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## Full circle at UGA

An international student's journey from mentee to mentor

Kyle Yuzzi

The University of Georgia is home to thousands of international students from more than 100 countries. While the unique transition that international students face can be difficult, some go on to establish permanent careers at the university.

One of those students is Samarchith Kurup, an associate professor in the UGA Department of Cellular Biology who now teaches and researches at the same university where he earned his doctorate.

From navigating an unfamiliar culture to mentoring other international scholars, his time at UGA has brought him full circle.

### From Kerala to Athens

Kurup began his academic journey with a degree in veterinary medicine from Kerala Agricultural University in India. While working toward his Master of Veterinary Science degree at the Indian Veterinary Research Institute, he researched vaccination and immunology for Trypanosoma, a disease prevalent in cattle — particularly in India where Kurup grew up. This led him to develop an interest in parasitology.

As his master's fellowship ended, he chose to search for places where he could continue his parasitology research instead of returning to veterinary practice.

"UGA is hands down the best place to do parasitology research, pretty much in the world," Kurup said.

After applying and being accepted to UGA, he earned his Ph.D. studying the parasite Trypanosoma cruzi, another Trypanosoma species prevalent in South America.

Kurup's plan was not always a career in academic re-

search. In fact, he had originally intended to open a veterinary hospital in his hometown.

However, the abundance of research opportunities in the U.S. led him down a different path.

"[The] U.S. still remains, I think, one of the best places to do research, especially research in the field of biological sciences," Kurup said. "The talent pool that's here, the resources that are here and the interest ... we are still in a league of our own."

Like any international student, Kurup attending school in the U.S. came with the challenge of assimilation.

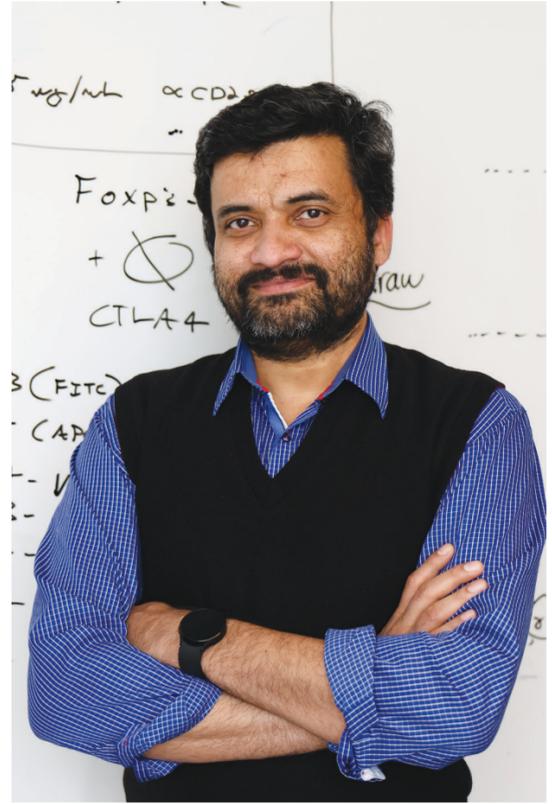
Arriving in the U.S. was Kurup's first time traveling outside India, and he had to restart his life in a new country without any familial ties or roots.

"I had like \$45 when I came here," Kurup said. "It's extremely difficult because you don't know how to go about doing things in the society. You don't know how the laws work, you don't have a car, so you have to actually start from ground zero."

Soon, Kurup met many people that helped him get accustomed to different social and cultural practices and felt that people in the U.S. were very accepting of him and his background.

"Even now, things are very, very similar between [the U.S. and India], and it was similar 20 years ago," Kurup said. "If you have an open mind, you can understand the culture and then learn to live in that culture."

During his Ph.D. studies, Kurup was mentored by Rick Tarleton, a professor in the Department of Cellular Biology. Tarleton felt that Kurup was a strong fit for the program because of his international medical experience.



Samarchith Kurup poses for a portrait on Monday, Feb. 16, 2026, in Athens, Georgia. Kurup moved to the U.S. to attend the University of Georgia and decided to stay after his graduation to pursue research and teaching. PHOTO/SYDNEY SHANKMAN

SEE MENTEE TO MENTOR PAGE A3



The entrance to Classic City Aquariums stands inside the Georgia Square Mall in Athens, Georgia, on Sunday, Feb. 15, 2026. Classic City Aquariums has been selling different types of fish and coral since 2017. PHOTO/AMELIA DURDEN

## Making waves

Classic City Aquariums reopens at the Georgia Square Mall, blending nostalgia with new growth

Alexia Rule

The near-empty Georgia Square Mall holds a store that shines ocean blue. Inside, Classic City Aquariums provides an aquatic escape for fish fans and curious Athenians alike.

The idea for Classic City Aquariums was first sketched on a bar napkin over beers at The Catch 22 Gastropub by friends Jimmie Rattles and Robert Elder. Years later, after loss, closure and new beginnings, the idea behind that sketch resurfaced inside the Georgia Square Mall, when current co-owners Rattles and Adam Daniel reopened their storefront in December 2025.

Rattles moved to Athens for work in 2000. He shared that what started as a hobby working with aquariums turned into more as he developed a love for it. He began growing corals out of his own tank and selling them. Eventually, he wanted to figure out a way to monetize his efforts.

"It was just a hobby that I loved, and it escalated," Rattles said.

Rattles began working at an aquarium shop where he stayed for seven years doing service and tank maintenance. After doing tank service on his own for three years, he eventually started Classic City Aquariums with Elder.

"We were at Catch 22 one day having a couple beers and I asked the server for a napkin, and we drew out a store," Rattles said. "Then the next day, he had it. He stayed up all night and did it in CAD (Computer-aided Design)... and we were like, 'okay, yeah, we need to do this.'"

When Elder was diagnosed with esophageal cancer just months into the business opening, he and Rattles asked their friend, Athens-native Adam Daniel, to temporarily cover his role in the store and with service customers. His intention was to go through treatments and make a full return.

Around two years later, Elder died and Daniel bought out the ownership of the store from his family.

SEE AQUARIUM REOPENS PAGE A3



Two clownfish swim in a tank at Classic City Aquariums inside the Georgia Square Mall in Athens, Georgia, on Sunday, Feb. 15, 2026. Classic City Aquariums has been selling different types of fish and coral since 2017. PHOTO/AMELIA DURDEN

## From “MasterChef” to the Classic City

### Cooking couple finds love and a calling in Athens

Brady Laddbush

What started as a high-pressure cooking competition turned into something lasting for Courtney Fraley and Adam Head. The couple who met during the most recent season of “MasterChef” is now channeling the techniques, discipline and creativity from Gordon Ramsay’s kitchen into interactive cooking experiences in Athens.

Season 15 of “MasterChef” introduced “Dynamic Duos,” where contestants applied for the show as a close pair. Fraley competed with her friend, Darce Olund, where the two of them traded scrubs for aprons. Known as the ‘vegan vet nurses’, they work together as animal ER nurses in Chicago, and specialized in global vegan cuisine.

Head entered the competition alongside his brother, Joel Head. The two are both University of Georgia alumni and incorporated some of Athens’ specialties into what they created on the show.

For Head, the opportunity to build something in his hometown adds meaning to his post-show journey.

“It’s fun to take these elements of our childhood and kind of reimagine some of it as new dishes, bring them into the spotlight and just have fun with it,” Head said.

Filming for the show was set in Australia and the bond Head and Fraley formed with the entire cast is something they will never lose. Now over a year post-filming, the couple still frequently talks to the “MasterChef” family they created.

“These people we’ve gotten so close to them, so they’re like family now, and us, we got to know each other so well and became friends first by filming this show together,” Fraley said. “The universe did us a solid.”

“I want people to look at food and be excited to come home from work and want to cook.”

COURTNEY FRALEY | CHEF

When auditioning, their casting director had many duos to choose from, but could only cast two, which happened to be Fraley and Head’s teams. This resulted in joking with their director that she placed them together unironically.

“I call her our casting fairy godmother,” Fraley said.

Fraley jokingly asked the director if she could cast her with her future partner. As it turned out, she did.

“I had been single for a while, and I kind of always thought if I was going to find my person, it would be doing the thing that I love, which is something like cooking,” Fraley said.

Being in a high-pressure kitchen with culinary icon Gordon Ramsay and other talent might scare certain contestants, but it was different for Fraley and Head. The couple used “MasterChef” as a creative outlet to strengthen their skills in the kitchen, breaking away from their lives back at home.

The Head brothers were both in the Redcoat Marching Band during their collegiate career, and relate their cooking to performing in a band.

“We know enough about cooking and how to cook and with the flavors that we want that we don’t have to worry about that technique,” Head said. “We just go out, turn it on and do it.”

The adrenaline from the show never stopped for Fraley, as she went right back to her fast-paced ER job. Working in a high-stress environment made it easy to translate her skills to the “MasterChef” kitchen.

The foundation the couple created after filming allowed them to explore new ways of sharing their love for cooking and for one another with those around them.

Since filming, they have hosted pop-up cooking classes designed to feel welcoming rather than competitive. Most classes are capped at around 20 participants and consists of duos just like them, giving guests the chance to ask questions, learn techniques and cook alongside them.

Their menus focus on plant-based cuisine, a reflection of Fraley’s background and their shared interest in global flavors. Although Head is not vegan, it’s easy for the couple to come up with dishes that are.

“We always do like the base of everything vegan, and then

he’ll add in a protein, and I’ll add in my mushroom,” Fraley said. “It’s shockingly easy as a couple for me to be vegan and him not to be.”

For Fraley, cooking is about connection. She describes the process as grounding, unifying and almost meditative — something that is shown through her blog “Faraway Kitchen.”

The couple wants those that leave their cooking classes to feel the love and authenticity that comes from cooking something enjoyable and feeling good about what they created.

“I want people to look at food and be excited to come home from work and want to cook,” Fraley said.

The couple hopes to continue building something lasting in the Classic City as they make their move to Athens in the next couple of months and plan additional pop-ups in the area and beyond, including collaborations with fellow cast members.

“We don’t want to hide in the back of a kitchen,” Fraley said. “We want to be out there talking to people, sharing stories and connecting with people. That’s the whole point for us.”



Adam Head (left) and Courtney Fraley (right) prepare appetizers before teaching a cooking class at Athens Cooks in Athens, Georgia, on Thursday, Jan. 15, 2026. PHOTO/AMELIA DURDEN

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Samarchith Kurup poses for a portrait on Monday, Feb. 16, 2026, in Athens, Georgia. Kurup moved to the U.S. to attend the University of Georgia and decided to stay after his graduation to pursue research and teaching. PHOTO/SYDNEY SHANKMAN

**MENTEE TO MENTOR FROM PAGE A1**

“He had some advantages over a freshly minted undergrad from the U.S. in that he had a veterinary degree [from India],” Tarleton said. “He was more mature than the standard new U.S. undergrad.”

Tarleton also felt that Kurup had the right abilities and characteristics to succeed as a Ph.D. student.

“You can be incredibly, incredibly smart and still totally fail because you may not be, for example, as creative or as motivated or driven or willing to accept failure,” Tarleton said. “If you’re not curious ... then I think your chances of succeeding as a scientist are not very good.”

Tarleton said his work with Kurup was characterized by argumentative, yet fruitful discussions. He felt that Kurup never took offense when they disagreed or took different stances on data.

“[He was] somebody that [would] challenge me intellectually,” Tarleton said.

Even though Tarleton and Kurup’s working relationship has gone from that of mentor and mentee to colleagues, Kurup still comes to Tarleton for advice and rigorous critiques on manuscripts and proposals.

Kurup’s openness to feedback reflects his willingness to pursue research in areas that may seem too difficult or that are outside of his primary area of study, according to Tarleton.

“He’s not only ambitious; he is a bit of a risk-taker, so he works on things that other people may have avoided because

they thought it was too hard,” Tarleton said. “He also has the interest in getting involved in things that are outside his narrow focus area.”

**From mentee to mentor**

Kurup’s ambition shows up in the fast-paced research environment he has cultivated in his own lab today.

Kurup keeps students in his lab busy with multiple projects at once. The engaging, challenging nature of his lab is influenced by the rigorous environment of his former labs and the research style of his former mentors.

Kurup believes that meaningful productivity is the best way to pay forward the luxury of being able to do what he loves.

“We are able to do our hobby and get paid for it,” Kurup said. “It’s only fair that we make the best use of the taxpayer resources and produce and advance humanity.”

Camila da Silva, a physiology lecturer at UGA and former postdoctoral researcher under Kurup, noted how his quick turnaround times made her a better researcher.

“He has a strong sense of urgency, and he sets very high standards,” da Silva said. “But at the same time, he’s very accessible and dependable.”

Originally from Brazil, da Silva came to the U.S. specifically to conduct research with Kurup, who had been searching for qualified postdoctoral researchers.

Kurup was an important resource for da Silva as she transitioned to life in a new country.

“I missed home a lot when I got here,” da Silva said. “He

shared his experience with me and told me a few things that helped me see things differently.”

During da Silva’s first month in the U.S., she was hit by a car while crossing the street. Kurup helped her navigate doctor visits and recovery because she did not know anyone else here at the time. He remained a supportive figure for her as she recovered

“There are resources in UGA that will help you with these things, and then slowly, you grow and then establish yourself,” Kurup said. “And it’s equally important that you give back to these resources that originally supported you.”

In recent weeks, the Trump administration’s enforcement of immigration policies has drawn national attention and criticism.

Amid ongoing uncertainty, Kurup reflects on the positive reception he experienced when he arrived in the country.

From his experience as an immigrant, Kurup believes that the people in the U.S., at least in academia, judge individuals more on talent and hard work than they do on background or culture, making it a unique place to build a life and career.

“This is still a place where, if you work hard and if you have talent, the people around you will encourage you and help you get ahead,” Kurup said. “I hope that never changes. I mean, things have deteriorated a little bit over the past couple of decades, I suppose, but I hope that that goodness is still there.”

Kurup noted that there are many others who moved to the U.S. from other countries and made major contributions in science and other academic fields, emphasizing how these contributions benefit not only the U.S., but the entire world.

“I’m not an exception by any means ... In practically any field you take, there have been leaders who were immigrants,” Kurup said. “If I can inspire at least one person, that would be extremely satisfactory.”

**“ This is still a place where, if you work hard and if you have talent, the people around you will encourage you and help you get ahead. I hope that never changes.”**

**SAMARCHITH KURUP | UGA ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR**

While Kurup hopes that his story offers encouragement to other international students, he also acknowledges that the uncertainty of moving to a new country can be isolating. Still, he urges students in similar situations to have faith that those around them will be nurturing of their talent and provide a strong support system. Kurup’s path, which began with an uncertain step into a foreign land, now stands as a testament to international students’ ability to thrive.

“If you are an immigrant, you might feel lost, and most of us do all the time,” Kurup said. “But trust that the immediate people around you and the people who you work with and people who have power over you, they will — for the most part — support you.”

**AQUARIUM REOPENS FROM PAGE A1**

“It’s unfortunate he never saw what it became here, but without Adam, I would have closed then,” Rattles said. “He’s super passionate. I knew he was the right guy.”

When Daniel first started working with aquariums, he shared that it “very quickly went from hobby to passion to career.” After working at a fish store for about a year, he met Elder and Rattles along the way, and knew them back when they opened up the original Classic City Aquariums location in Watkinsville, Georgia.

“Being that I knew Jimmie already and was friends with Robert, they asked if I would step in to kind of cover some of the shifts and stuff in the store and pick up a couple of the service customers to help cover that time frame,” Daniel said.

Daniel and Rattles have been equal partners since 2018. They owned the store in Watkinsville together for about eight years before closing in April 2024, where they maintained a small space for growing coral and providing off-site aquarium services only.

“For the last year and a half, Adam and I have just been doing service,” Rattles said. “We make a good living that way, but we need the store to grow the service, because inevitably, someone’s going to get rid of their fish tank or if it’s in an office, the office closes ... We needed a place that could sell more of that, and so we could house fish and stuff to care for those people.”

**A new home**

The Classic City Aquariums store is now located inside the mostly-vacated Georgia Square Mall, which used to be a bustling retail location. The mall has had a tentative redevelopment plan since May 2020.

“We got the opportunity to come here and we jumped at it,” Daniel said. “There’s a lot of different discussions for the redevelopment side of everything, and that’s going to be awesome, to be part of it and to be here.”

Daniel recalled the “immense amount of nostalgia” he felt walking back into the mall that he spent his childhood visiting. He remembered that the space that now holds Classic City Aquariums used to be an arcade.

**“ Everybody’s tank should be a little bit different because that’s the whole point. It’s your own little slice of the ocean or the lake or whatever you’re recreating.”**

**ADAM DANIEL | AQUARIUM CO-OWNER**

“We have a pretty good Instagram and Facebook following, so as soon as I put a picture of keys and a lease, my engagement from that post was really positive, so I was like, ‘I know we’re gonna be fine,’” Rattles said. “By the second day, we had seen everybody we had hoped to see, and I’m really happy that we reopened ... We’re not going anywhere.”

Daniel referred to the company as a “destination of our own,” never being dependent on walk-ups from other businesses to lead to customers.

“Unless you have an aquarium or you just want to go look at pretty fish, there’s not much of a reason to go to a fish store, so we know we’re a small little kind of niche,” Daniel said. “We’ve been able to bring most of our customer base already from back home, where we were at in Watkinsville.”

Daniel’s favorite part of working in the industry is propagating and growing the corals. He shared that Classic City

Aquariums aims to farm all of the coral they have in tanks in compliance with their “conservation mindset” and goal to not take pieces from the ocean.

**Moving in**

Classic City Aquariums sells fresh and saltwater fish, corals, plants and dry goods to set up and maintain aquariums and provides services such as vacation feedings and aquarium installation, maintenance and moves. Daniel shared that they have moved tanks from Monroe to Tennessee and currently provide services in Athens, Conyers, Elberton, Johns Creek and beyond.

According to Rattles, sharks and stingrays are also coming soon to the store.

“There’s so many unique and individual fish, and I’ve had most of them,” Rattles said. “I’ve been doing this since I was a kid. I’ve had salt water tanks for about 25 years now.”

Daniel shared that his favorite part of owning the compa-

ny and working in the store is the customer base that they have been able to form. Building relationships with them and sharing his knowledge on starting and maintaining aquariums has been rewarding as he has continued to learn things along the way.

“It can be very overwhelming, especially when you’re first getting started and trying to decipher the million different stories of ‘this is the right way to do it,’” Daniel said. “Everybody’s tank should be a little bit different because that’s the whole point. It’s your own little slice of the ocean or the lake or whatever you’re recreating.”

Rattles and Daniel look forward to the future of Classic City Aquariums as the environment around the store in the Georgia Square Mall continues to evolve.

“If everything that comes that we think is, and we’ve heard we’re in a really good spot, we’re excited,” Rattles said. “We moved in here in December and we’ve already got a few new service clients. We’re happy.”



Classic City Aquariums co-owners Jimmie Rattles (left) and Adam Daniel (right) pose for a photo together in front of a fish tank in their store inside the Georgia Square Mall in Athens, Georgia, on Sunday, Feb. 15, 2026. Classic City Aquariums has been selling different types of fish and coral since 2017. PHOTO/AMELIA DURDEN

## The Rise of Justin Wise

### North Oconee's four-star guard leads Titans back into title hunt

Kristopher Wilhelm

The North Oconee boys basketball team enters the state playoffs with a 24-3 overall record and 13-1 mark in region play. The No. 1 Titans in AAAA ended the regular season with a loss, however, falling to No. 1 Holy Innocents Episcopal of Class AA on Feb. 7, 68-64.

The finale was a rematch of the 2024 AAAA state championship game — a game which saw the likes of star forwards Caleb Wilson for the Golden Bears and Khamari Brooks for the Titans. Wilson is now at North Carolina and is expected to be a top 10 pick in the 2026 NBA Draft, while Brooks signed with Georgia's football team in December as a consensus four-star edge rusher.

But also in that game was a lesser-known star-in-the-making; freshman guard Justin Wise.

Wise, only 16 years old at the time, rattled off five 3-pointers and 19 points in the big game to help his Titans win their first state championship in program history, earning himself the game's MVP award in the process.

"We were kind of in a [shooting] drought," junior forward Kelvin Millington said while recalling the game. "Then [Wise] hit a big 3-pointer that sparked our run, and then he just hit, hit, hit — three 3-pointers in a row, and that just gave us momentum ... It was crazy."

Since then, Wise has acquired even more hardware, including another state title and MVP award as well as state and region player of the year honors last season. In addition, he's earned numerous accolades from AAU basketball circuits and various tournaments the four-star guard has played in.

Now in his junior year at North Oconee, the Bogart, Georgia, native has made a name for himself and caught the attention of several big-time college programs — with offers from Georgia, Auburn, Cincinnati, Cal, Florida State, Villanova, Virginia Tech, Clemson, Miami and Tennessee.

Wise said he plans to make a commitment decision "pretty soon," with official visits lined up to Auburn, Georgia, Clemson and Miami in the near future. First, though, the star guard has a postseason run in the immediacy, with the potential for a third consecutive state title looming large.

"I'm feeling pretty good," Wise said when asked about a potential three-peat. "I'd say right now we definitely have the experience that we can do it again — with me, Blake [Bracco] and Banks [Pourchier] — we definitely could."

Bracco, a 5-foot-10 senior point guard, and Pourchier, a 6-foot-8 senior forward, are part of a larger group of five seniors who have elevated the program during their time at North Oconee. Although not a part of that class of seniors, Wise is still looked up to by his teammates.

"His freshman year, we had five great seniors on the team and I wouldn't say he was a follower — he played and he was his own guy and he was tough and clutch ... but he looked up to those guys," North Oconee head coach Rick Rasmussen said. "Last year he was more of a leader and then this year



North Oconee junior Justin Wise (2) attempts a jump shot during the Oconee County vs. North Oconee high school basketball game at Oconee County High School in Watkinsville, Georgia, on Thursday, Nov. 13, 2025. North Oconee won 76-40. PHOTO/GABRIEL OBLETON

he's become the main guy ... He leads by example, but he also leads by correcting."

Wise has also improved statistically this season, with his teammates praising his significant growth in playmaking and defensive ability.

"As a freshman, [Wise's] game was mostly just shooting 3-pointers and then driving occasionally," Millington said. "But I've seen him ... grow into an all-around basketball player — being able to score at all three levels: mid-range, pull-ups and deep 3-pointers. He's always really clutch in the fourth quarter when we need him most."

The outstanding athletic ability Wise harnesses on the court has deep roots within his family. His mother, Lydia McCormick, was on the South Gwinnett girls basketball team that went undefeated and won the state title in 1995. His uncle, Torey McCormick, played college basketball at Miami from 1993 to 1997, and Justin's younger brother, Brayden,

currently plays for North Oconee alongside him as a freshman.

Brayden has been a key contributor for the team, too, and someone that Rasmussen sees going to the next level.

"Justin's little brother, Brayden, he's a future college player as well, and Justin's been a great mentor to him," Rasmussen said.

North Oconee secured its third consecutive region tournament championship on Feb. 20, with a 75-64 win over Eastside (Covington) at Cedar Shoals High School. Wise led the Titans with a career-high 39 points and added five blocks, five rebounds, three assists and two steals, delivering in the biggest moments of the tournament. For the junior guard who first made his mark on a state tournament stage as a freshman, the latest region title adds to a career already shaped by postseason success, as Wise will once again anchor North Oconee's pursuit of a third straight state championship.

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## Moments from anti-ICE demonstrations in Athens



University of Georgia and Athens community organizations hold the "ICE Out of Athens" walkout and protest on campus at Tate Plaza in Athens, Georgia on Friday, Jan. 30, 2026. The demonstration comes alongside nationwide walkouts and protests opposing ICE and President Trump's immigration policies. PHOTO/EVAN FRILINGOS



Musicians march during an anti-ICE demonstration in downtown Athens, Georgia, on Sunday, Feb. 8, 2026. PHOTO/CAROLINE NEWBERN



Protestors hold up signs during an anti-ICE demonstration in Athens, Georgia on Sunday, Feb. 8, 2026. The protest included speakers and a march through downtown Athens. PHOTO/EMILY LAYCOCK



A protestor outside of the Classic Center in Athens, Georgia, on Wednesday, Feb. 4, 2026. The demonstration was held in opposition to the U.S. Customs and Border Protection booth at The University of Georgia's Spring Career and Internship Fair. PHOTO/GABRIEL OBLETON



Protestors hold up signs during the "ICE Out Walkout" protest at the Arch, on Tuesday, Jan. 20, 2026. Protestors showed solidarity with Minneapolis following the death of Renee Good. PHOTO/JAKE WESTING



Participants yell "shame" in a protest opposing ICE in front of the U.S. Post Office in downtown Athens, Georgia, on Sunday, Feb. 8, 2026. PHOTO/CAROLINE NEWBERN



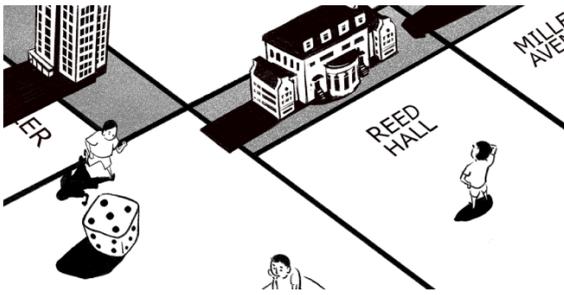
University of Georgia and Athens organizations hold the "ICE Out of Athens" protest at Tate Plaza in Athens, Georgia on Friday, Jan. 30, 2026. PHOTO/HOSANNA WORKU

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## OPINION: Home away from home

### Navigating the challenges of student housing in Athens

Matthew Carr

Finding housing is an important part of every student's college experience. Many students have apartments that they envision living in. From luxury high-rise apartments with a modern feel to historic homes infused with the heart of Athens, there is a spot for almost everyone. The vast infrastructure in and around the University of Georgia allows students the opportunity to find their perfect place.

However, this opportunity doesn't come without its challenges. Students must account for a multitude of different variables when deciding where to live. Different neighborhoods offer students unique options, but can also prove to be overwhelming for people dealing with the apartment search for the first time. In addition to this, the high demand for housing leads to apartment prices rising to levels that many students simply cannot afford.

With the spring semester underway, many students are currently searching for housing spots for next school year. While this can be an exciting time, it can also be a hectic period filled with many questions, obstacles and tough decisions.

"I wish there was better handling of transport off campus because the parking situation is complicated in the first place. Now, certain places offer a shuttle to get you to and from school, but they're kind of scarce, and they don't work all of the time. So, I wish there was more effort on the part of the university to get you to like different parts of the town," said

Toure, a junior data science major, said.

Parking is a prevalent issue on campus for many. I remember scrambling to secure a parking space for this year. I was one of the lucky ones who was able to find a parking spot close to where I live, but a lot of other students were not as fortunate. The lack of available parking spaces force students to plan a lot of their housing decisions around their commuting situation. Unless a student's off-campus residence is within a short walking distance of the university, they need parking spaces for their vehicles so that they can efficiently get to campus.

Although the university and the Athens area at large have tried to adjust for the need of more parking spots, there is still a large gap between the supply of and demand for parking passes.

It can be a nerve-racking experience for students going through the leasing process for the first time. On top of apartment tours and contracts, dealing with potential issues in a living space can be hard to handle. Even though it may feel uncomfortable at first, being able to advocate for yourself is a skill that sets students up to have a much more pleasant living experience.

"For off-campus, just look at all of the options, and don't be afraid to call and ask questions because I know it can be a little daunting to call a random apartment complex and ask them a bunch of questions," Jackson Waddell, a sophomore economics major, said. "But, it's worth asking them now instead of finding out what you didn't want once you've moved in and signed a lease and all of that."

With all of the discussion regarding off-campus living, students living on campus shouldn't be forgotten. On-campus students face their own set of challenges, with modern college culture putting pressure on students to live in a specific dormitory building deemed more social than others in order to make friends. My best friends at UGA are all people that I met in my dorm. I wouldn't trade any of the movie nights, late night study sessions, or kitchen dinners with my friend group for another dorm that some people online say is more "active" or "lively."

"As a freshman, I really was like 'Oh, I didn't get into Brumby or Russell. I'm screwed. My life is going to suck.' But I feel like pretty much every dorm is fine, and you'll make friends wherever you are," Abby Kirry, a senior economics and sociology major, said.

With all of the elements that go into finding housing as a UGA student, the experience can feel intimidating at times. But with continued efforts to aid students by the university and with determination by students, everyone can find their perfect home away from home while at UGA.

*Matthew Carr is a freshman history and intended economics major*

## Yowser & Yowsette in Food Fright on Date Night



## STUDENT VOICES

### UGA students share sober night life recommendations

Josephine Thomas

In a college town that hosts approximately 80 bars in one square mile in its downtown area, there are many opportunities to drink.

However, Athens is also home to businesses and locations that allow for an equally fun and fulfilling sober night out. In recent years, some studies have shown decreasing alcohol use by University of Georgia students, following national trends. So, for the many students who abstain from drinking, cannot legally drink or simply prefer to maintain a balance between nights spent drinking and not drinking, having sober night life activities is important.

The Red & Black spoke with UGA students about sober night life options that they wanted to highlight.



**Emily Pressley**  
SPECIAL EDUCATION MAJOR

"I love to go out to eat with my friends. Emmy Squared [Pizza] is one of my favorite places. Then, The Rook & Pawn: me and my friends like to go and play card games — or any type of game — and just sit and hang out," Pressley said.



**Aidan Jackson**  
ENTERTAINMENT AND MEDIA STUDIES MAJOR

"A lot of the time when I'm downtown, I'm just walking to go to Ciné because it [has] really cheap movies, and you can go with friends and get something to talk about for a good while afterwards. Otherwise, I'll get invited over to enjoy some time at my friend's house rather than going out," Jackson said.



**Sydney Scheiwe**  
HUMAN DEVELOPMENT AND FAMILY SCIENCE MAJOR

"My favorite is always just going to get a sweet treat like Andy's [Frozen Custard] is good, or Jeni's [Splendid Ice Creams]. I love getting ice cream just with a friend, just a little ice cream date at night," Scheiwe said.



**Ryan Tipper**  
EXERCISE AND SPORTS SCIENCE MAJOR

"There's so much of UGA to explore throughout all campus, even downtown ... there's so much to look around at," Tipper said. "Going to McDonald's at two in the morning — that's open on Prince Avenue 24 hours."

PHOTOS/JOSEPHINE THOMAS

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## Puertas abiertas

### Students for Latinx Empowerment anima a estudiantes locales de secundaria a cursar estudios superiores

Cara Eldridge, Traducción: Nathan Valles

Students for Latinx Empowerment (SLE) es una organización estudiantil de la Universidad de Georgia dedicada a brindar recursos a estudiantes hispanos de secundaria con el objetivo de aumentar la matrícula universitaria. SLE celebró su cuarto evento anual ¡Sígueme!, una jornada completa que conecta a estudiantes hispanos de secundaria con UGA, en el Tate Grand Hall el 13 de febrero de 2026.

Aproximadamente 50 estudiantes de Clarke Central High School y Cedar Shoals High School asistieron al evento. Los consejeros universitarios y vocacionales de ambas escuelas se mostraron entusiasmados de que sus estudiantes pudieran imaginarse en un entorno de educación superior y abrir nuevas oportunidades de movilidad económica en el futuro.

“A veces este tipo de iniciativas no parecen estar dirigidas específicamente a ellos”, dijo Alejo Zayas, asesor universitario y vocacional de Clarke Central High School. “Yo no tuve un mentor así... así que creo que es muy positivo que ya estén conscientes de todas las oportunidades que existen para ellos”.

Los estudiantes participaron en ¡Sígueme! de 8:30 a.m. a 3 p.m. para vivir una experiencia inmersiva en UGA. Los mentores de SLE quisieron contar con el mayor tiempo posible para compartir su proceso hacia la educación superior y establecer vínculos.

El evento incluyó un recorrido por el campus, una clase simulada, una feria de participación estudiantil y un panel de estudiantes de posgrado. Se ofreció información detallada sobre FAFSA, opciones de becas y el proceso de solicitud no solo para UGA, sino también para otras universidades y escuelas técnicas. Este enfoque integral busca desmitificar lo que puede parecer una transición abrumadora de la secundaria a la universidad.

Maria Rodriguez, presidenta de SLE y estudiante de cuarto año de arquitectura del paisaje en UGA, considera que el éxito de su misión se refleja cuando los estudiantes de secundaria pueden identificar los recursos presentados durante el evento y utilizarlos en su proceso de solicitud y en su futura trayectoria universitaria.

“Realmente estamos alentando cualquier camino que les permita superarse y dar pasos que les ayuden a entender que no tiene que ser esta meta enorme de Harvard, sino que puede ser asistir a Kennesaw State University o a Gwinnett Tech”, dijo Rodriguez.

Crear un sistema de apoyo tanto académico como social para estudiantes hispanos es otro objetivo fundamental de



La mesa directiva de Students for Latinx Empowerment posa para una foto durante el evento anual ¡Sígueme! de SLE en el Tate Student Center de la Universidad de Georgia en Athens, Georgia, el viernes 13 de febrero de 2026. SLE invita a estudiantes de secundaria de condados cercanos a ¡Sígueme! para que experimenten un día en la vida de un estudiante de UGA. FOTO/EVAN FRILINGOS

SLE. También organizan otros eventos comunitarios como redacción de cartas y una noche de salsa.

Otras organizaciones para estudiantes latinoamericanos e hispanos, como la Hispanic Student Association (HSA) de UGA, instalaron mesas en la feria de participación para demostrar el amplio apoyo disponible en el campus.

Roberto Rios, representante de HSA, dijo que el objetivo principal de la organización es “crear un espacio para que los estudiantes hispanos y latinos se reúnan y formen comunidad”.

Kimberly Castro, estudiante de último año de biología y coordinadora de alcance comunitario de SLE, proviene de una escuela secundaria marginada y es estudiante universitaria de primera generación. Un programa similar a SLE la ayudó a postularse a UGA. Ahora espera convertirse en mentora de la misma manera en que ella fue apoyada.

“Porque vi a otros Hispanos en roles que pensaba que tal vez no eran posibles, pensé: ‘Yo puedo hacer esto’”, dijo Castro.

Valeria Rodriguez, estudiante de segundo año de justicia penal y coordinadora de voluntarios de SLE, originalmente planeaba unirse al ejército para obtener una educación superior a bajo costo, pero tras informarse sobre oportunidades de becas, pudo asistir a UGA. Espera ayudar a personas en una situación similar a conocer sus otras opciones.

“Mostrarles a los estudiantes que solo porque vienes de este entorno no significa que tengas que tener la misma historia”, dijo Rodriguez. “Puedes escribir tu propia historia”.

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



Dos estudiantes posan para una foto en el evento ¡Sígueme! de Students for Latinx Empowerment en el Tate Student Center de la Universidad de Georgia en Athens, Georgia, el viernes 13 de febrero de 2026. SLE invita a estudiantes de secundaria de condados cercanos a ¡Sígueme! para que experimenten un día en la vida de un estudiante de UGA. FOTO/EVAN FRILINGOS

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1	2	3		4	5	6	7		8	9	10	11			
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15				16					17						
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50							51				52				
53							54				55				

- ACROSS**
1. “Space Oddity” major
  4. Radiate
  8. Bank offering
  12. “\_\_\_ momento!”
  13. Double agent
  14. Disco do
  15. Dog holder?
  16. Kid’s transport
  17. Burgoo, e.g.
  18. Covert comments
  20. Babysitter’s charge
  22. Causing a pucker
  23. Latched, in a way
  27. Rob Roy, et al.
  29. Whistle-blower
  30. Ecol. watchdog
  31. Anecdotal history
  32. Assist the waiter
  33. All hands on deck?
  34. Fossey subject
  35. Fee follower
  36. Queens, for example
  37. Retired, with “down”
  39. For Pete’s \_\_\_!
  40. Cookbook direction
  41. Rich, as foods
  44. Naval base?
  47. Panache
  49. Mad Hatter’s drink

50. Colorful mineral
51. Cheese off
52. Be fallible
53. Glimpse from afar
54. Broke a limit
55. Hibernation spot

- DOWN**
1. Marching-band burden
  2. Difficult duty
  3. Recorded (progress)
  4. Fading memories
  5. Like a good cake
  6. Sort
  7. Cuts canines
  8. Doesn’t fall apart
  9. Frequent, to Keats
  10. A word with you?
  11. When, for an eager beaver
  19. Time line inclusion
  21. Big galoot
  24. Pervaded
  25. Tool for a duel
  26. Vampire’s curfew
  27. Bacon buy
  28. Get along
  29. French way
  32. Sotheby’s patrons
  33. Popular pop
  35. Bureau member
  36. On notice
  38. Loiter
  39. Cartographer’s concern
  42. Scarcely enough
  43. Kitten’s plaything
  44. Break new ground?
  45. Boom periods
  46. A place of luxury?
  48. Some disrespect

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# Thames Cranz

Creative Director,  
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My coursework at Grady College has provided a strong foundation in managing complex creative workflows and navigating group dynamics. Specifically, it taught me how to balance personal accountability with the leadership skills needed to guide a team toward a cohesive final product.

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

The most rewarding part has been the opportunity to work alongside fellow students in an environment where we have the space to grow and fail together. This shared journey fosters a unique sense of camaraderie and allows us to refine our professional skills through collective experience.

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– Natalia Daniel, Class of 2028



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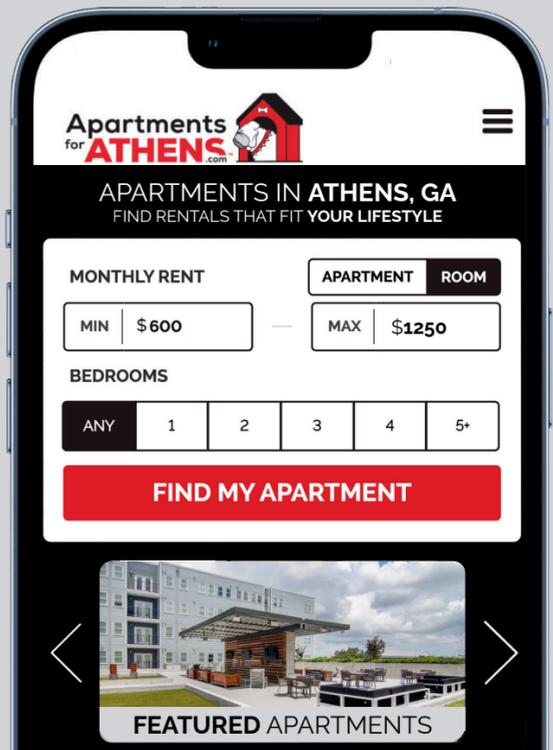


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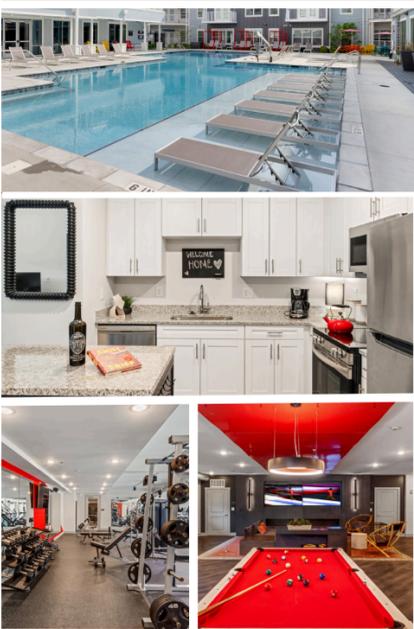
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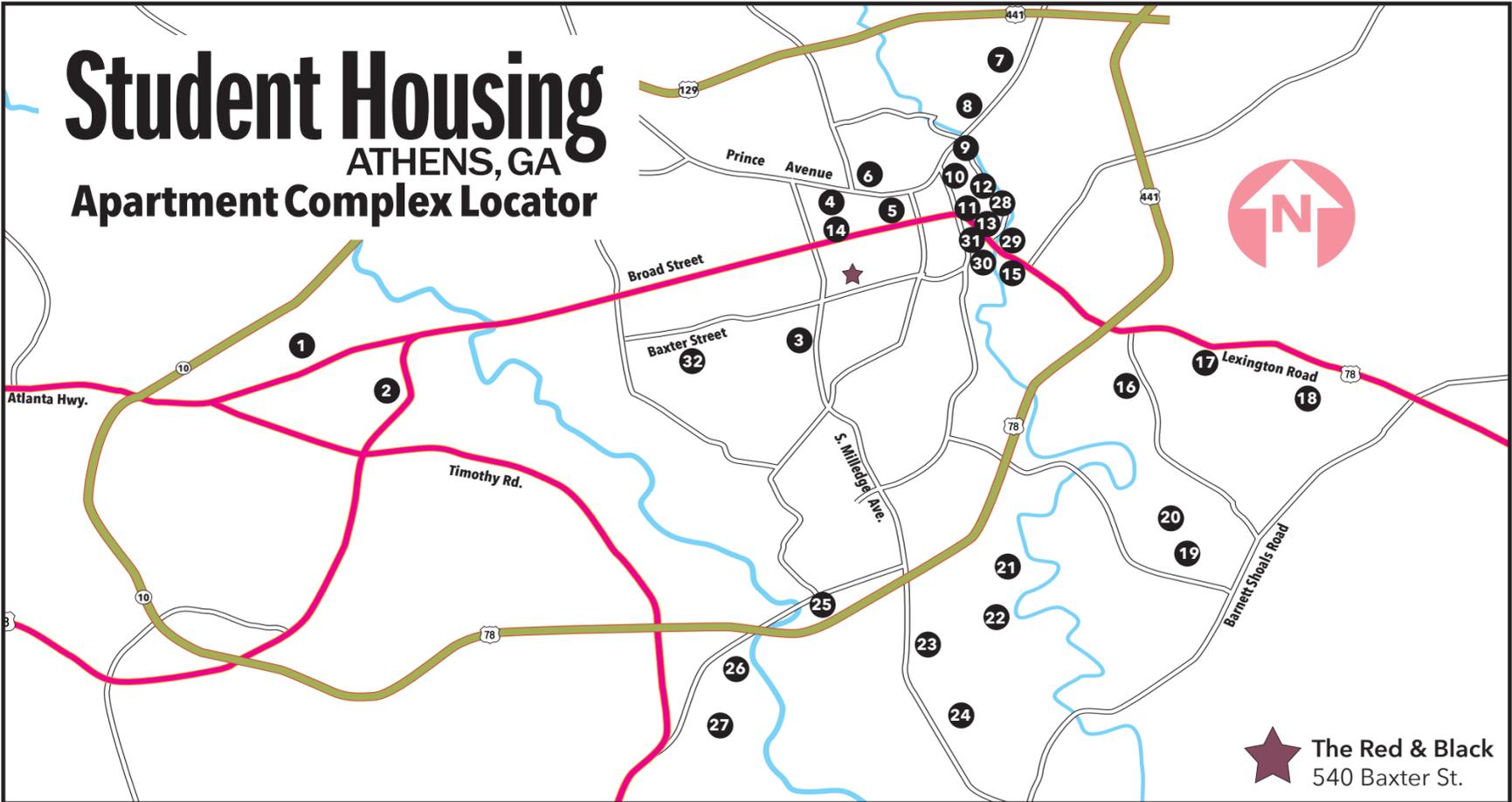
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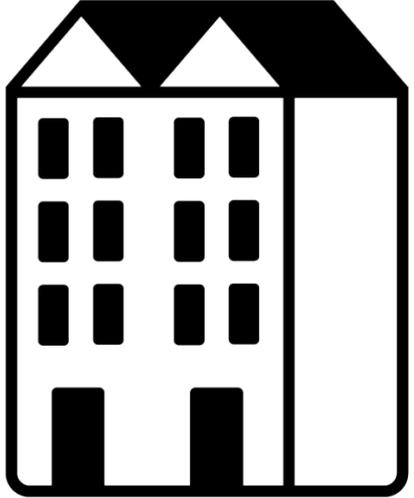
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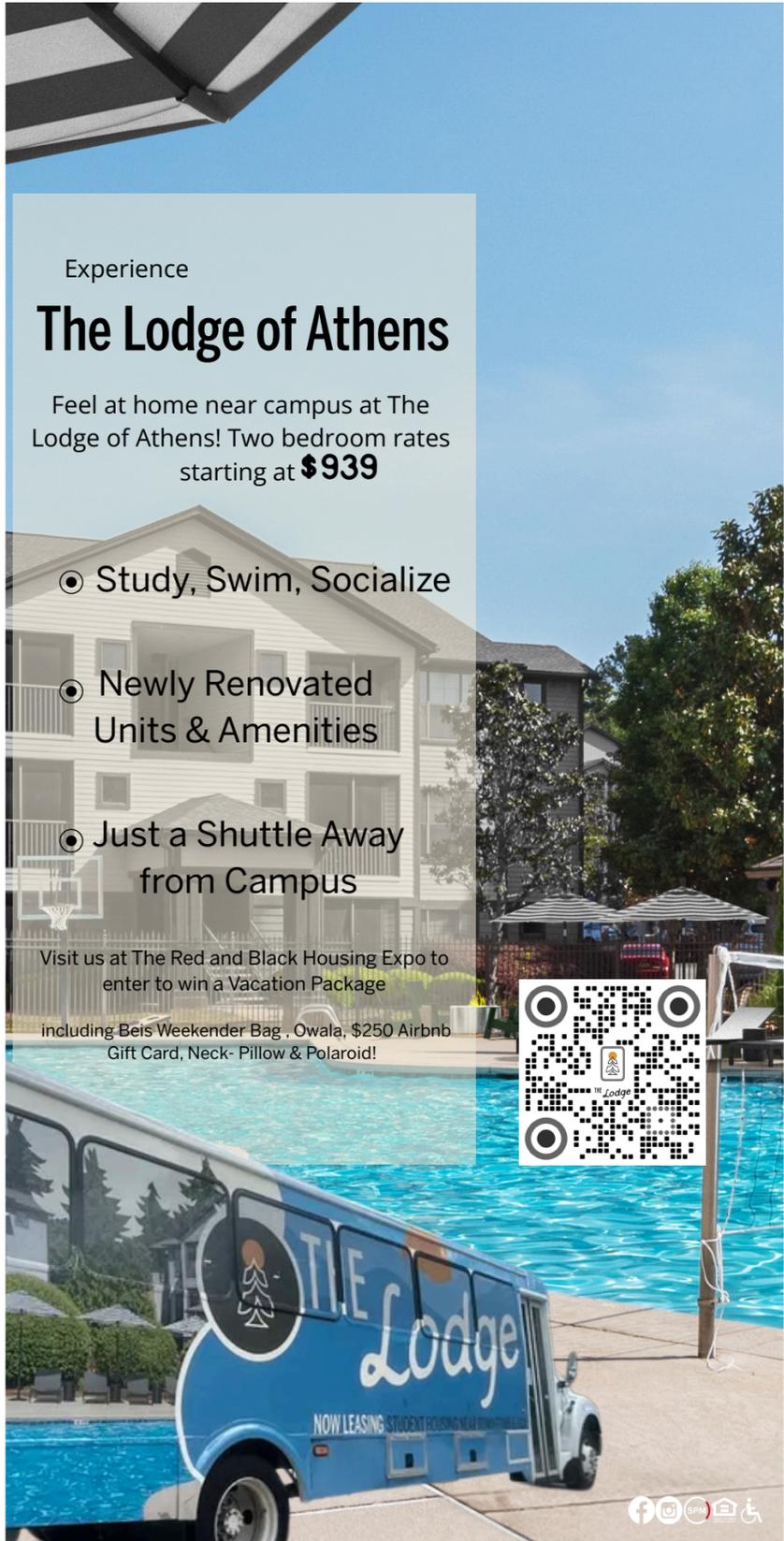
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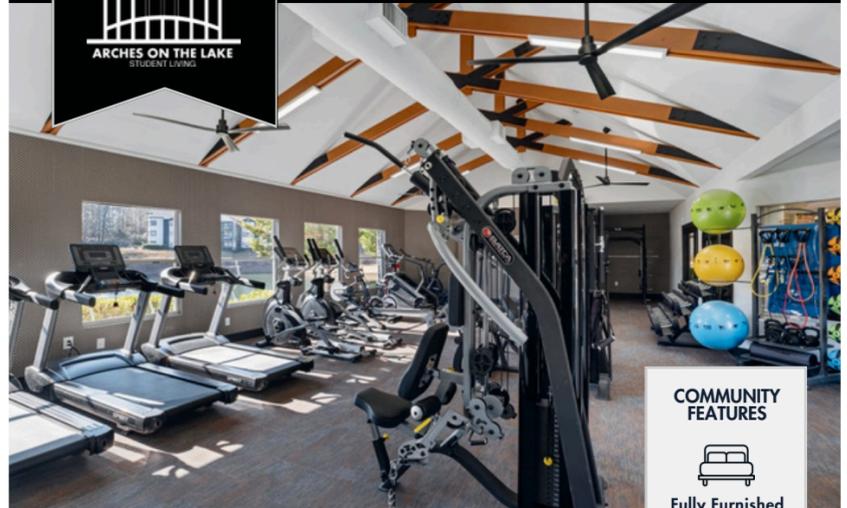
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