward, he finalizes music selections and transitions, writes a script and is ready to record in his home studio.

Over the years, that passion has led him to conversations with some remarkable artists. Two of his most notable interviewees: Wayne Coyne from the Flaming Lips and David Byrne from Talking Heads.

“I love talking to musicians and creative people,” Silva said.

Building on that spirit of connection, Silva aims to launch a YouTube channel in the new year.

“You kind of have to hit the modern content consumer from as many angles [as possible],” Silva said.

New age of music

Silva acknowledged that the medium has changed dramatically over time.

“Certainly, it’s not the Golden Age of radio anymore,” he said.

During that era, beginning in the 1930s, peaking in the 1940s and plateauing in the mid-1950s, commercial broadcast radio was more than a pastime, it was life.

From news to entertainment, quarter-hour and half-hour segments accompanied listeners through the day. Jazz played at 7 p.m., daily headlines rolled in at 9 a.m. and tuning in was a habitual practice to achieve awareness and a sense of connection.

“Now, everybody gets to kind of be their own DJ in a lot of ways,” Silva said.

With streaming services like Spotify and Apple Music, listeners are encouraged to develop their own playlists and niches.

Against the odds, radio persists.

To Daniel McDonald, the production and operations director of WUGA, it’s people like Silva who create the magic.

“When you’re talking to someone through radio, that radio host is talking directly to you as an audience member,” McDonald said.

For about 10 years, McDonald has worked professionally in radio and has been a long-time listener of “Just Off the Radar” turned “Athens 441.” Silva’s passion, personality and persistence keep him coming back.

To Silva, the excitement and that magic of radio remains, as does Athens’ influence on the music scene; both will continue to be shared through “Athens 441.”

The price of prestige

Rigor drives UGA students toward burnout

Alice Iancu

With midterms looming, frantic students pack the Miller Learning Center wall-to-wall. Study rooms have become the hottest commodity on campus. These aren't just cramming sessions, they're survival strategies for students in the face of the University of Georgia's intense academic rigor.

There's no denying that UGA is quickly becoming an academic powerhouse. UGA's class of 2029 is one of the most academically accomplished cohorts the university has admitted.

The class has an average GPA of 4.17 and took an average of 11 advanced placement, international baccalaureate or dual-enrollment classes in high school. In contrast, 10 years ago, new students' average GPAs ranged 3.68-4.00 and took an average 5.6 advanced placement, international baccalaureate or dual-enrollment classes in high school.

While this growing prestige is something to celebrate, students bear the weight of these numbers. It's not enough to be smart, you must also be exceptional. UGA prides itself on its academic rigor, and it should. But when "rigor" becomes synonymous with anxiety and burnout, it's no longer a point of pride but a warning sign.

Students spend hours buried in books, flashcards and practice exams in hopes that these grueling sessions will be reflected in their grades. But this all comes at a cost. Students as early as freshman year have reported enduring multiple arduous study days with only coffee and energy shots fueling them to prepare for difficult exams.

Ask any student around you, and they'll likely tell you the same thing: they've sacrificed sleep, meals and mental health to keep up with the hustle culture that the university touts.



GRAPHIC/OLIVE LEE

Our days are full of classes and extracurriculars, followed by hours of studying. Most days, my mornings are packed with classes: statistics, English, chemistry and psychology. When I think I have a break, a GroupMe message goes off reminding me of a club general body meeting I have to attend, or I receive a notification about an incoming shift for work.

This adds up quickly to be the vast majority of our days and bleeds into our nights. A study by The National Institutes of Health found that once a person performs four hours of mentally demanding work a day, it becomes harder to recover overnight. Over time, long study sessions can make it harder for students to fully rest and recharge, which keeps them from performing at their best.

And yet, the grind is still glorified.

It's in our casual conversation: how little we sleep before exams, how many Red Bulls it takes to write a paper and how long we've stayed at the MLC the night before. It's become a badge of honor, proof that you're doing college "right."

At some point, we have to ask: What's the end goal here? If it's to prepare students for the real world, then surely teaching sustainable work habits, prioritizing mental health and fostering a lifelong love of learning should be part of that equation. In the real world, chronic stress and sleep deprivation aren't

indicators of success.

The job market is brutal, particularly for recent graduates, even those with impressive resumes. Entry-level jobs demand years of experience with up to 35% of them requiring three or more years. Internships are sometimes unpaid, leading to lower starting salaries. Graduate school is increasingly necessary, but also increasingly expensive, with the cost rising by 180% in the past 33 years.

UGA is no doubt preparing us for a competitive world. But what kind of world are we stepping into if we're already burnt out before we get there?

Georgia's state motto and the three pillars of UGA's Arch, are wisdom, justice and moderation. It's time we take that last one seriously. Moderation doesn't mean laziness, it means balance.

UGA doesn't need to lower its standards, but it should support the students working to meet them. Changes like smaller class sizes for high-fail rate courses and coordinated exam schedules to avoid burnout could play a huge role in creating an environment at UGA that supports its students. But it starts with redefining what rigor means. Not relentless pressure, but meaningful challenge.

Alice Iancu is a freshman biomedical physiology major at the University of Georgia



Karen Fooks poses for a portrait inside of Fooks Foods in Athens, Georgia, on Thursday, Oct. 16, 2025. PHOTO/KALEB TATUM

Creating culinary community

Fooks Foods brings taste of home to Asian students

Isabelle Farina

After decades of experience in the food industry, Karen Fooks is ready to settle down on a beach somewhere. Until then, she will keep supporting Athens' Asian community and running her local Asian grocery store, Fooks Foods.

Athens, a town with corporate grocery stores on every street corner, was lacking a spot for authentic Asian ingredients. Fooks recognized this as a longtime Athens resident, and pioneered her own Asian market. Located at 2026 S. Milledge Ave., Fooks Foods has now fulfilled that need for 22 years.

"I just saw a need in the community for a place like this," Fooks said. "I'd been living in Athens for a while, and there really wasn't an area or place to buy Asian food that I wanted to eat."

Fooks has been "mak[ing] things happen" in the food business since she was a child. She first entered the industry selling produce and making sushi with her grandmother in Hawaii. From there, she applied her experience working in various restaurants – cooking, cleaning and waitressing – along with her management degree from the University of Nevada, Las Vegas to eventually open her own establishment.

Her store is a one-stop shop for Asian food essentials. The aisles are stocked with all the basics including rice noodles and fresh vegetables from across Asia and the Middle East.

Fooks' duties as owner require her to take inventory of customer needs and evaluate industry trends to ensure shopper satisfaction. She combines her childhood experiences growing up in Hawaii, her Japanese-Filipino background and her professional knowledge working in Chinese restaurants to curate a well-rounded store.

As an avid shopper and "addict" of Fooks Foods, senior economics and entertainment media studies student Tyler Tran can attest to this.

"I think they offer a lot of goods from a variety of different

cultures," Tran said. "It allows people to cook things that represent them and represent their identity."

While Fooks Foods may have been created to serve Asian communities, all are welcome.

"Just give it a try," Fooks said. "As long as you know where your stove is, fine, or you don't even need your stove for some things."

Tran, who is also of Asian heritage, echoes this experiential attitude.

"There's so many things that you probably couldn't even identify," Tran said. "I think even if you don't know how to cook, everyone enjoys food, so getting to expand your palate will bring you a lot of happiness, I think a lot of happiness is shared over a meal."

Even as her consumer base has grown, Fooks still remembers her first customers, some of whom still shop there today.

"Asian international students came in and were like, 'Oh, it smells like home,' and that's when I knew I had succeeded," Fooks said.

Because the market for Asian grocery stores is not very large, the presence of one doing it well generates a lot of buzz in the community. Fooks said the majority of her business has come from word of mouth.

"If you're doing a good job, you're selling fresh products at a good price, they're going to tell their friends, neighbors, incoming students, whatever it is," Fooks said.

However, maintaining her loyal customers or simply keeping her doors open has not always been easy. Sourcing products and hiring staff are typical challenges for local businesses that Fooks has experienced first hand. She calls on "whomever wants to help" to support their local community.

Balancing these challenges, along with the mound of responsibilities that comes with owning a business, has prepared Fooks for her retirement. While she does not have any plans for the store, she is not concerned with what potential new owners will do, and plans on "enjoying life" and traveling.

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Mentoría con propósito

LISTo une a los estudiantes de UGA a través de la cultura hispana

Addie Weber, Traducción: Nathan Valles

Para los hispanohablantes, la palabra “listo” significa “preparado”. En la Universidad de Georgia, LISTo es el acrónimo de “Latinos Invested in the Students of Tomorrow” (“Latinos Invertidos en los Estudiantes del Mañana”), y es una organización que promueve la preparación profesional, el crecimiento personal, las relaciones y el aprecio por la cultura hispana a través de relaciones de mentoría establecidas entre mentores y aprendices.

LISTo ayuda a desarrollar el concepto de “familismo”, una idea cultural hispana que valora los lazos familiares y la lealtad, entre mentores y aprendices. Muchos miembros consideran que esta relación con su mentor fue lo que los llevó a permanecer en la organización y, eventualmente, convertirse ellos mismos en mentores.

“Las personas tienen una buena experiencia con LISTo y quieren quedarse y retribuir, porque tuvieron una buena experiencia con sus mentores”, dijo Kristalee Gonzalez-Perez, co-vicepresidenta de la organización.

El director del UGA Pride Center, John Álvarez Turner, escribió su disertación sobre LISTo, explorando el poder de la mentoría dirigida por estudiantes en el éxito académico y personal de los estudiantes hispanos en la UGA, una institución predominantemente blanca (PWI, por sus siglas en inglés).

“Durante mi investigación, aprendí la gran importancia que tiene la orientación bicultural, la mentoría y la representación cultural para la persistencia de los estudiantes, y uno de los descubrimientos más notables fue el papel profundo que la historia de los exalumnos desempeña en la inspiración de los estudiantes actuales”, dijo Álvarez Turner.

Orígenes y misión de LISTo

Según Álvarez Turner, la historia documentada sobre los orígenes de LISTo es limitada. Su investigación encontró que LISTo comenzó como un proyecto derivado de la Hispanic Student Association, liderado por estudiantes, y se convirtió en un programa de mentoría entre pares enfocado en la academia para ayudar a los estudiantes hispanos de primera generación a adaptarse a la vida universitaria — que para muchos representaba un choque cultural.

La investigación de Álvarez Turner mostró que los estudiantes hispanos pueden enfrentar obstáculos adicionales durante su carrera académica, incluyendo barreras lingüísticas, preparación académica limitada y sentimientos de aislamiento cultural. Estos desafíos son especialmente comunes entre los estudiantes de primera generación que crecieron en hogares donde el inglés no era el idioma principal.

En este contexto, los programas de mentoría en las universidades son necesarios, según la disertación.

“Organizaciones como LISTo, que conectan a estudiantes con mentores que comparten antecedentes culturales y experiencias similares, pueden reducir la sensación de sentirse abrumado y ayudar a los estudiantes a navegar la transición crítica durante sus primeros y segundos semestres,” afirmó Álvarez Turner.

Para 2023, la población estudiantil inscrita en la Universidad de Georgia era 64% blanca y la población hispana inscrita era 7.27%.



Getsemaní Cantos, co-organizadora de eventos de Latinos Invertidos en los Estudiantes del Mañana, posa para un retrato cerca de la carroza de SOMOS UGA, la cual reúne a miembros de Latinos Invertidos en los Estudiantes del Mañana y de la Asociación de Estudiantes Hispanos, durante el 103.º Desfile de Regreso a Casa de la Universidad de Georgia en el centro de Athens, Georgia, el viernes 3 de octubre de 2025. FOTO/KRINA PATEL

Kiara Maravilla, co-organizadora de eventos en LISTo, habló sobre la importancia de tener a alguien que comprenda lo que significa asistir a una PWI siendo minoría.

“Siento que eso es lo que hace que esto sea tan diferente de otros grupos de mentoría, porque somos mayoritariamente hispanos y latinos”, dijo Maravilla. “Somos inclusivos, pero la mayoría de nuestra comunidad es latina, y eso es lo que lo hace tan especial”.

Cómo funciona

Los estudiantes interesados en emparejarse con un mentor llenan un formulario, proporcionando su información básica, carrera e intereses. A partir de allí, los mentores pueden ver los intereses y carreras de los posibles aprendices y de dónde vienen, sin revelar nombres.

Jessica Flores, estudiante de último año en ciencias del ejercicio y deportes, comparó esto con elegir un jugador para un equipo de fantasy.

“Es como si estuviéramos pujantando por ellos. Es decir, ‘oh, quiero a este aprendiz o quiero a aquel’”, explicó Flores. “Así podemos emparejarnos con alguien que creemos que sería un buen match, y ellos también lo revisan”.

Aproximadamente una semana después de llenar el formulario, los miembros se reúnen en persona para ser emparejados.

Eventos de LISTo

LISTo organiza muchos eventos durante el año para ayudar a sus miembros a tener éxito. Que pasa con tu Calabaza es un evento emblemático: un día de salud mental donde pintan calabazas juntos alrededor de los exámenes parciales. Otros eventos para reducir el estrés incluyen sesiones de ejercicio en grupo en Ramsey.

En el evento anual “Map it Out”, exalumnos regresan para hablar sobre sus vidas, carreras y ayudar a los miembros con la preparación laboral.

“Su regreso es una sensación maravillosa porque muestran que quieren vernos tener éxito”, dijo Emily Vicente-Munguia, una de las presidentas de la organización.

Juntos en Comunidad fue un evento que brindó un espacio para que la comunidad hablara sobre sus preocupaciones y promoviera la sensación de unión. Fue una colaboración entre HSA y LISTo.

“Poder contar con LISTo y otras organizaciones hispanas definitivamente me ha hecho sentir más bienvenida”, dijo Flores. “Es muy beneficioso tener cercanía y familiaridad con otros que comparten los mismos valores y que se parecen un poco a ti”.

To read the English version of this article, visit redandblack.com

Thursday Crossword - Answer Online FRIDAY Oct. 24

1	2	3	4	5		6	7	8	9		10	11	12	13	
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60						61					62				
63						64					65				

ACROSS

- Waited for a baby, maybe
- Far from friends
- Dugout supply
- Airborne
- Bronte's fictional governess
- Choice in fencing
- Discontinue, as relations
- Clearing house?
- Cost of a ticket, perhaps
- Makes free of bacteria
- Farrier's aid
- Fred, to Pebbles
- Role rote
- Cured, in a way
- Knife handle?
- Angry, and then some
- Capitulate
- Grave responsibility
- Lip-smacking
- Woodworker's groove
- Malachite and lapis lazuli
- Made over
- Pen pal chatter?
- Anaesthetize
- Food Network stars
- Hook, as a crook
- Campus building
- Weatherman
- Opposed

- OPEC V.I.P.
- Lake on the Nevada border
- Gable's place
- Cultivate, as a garden
- Dale on Buttermilk
- Speaker, of sorts
- Make-meet link
- Franklin or Jefferson, religiously

DOWN

- Football call
- Act as a lookout, say
- Sheltered spot
- Glade or green starer
- Put down
- Like a dump's aroma
- Bailiff's bellow
- Coastal raptor
- Film studio's many
- Got close to
- Like some colonies
- Grammar subject
- Slowly trickles
- Dog in literature
- Be a make-up artist?
- No walk in the park
- Cry from a selfish child
- Eggs, in biology
- Resuscitation routine
- They move pupils
- Food scraps
- Like some wit
- Lost seaworthiness
- Absurdist art movement
- Change your story?
- Used a saddle
- Amount of bricks
- "Angela's Ashes" sequel
- Returned some cash
- Black Hawk's people
- Boardroom illustration
- Capital since 1976
- First name in pop music
- Pocket protector wearers
- Honor with a party
- Black cat, possibly
- Peeling
- One way to gain interest?
- Cambodian's neighbor
- Ages upon ages
- Doctors often prescribe it

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Members of the Classic City Dawgs adaptive sports team speak to one of their coaches during their practice in Athens, Georgia, on Sunday, Oct. 12, 2025. PHOTO/KALEB TATUM

Ball for all

Classic City Dawgs brings adapted sports to Athens

Jake Branan

Organized sports can be difficult to access for children with disabilities, especially when it would often require a commute to the Atlanta area.

Now, the Classic City Dawgs adapted sports team provides children with both physical and learning disabilities across northeast Georgia with the opportunity to play organized adaptive sports, and the organization is looking to continue growing.

The team has been active for nearly two years and alternates between football, basketball and handball around every three months. It's run out of Clarke Central High School, but more broadly serves as the northeast Georgia arm of the American Association of Adapted Sports Programs, the national governing body of adapted sports in schools that's fully recognized by the Georgia High School Association. The brainchild of former Clarke County School District superintendent Robbie Hooker, the team is led by co-head coaches Ryan Johnson and Julius Hooper.

Johnson's journey to becoming the head coach started over 20 years ago. After getting his degree from the Univer-

sity of South Florida with an emphasis in athletic training, he moved to Georgia in 2004 to take a job as an outreach athletic trainer at Clarke Central. He used his experience training people with disabilities for his degree to get additional jobs as a paraprofessional and in the special education department.

He left his position as an athletic trainer after about 13 years, but during his hiatus, two of his former colleagues in the special education department approached him about coaching this team. He agreed to take the role once his youngest child finished school and he officially became the Classic City Dawgs' head coach in August 2024.

Johnson relishes the opportunity to coach an adaptive team for the first time, and said he is grateful for how many doors this job has opened for him.

"I've only been involved [with the team] since I've taken on the head coaching position," Johnson said. "But the people I've met and the opportunities that have come up have been just awesome. I appreciate every opportunity that I've been given."

The team has provided similar opportunities for people like 10-year-old Cohen Stephens and his mother, Victoria Stephens. Cohen, who has spina bifida and hydrocephalus, loves sports, but has never been able to play because he and his family live in Commerce, Georgia, and would have to commute to Atlanta for the nearest program, which Stephens said was unfeasible. But after she received an invitation from Johnson in March to join the Classic City Dawgs football team, she said that Cohen would now be able to fulfill his passion for sports and finally achieve his dream of being an athlete.

"He's always wanted to do sports," Stephens said. "He's always said that he's a sports star even though he's never played it before, and now he can actually get the skills and do what he wants to do with it and hopefully become great at it."

"It really means a lot to me," Cohen added. "It makes me feel awesome."

Even though Johnson, parents like Stephens and the CCSD athletic department have continued to promote the team, very few other parents of disabled children in the area have taken up this opportunity.

Johnson said that even though the program is free and he could charter buses for families who can't make the drive, only 10 players have signed up. That even includes two able-bodied students who are on the roster to help field full teams. Johnson speculated that the team might have low engagement because of the stigma that using a wheelchair brings, but he used those able-bodied "filler" players as an example for how rewarding the experience can be.

"Anybody that is able-bodied that has come and sat in the chairs and put the work in to learn how to do the things has had a blast," Johnson said. "Nobody's ever regretted the moment. Nobody's ever regretted the experience. Everybody's always laughing and having a good time."

The enjoyment of sports is the primary lesson Johnson wants to teach his players. He emphasized that he'd like his team to win a game on occasion, but that having fun, staying active and growing as players and people are much more important. He said he hopes this simple goal will resonate with families and motivate them to sign up, and that his message will continue to spread.

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