

# The GW Hatchet

## Opinions

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## What's inside

## Tracking COVID-19

Jan. 20 - Jan. 26

Weekly COVID-19 cases: 195

Weekly positivity rate: 1.95%

Change in cases since previous week: -140

## A look inside GW's COVID testing lab operations

ISHANI CHETTRI  
ASSISTANT NEWS EDITOR

Nestled on the first floor of the Science and Engineering Hall, GW's public health lab translates community members' bi-weekly COVID-19 nasal swabs to online test results, generally in the span of 24 to 36 hours.

Working behind the scenes, a dozen technical staff members conduct, process and report up to 3,000 tests on a daily basis. The Hatchet met with the faculty spearheading the lab's operations and took a tour of the space to see the workings of the system at the center of the University's COVID-19 response.

From the H Street testing trailer to your Colonial Health Center portal, here's how GW's public health apparatus processes your COVID-19 test:

### From the test tube to the CHC portal

Praveena Tummala, the lab's director of laboratory operations, said staff start to receive COVID-19 tests from GW's testing centers at about 8 a.m. every weekday. The tests first arrive in a processing room.

Tummala said lab technicians manually de-cap each test tube and extract a small amount of the tube's liquid onto a section of a 96-well plate, a rectangular plastic dish with 96 holes to hold liquid samples.

Next, she said Hamilton Microlab STAR robotic machines dispense chemical solutions into each sample on the plate, scan the plate and kill any parts of the samples that do not contain the live coronavirus.

Lab staff said the processing room machines take up to two hours to extract both viral and human RNA from each of the plate's 91 individual samples and five control samples, which provide a quality measure to ensure reliable results.

Before technicians transfer the samples to the main lab room, each is decontaminated to prevent exposing potential coronavirus RNA to other areas, Tummala said. "Only the samples after everything is killed is brought outside," she said.

Jack Villani, the lab manager, said technicians ensure each sample complies with specific criteria before they are moved, a step he called the most labor-intensive task of the day.

In the lab's main room, Villani said the Microlab



DANIELLE TOWERS | ASSISTANT PHOTO EDITOR  
The testing lab's managers are working to address a recent shortage in staff.

STAR robots use pipettes to distribute a chemical liquid that breaks open every cell and virus particle in each sample. He said after each sample is removed of contaminants, lab staff prepare the samples for the PCR test.

He said a Mosquito LV robot transfers the combined samples to another 96-well plate that contains chemical solutions required for PCR testing.

"What's in that water is dissolved RNA, and that's what we actually use for PCR testing, so all of that has to happen before we can actually do the actual test to see if any virus is present," he said.

Villani said the PCR test detects two regions in the coronavirus gene, known as N1 and N2 primers. A positive result means a sample tested positive for both the N1 and N2 primers, while an inconclusive result means the sample tested positive for only one of the two.

To examine the reliability of the result, Villani said staff assess each sample's amount of human RNA. An invalid result is reported when the amount is too low, requiring a second PCR test.

Villani said the assessment of a single plate usually takes five minutes to complete. He said the entire process takes a total of six to eight hours from start to finish.

### Hiring, retaining and assisting staff

Tummala, the laboratory operations director, said hiring additional staff members like lab assistants and supervisors has been a struggle because the positions are temporary and must be filled

when a staff member's term concludes. During an interview with The Hatchet in December, officials said they would increase the number of people staffing the testing operation to deal with the influx of testing appointments in January.

"The staffing has always been challenging, and even right now we are not fully staffed," Tummala said. "We don't have supervisors currently, so it has been quite challenging."

Tummala said she created more part-time positions in the lab and hired two graduate students and three undergraduate students to help run tests. She said the lab team had about 15 staff members at its maximum in August but is currently made up of 12 lab assistants, associates and associate leads.

"Since we came back from the winter break, we had times when we had to work through the weekends, and our staff graciously stayed back and came on extra days," Tummala said. "I think everyone who works here currently takes pride in doing what we do, so it's an extremely great team."

The University's job postings website currently includes listings for a supervisor and a laboratory assistant for the lab.

"I think our team has always been very proud of what they do, and seeing that increased productivity I think has made them happy," he said.

### Home test kits and the future of the pandemic

Villani said the Food and Drug Administration

approved the lab to create and distribute home testing kits for the University community earlier this month. He said the lab designed the kits to fit with the lab's test processing workflow without much disruption.

He said the staff plans to primarily distribute the home testing kits to testing locations like the Virginia Science and Technology Campus to determine the kits' reliability and their potential use on a greater scale.

Tummala said the lab team is working to improve the processing workflow to share results more quickly to University community members. She said the team is trying to extend its work hours on Fridays – apart from the normal 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. and 12:30 to 9 p.m. shifts on weekdays – in hopes of accelerating community members' results.

"We're just trying to extend our hours a little bit," she said. "Maybe start a little early so that way we can test and release more results throughout the day."

Tummala said the University community's positivity rate has improved in the past few weeks, returning to the two to four percent range from before the spread of the Omicron variant. She said while campus health is improving, she thinks another COVID-19 variant could possibly sweep across the District once again.

"Whatever it is, we are prepared to keep our GW community safe and keep testing," she said.

## Anti-racism course in flux after white professor uses N-word

ISHA TRIVEDI  
NEWS EDITOR

NICHOLAS PASION  
ASSISTANT NEWS EDITOR

Officials are "actively working" to finalize the future of the GWTeach Anti-Racist STEM Education course after a white professor said the N-word, which appeared in a painting she was showing the class, prompting her to step down from teaching the course.

Students in the course said Alicia Bitler, a GWTeach professor, said the N-word in a Jan. 18 class while referring to a painting of civil rights activist Ruby Bridges before calling her use of the N-word an "oops moment" minutes later. Students in the class proceeded to file complaints with administrators, and the Black Student Union hosted a town hall Friday evening for students to discuss Bitler's use of the slur.

University spokesperson Crystal Nosal said officials received anonymous reports about the professor's use of the N-word Jan. 19.

Students said officials responded three days after the class acknowledging that they had received the reports and directed students to reach out to officials for support.

She said officials from GSEHD, which houses the GWTeach program, and the Office of Diversity, Equity and Community Engagement met with the class to begin discussions on how to move forward and assured students that faculty would receive "appropriate preparation" for inclusive education in the future.

Bitler declined to comment, deferring to Michael Feuer, the dean of GSEHD. Nosal declined to provide further comment on his behalf.

BSU published a statement Friday condemning Bitler's use of the N-word and offered support and "healing spaces" for students who were affected by the incident.

"Derogatory expressions have no place in our community under any circumstances, especially within our intimate learn-

ing communities," the statement reads. "BSU acknowledges the immense harm that was done to our community that pervades beyond that particular class session."

BSU hosted a town hall meeting via Zoom Friday. At the request of BSU leaders.

Gianna Cook, the president of BSU, and Tony Peeler, the executive vice president of BSU, declined to comment.

Cayton Underwood, a sophomore majoring in journalism and mass communication taking the course, said Bitler continued to teach the class after saying the slur, and Bitler said she tends to use the N-word in academic settings when reading quotations.

Bitler apologized to students in an email sent the day of the class, which was obtained by The Hatchet, for using the N-word. She said in the email she used the word "without thinking" and she wanted to discuss the hurt she may have caused at an "open conversation" during the following class.

"The more I am educating myself, the more I am becoming aware of how damaging it can be to hear that word in a space that is supposed to be safe," Bitler said in a separate email the next day.

She said during the class' conversations with officials, Dwayne Wright, the director of diversity, equity and inclusion initiatives at GSEHD, said the course's syllabus was "simplistic" and "inadequate" and did not appropriately cover the anti-racist STEM education goals the course set out to address.

Sophomore Jordan Harzynski, who is taking the course, said students sent a letter to interim University President Mark Wrighton recommending that the University reconsider its policy on how faculty are chosen to teach classes.

Wrighton responded in a letter, which was obtained by The Hatchet, saying that GSEHD and GWTeach officials are "actively working" to finalize a plan for the remainder of the class, and they are looking to find a new professor to take over the course.

## MyLaw outage forced final exam changes, sparked security concerns

ERIKA FILTER  
STAFF WRITER

NIKKI GHAEMI  
REPORTER

GW Law students said officials' response to a recent cyberattack on the law school's MyLaw platform limited access to course materials and forced last-minute changes to take-home exams late last semester.

In interviews, more than 10 law students said they have started downloading course materials to their personal devices to avoid depending entirely on the MyLaw system to be more prepared in the event of future cyberattacks. University spokesperson Crystal Nosal said officials restored MyLaw on Jan. 6 and reported the attack to the FBI after student and faculty members' names, GWIDs and GW Law email addresses were potentially compromised.

"A team of experts dedicated to restoring the best possible service to the GW Law community has worked tirelessly to serve and protect data, privacy and the ongoing mission of our law school," Nosal said in an email.

The FBI declined to comment. AppointLink, an education software developer that owns the platform, did not return a request for comment.

Students said the data the cyberattack may have compromised were relatively insensitive, so they were not particularly concerned

about the potential breach. But they said professors have been hesitant to return to the platform and have turned to alternative platforms like Westlaw, even though MyLaw is up and running again.

The Student Bar Association Senate rejected a bill last week calling on officials to disclose whether GW had a planned response to potential outages before the cyberattack. Some senators called it "unnecessary" and encouraged students to send their questions to law school officials directly.

Nathaniel Kristel, a third-year law student, said he was unable to access study materials like class presentations last semester because of the outage. Although officials have restored MyLaw this semester, he said some professors are concerned about a future outage.

"I'd say some professors were more adaptive than others," he said. "It really depended on where they have their documents stored so if they had them on MyLaw, they wouldn't be able to send them to students directly regardless."

Anne Marie Bullington, a third-year law student, said during the outage students were given the option to take exams in person amid rising COVID-19 cases last month or to wait until the spring to complete the exams virtually when the MyLaw service would be restored, the latter of which Bullington decided to do.

The SBA created a crowdsourced Google Drive folder in De-



SOPHIA GOEDERT | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER  
Officials said they installed "state of the art" protections to avoid similar threats in the future and implemented ongoing testing and analysis to detect potential vulnerabilities.

cember where students and faculty could upload missing documents and study materials until the platform returned online. Bullington said the folder was helpful since it provided lost documents and materials to students in large classes.

Student Association Sen. Cody Ingraham, Law-G, said students could only upload the files to the crowdsourced folder that they already happened to download before the outage.

"It was definitely frustrating

especially if professors didn't have all the materials saved to their hard drive or if the materials were in different places that the professor couldn't access them really easily," he said. "Long story short, it was quite a ride."

# News

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## THIS WEEK'S EVENTS

**GEORGE TALKS BUSINESS: SIRISHA BANDLA**  
 Wednesday, Feb. 2 • 12:30 p.m. EST • Free  
 Join the GW School of Business in a discussion with Sirisha Bandla, the vice president of government affairs and research operations at Virgin Galactic.

**RUTH BEN-GHIAT ON "PERSONALITY CULTS AND THE AUTHORITARIAN PLAYBOOK"**  
 Thursday, Feb. 3 • 5 p.m. EST • Free  
 Tune into a guest lecture hosted by the GW Humanities Center about global authoritarianism.

## THIS WEEK IN HISTORY

Feb. 1, 1996

Officials plan to expand the use of GWorld cards to allow students to add funds for nonfood expenses like laundry and parking, now known as Colonial Cash, The Hatchet reported.

# At-Large D.C. Council member Robert White's plan to challenge Bowser's re-election bid

**ZACHARY BLACKBURN**  
 ASSISTANT NEWS EDITOR

Mayor Muriel Bowser is facing competition in her bid for reelection as D.C. mayor as a progressive D.C. Council member vies to oust the incumbent following Bowser's eighth year in office.

At-Large Council member Robert White – a 40-year-old, fifth-generation Washingtonian who tossed his hat into the mayoral race in October – is canvassing and phone-banking to stockpile voters in the buildup to June's Democratic primary while campaign events are on hiatus because of D.C.'s gathering restrictions during the spread of the Omicron variant. White said in an interview that he hopes to transform the District with improved education, housing and operations administration, which he hopes will change the "status quo" in the city.

White, who has two daughters, said worsening issues like rising crime, weakened transportation infrastructure and decreased affordable housing – which he said Bowser hasn't appropriately addressed – are guiding his efforts to become mayor.

"We need a mayor who is going to be serious about helping people, which means that we need a mayor who's going to be serious about solving some of our most endemic problems," White said.

Ward 8 Council member Trayon White also an-



The primary election will take place June 21.

COURTESY OF ROBERT WHITE CAMPAIGN

nounced his campaign for mayor in October. He gained national attention in 2018 for antisemitic remarks during a snowstorm implying a Jewish family controls the weather.

Trayon White did not return a request for an interview.

Trayon White has not released a public platform for his campaign. As Council member, he co-introduced legislation that banned the suspension of driver's licenses because of unpaid traffic tickets and was the sole Council member to vote against legislation that mandated COVID-19 vaccination

for the Council's members and staff.

Bowser announced her campaign for re-election through a video posted to Twitter in November and emphasized her mayoral experience as a reason to trust her leadership through the end of the pandemic.

"You trusted me to lead D.C. through these unprecedented times," Bowser said in her campaign announcement video. "I'm asking once again for your trust and your vote in the Democratic primary on June 21."

Bowser did not return multiple requests for an interview.

Bowser has raised about \$517,000 between October and December, more than four times than White's \$117,000, according to reports from DCist.

Trupti Patel, a Foggy Bottom and West End Advisory Neighborhood commissioner, said students should support White because of his focus on issues like housing costs, which can help students to afford to live on or near campus.

"The idea that the students don't contribute to this city is a false notion, and when Robert White is mayor, students will have a seat at the table," Patel said.

## CRIME LOG

### LIQUOR LAW VIOLATION

500 Block of H Street NW  
 1/21/2022 – 11:22 p.m.  
 Closed Case  
 GW Police Department officers responded to a report of an intoxicated male student outside of Madison Hall. EMeRG paramedics arrived at the scene, and after preliminary medical treatment, took the student to the GW Hospital emergency room for further treatment.  
**Referred to Division for Student Affairs.**

### FRAUD ID/FRAUD

Madison Hall  
 1/22/2022 – Multiple  
 Open Case  
 A female student reported she was the victim of a fraud. The subject sent the student fraudulent emails and text messages prompting her to purchase Google gift cards.  
**Case open.**

### LIQUOR LAW VIOLATION, SIMPLE ASSAULT

Various Locations  
 1/23/2022 – 1:15 a.m.  
 Closed Case  
 Metropolitan Police Department officers contacted GWPD in reference to a female student who assaulted an Uber driver. GWPD officers made contact with three students, one of whom the complainant identified as the individual who committed the assault, but the complainant pushed no further charges. Another female student within the group of three was noticeably intoxicated. EMeRG officials responded to the scene and took the individual to the GW Hospital emergency room.  
**Referred to DSA.**

—Compiled by Acacia Niyogi

# Officials record small uptick in Panhel recruitment numbers

**ABBY KENNEDY**  
 ASSISTANT NEWS EDITOR

Spring sorority recruitment participation remained at its lowest level in recent years during the Panhellenic Association's second year of virtual recruitment.

About 275 students participated in formal recruitment, and 222 accepted bids this year – totals that are less than half of the recruitment numbers recorded in 2018, which preceded a multi-year decline heading into the pandemic. Panhel's total participation and accepted bids increased by less than 3 percent from last year, as sorority recruitment numbers for the first year back to in-person classes have stayed around the pandemic levels of the last couple years.

Panhel and chapter leaders said they plan to host events and partnerships with other organizations like Students Against Sexual Assault. Chapters moved their recruitment agendas online in January after the University announced that in-person operations for sororities were canceled for the start of the spring semester.

Brian Joyce, the director of Fraternity and Sorority Life, said Panhel's ongoing continuous open bidding process, which allows students to accept bids after the formal deadline, has raised the total share of new members to 290

this spring. He said recruitment numbers have continued to decline by about 100 participants compared to before the pandemic because of the on-line switch.

"We also know that there is work to do to rebuild the culture of our fraternity and sorority community," he said in an email. "We are actively working with our fraternity and sorority leaders to strengthen the fraternity and sorority experience in such a way that the espoused values of our community are reflected in our actions."

He said sororities handed out between 19 and 25 bids per chapter.

Joyce declined to state how many students joined each chapter during formal recruitment.

Junior Lloyd Woods, the president of Panhel, said chapters' recruitment chairs had to restructure their internal workshops and recruitment events to make them "compatible" with an online environment after GW announced that recruitment would be held virtually.

"I am really proud of each chapter for their flexibility and dedication to creating a safe recruitment process," she said in an email. "The Panhellenic Association and its member organizations have continued to meet virtually throughout the month of January to be in ac-

cordance with aforementioned COVID-19 policies."

She said potential new members could meet with every organization via Zoom and engage in conversations with chapters.

She said Panhel leadership met with chapters' recruitment officers in the months leading up to recruitment to plan events that would support sororities throughout the recruitment process. She said many of the events planned by Panhel leadership were also focused on supporting potential new members through the recruitment process as well.

Woods said Panhel hopes to continue planning in-person events while adhering to COVID-19 guidelines. She said Panhel will host events during March, the Month of Sisterly Love, and is also collaborating with SASA to create a sexual violence prevention training program for all members in the coming months.

Junior Abigail Ingoglia, the president of Kappa Delta, said the sorority was prepared for both an in-person and online recruitment and built on last year's virtual recruitment format to recruit new members this year.

She said since new members have been joined the chapter, the sorority has hosted virtual sisterhood events for new members to get to know the current ones.



FILE PHOTO BY PHEBE GROSSER | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER  
 The Nashman Center, located in the GW Hillel building, has largely pivoted to virtual service opportunities during the pandemic.

# Students balance in-person, virtual community service efforts

**ABBY KENNEDY**  
 ASSISTANT NEWS EDITOR

**LAUREN GRAUER**  
 REPORTER

Junior Dilshad Dinshaw peers into her computer sitting on the floor of the dance studio in the District House basement every Friday waiting for her class of local elementary school students to log on for their weekly dance lessons.

Dinshaw is the director of Creative Movement with Balance, the volunteer program that offers free dance lessons to elementary school students in the District, through GW Balance, a student dance organization. She said teaching dance, working with children and keeping them engaged over a screen has been challenging during the spread of the Omicron variant.

"It definitely has been more challenging during COVID-19 to run the organization," she said in an email. "Trying to keep in contact with elementary students, parents and staff became extremely difficult without any in-person interaction. Students struggled to pay attention to the class over Zoom, and it was harder to attract as many GW

Balance members to help teach the classes."

Dinshaw is one of half a dozen students who said they have struggled to stay connected to the District community through volunteer work this year after much of their previous work relied on in-person interactions and face-to-face connections. Members of GW service organizations said they are still attempting to complete in-person service opportunities but have shifted to a hybrid method of volunteering with this year in an attempt to continue to serve the District community.

Amy Cohen, the executive director of the Nashman Center for Civic Engagement and Public Service, said students who sign up to volunteer for one day at the center had to pivot to virtual service opportunities, and the Nashman Center established partnerships with the National Archives, the Smithsonian Transcription Center, where volunteers transcribe historical documents and biodiversity data, and Free Minds Book Club and Writing Workshop, an organization that shares poetry and fosters a sense of community among incarcerated individuals.

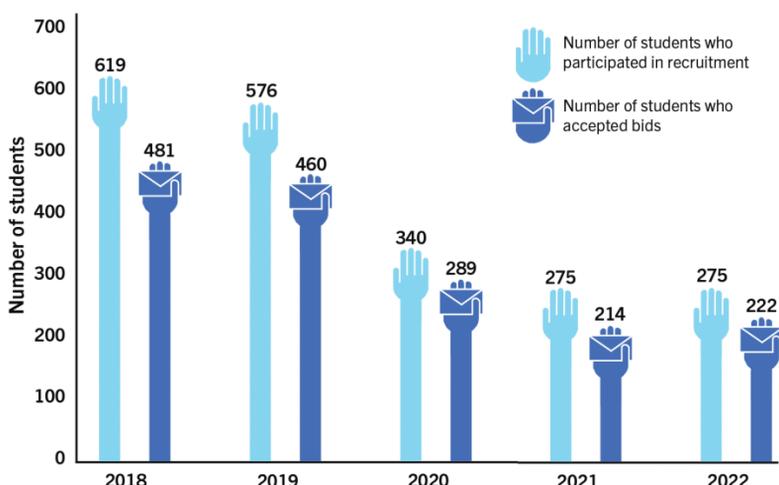
Senior Leila Wrynnyckyj – the president of Alpha Phi Omega, a national service fraternity – said the organization can still complete in-person service opportunities despite the recent spread of the Omicron variant, including trips to Charlie's Place, a shelter for people experiencing homelessness located in Kalorama Heights.

Maddie Billet, a sophomore majoring in political science and environmental studies, said she volunteers with GW Compost and finds community service work through her service sorority, Epsilon Sigma Alpha.

She said the organization stopped volunteering with St. Mary's Court, a safe housing option for the elderly and people with disabilities in Foggy Bottom, because of the population that faces a high risk for developing severe coronavirus symptoms.

She said the organization has begun to organize campus cleanups, where volunteers pick up trash throughout campus during the semester to try to offer some form of in-person volunteer work that does not involve person-to-person interaction.

Panhellenic Association accepted bids from 2018 - 2022



Source: Fraternity and Sorority Life

NICHOLAS ANASTACIO | GRAPHICS EDITOR

# GW Club Climbing kicks off this spring to forge community among climbers

**SAMANTHA SERAFIN**  
STAFF WRITER

A group of students has turned to rock climbing to build on the sport's core values of community and partnership inside and outside of the gym through a new student organization launched this spring.

Roughly 100 students, who will meet about once a week to climb at a local gym in the District, have joined GW Club Climbing after two juniors founded the organization earlier this month. Club leaders said they wanted to connect students who are passionate about climbing with those who are looking for a new hobby and form of exercise.

Junior Madeleine Eichorn, the club's president, said she has been involved in the sport for more than seven years and searched for a climbing community when she moved to D.C. as a freshman but was unable to find one at GW. She said she wanted to begin the club her freshman year to offer students the opportunity to find the same community she found through climbing, but the COVID-19 pandemic interrupted her plans.

"You have this whole mix of people, but everybody's united by this sport," she said. "So I think I found that beautiful. I just kind of joined this community, and so it's nice because wherever I go, I can find a climbing gym. And I'm just instantly welcomed there, and it's so great."

Eichorn said she secured a job as a climbing instructor at Movement Crystal City, a rock climbing gym in Arlington, and was inspired to start the club after

noticing many students using the Virginia gym. She said the club is currently working out a deal with the gym to secure memberships for students to use the rock climbing facility, and the University will help fund the cost.

"We're trying to make it more accessible for people to get into climbing," she said.

She said the club hosted informational sessions this past week and will hold tryouts later in February to assess which students have time available to dedicate to the team. She said she is working to upgrade the organization to a club sport at GW, and she's communicating with teams at Georgetown and American universities about hosting competitions.

"I want to expose as many people to the sport as possible because it is really fun," Eichorn said. "It is a really great community, and so people that are searching for that I think can really find it in the sport."

Junior Yutong Jiang, the vice president of the club and a former Hatchet reporter, said he began climbing last year. He said he created a GroupMe for student climbers at GW after connecting with other students interested in the sport through Facebook.

"I added a couple of people that I know who are into climbing, and it just expanded from there," he said.

He said the sport also allows students to learn from one another through each climber's unique style of climbing.

"You can climb and everyone can take a different path or different road and everyone has dif-



PHOTO ILLUSTRATION BY GRACE HROMIN | SENIOR PHOTO EDITOR

Group members said the supportive club makes climbing accessible for anyone interested.

ferent styles," he said. "There's no one right answer. You can try it in many different ways and get the same result."

Junior Avery Schmitz, a member of the club, said he met Eichorn after he started working at Movement Crystal City, and he learned he could apply his passion for climbing and join a community of climbers at GW. He said he began climbing this July with his sister and hopes the organization will

help other students find a similar passion.

"It's not a zero-sum sport where one person wins and the other person loses," Schmitz said. "It's way more, at least for me and for I think a lot of people who I climb with and talk to working over at the gym, it's very much about pushing yourself and setting your own goals."

He said climbing with others allows for a "supportive" environ-

ment where climbers can motivate each other and build deep connections. Schmitz said the goal of the club is to make climbing accessible for anyone interested in getting involved.

"Recognizing that there are a lot of barriers to getting started whether that is gear or hard skills or stuff like that, really being able to alleviate some of those to just make climbing as accessible as possible," Schmitz said.

## Student Lerner employees went without work while waiting for facility to reopen

**CAITLIN KITSON**  
REPORTER

Student employees at the Lerner Health and Wellness Center spent the month waiting for their cash flows to return at the sole campus facility that remained closed in Foggy Bottom throughout the month.

Lerner will reopen Monday, capping off a three-week-long stretch when student employees were unable to complete their usual shifts at the gym and questioned the future of their in-person work. Student employees could participate in virtual customer service-related training and in-person cleaning sessions to earn money during the closure, but availability was limited.

Before students returned to campus for the spring semester, officials originally announced that Lerner would reopen Feb. 1 as part of their plan to slow the spread of the Omicron variant.

"We are able to take this action thanks to the collective efforts of our community members to keep one another healthy and safe," an email announcing Lerner's reopening last week states. "These

important efforts include compliance with our booster dose mandate, the use of upgraded masks on our campuses and temporarily pausing in-person social gatherings and events."

GW's symptomatic COVID-19 testing also moved from the Colonial Health Center to Lerner earlier this month.

Andre Julien, a senior associate athletics director at Lerner, said Lerner is working to relocate some in-person group fitness classes to another location on campus as symptomatic COVID-19 testing will continue at Lerner for the "foreseeable future." He said more information will come out this month on Lerner's hours of operations and locations for the spring semester.

"We are grateful for our student employees who help keep Lerner Health and Wellness operating during the year," Julien said.

Sophomore Claudia Blázquez, who works at Lerner as part of her Federal Work Study award, said she has felt concerned about not being able to work as she uses some of the money she earns to pay her tuition. She said GW should have communicated the announcement that Lerner would open on Jan. 31 instead

of Feb. 1 earlier than just a few days before the change.

"I think the University could do a bit of a better job communicating with student employees," she said. "But I think the staff at Lerner have done a really good job with talking to us, so it's nice to have at least somebody communicate with us."

Blázquez said her supervisors said in a recent meeting with employees that they expect the HVAC renovations that will close Lerner for "a portion" of 2022 to take place this summer.

"With HVAC, the way it works is they need to start and finish," Blázquez said. "They can't just start and then stop and then start and stop. I think that's why they chose the summertime because there's less people on campus and less students will be using the gym."

Sophomore Jordyn Bailer, who is employed at Lerner as part of their Federal Work Study award, questioned why the closure lasted until Jan. 31 while in-person classes returned Jan. 18. They said their supervisors at Lerner have communicated updates on the building's reopening through GroupMe messages

and emails, but they wish GW emailed student employees more frequently about their plans to reopen Lerner.

"There's a little bit of transparency, but not a lot and that's just a little frustrating because obviously I haven't really been able to work since December of last semester," Bailer said.

Freshman Nick Isphording, who holds a non-Federal Work Study job at Lerner, said he was unable to take advantage of most of the paid, virtual training sessions that Lerner offered over the past few weeks because he was still adjusting to being back on campus and taking his new class schedule.

He said that he did attend a required, paid training session where Lerner staff went over a new procedure manual and reviewed old procedures. He said he felt that closing Lerner was the right decision to slow the spread of COVID-19 on campus and prevent classes from moving completely online.

"I think that it was the right cautionary measure to be taking so that way we didn't all of a sudden have an upsurge and we have to go back online," he said.

## Elliott School researchers updating international data governance map

**HENRY HUVOS**  
STAFF WRITER

**ISHANI CHETTRI**  
ASSISTANT NEWS EDITOR

Elliott School of International Affairs researchers are continuing to track countries' ability to govern data in areas like human rights through an online interactive map as they start the third phase of an ongoing study.

The Digital Trade and Data Governance Hub launched the Global Data Governance Mapping Project last May, and the team has completed two phases analyzing how nations are implementing policies and laws related to data governance — how countries enforce regulations and standards to manage and protect data, according to the project's website. The research team will study more countries, collect documents about their data policies and expand its range of "indicators" to assess data governance across the globe during its third phase, according to the report on the project's first year.

Susan Aaronson, the director of the hub and a research professor of international affairs, said the project organizes how different countries plan strategies to handle issues like human

rights and national laws to assist policymakers in developing international standards for data governance.

She said addressing issues related to data governance can help with handling other problems like the potential international decline of democracy and climate change.

"I'm not saying data governance is more important than climate change, but I'm saying that if we can figure this out, we might be more successful in these other realms," she said.

The project observes six attributes of data governance that value a nation's strategic, regulatory, responsible, structural, participatory and international plans when it comes to data, according to the first year report.

The research team assigned numerical values to nations that fulfill criteria in each of the six attributes. Australia scored a 75 in the responsible attribute — a measure of a nation's consideration for the implications of data governance on human rights — because it lacked the digital charter indicator — a government's formal statement that recognizes its responsibility to uphold data governance principles, according to the project's website.

Aaronson said richer nations like the United States

did not consistently receive high scores, and national histories — including potential invasions of privacy — could do much more to influence data than wealth. Readers are encouraged to compare national scores but should understand that they are not rankings of countries' effectiveness when it comes to data governance, according to the project's website.

She said researchers analyzed how 51 national governments and the European Union handle data governance based on the six attributes in the first phase. She said recent grants will fund the staff members' observations of 19 more countries, expanding the total number of countries on the map to 70.

She also said while future research will incorporate eight more factors to evaluate nations, the team is concerned that adding more indicators will make it more difficult to assess each nation's overall performance.

"Funding is a challenge right now," she said. "We are doing okay, but fundraising for this kind of thing is hard. It's never easy."

Aaronson said the data governance hub plans to hold study groups to educate trade officials from the United States, Canada and the United Kingdom on the project's findings and hold

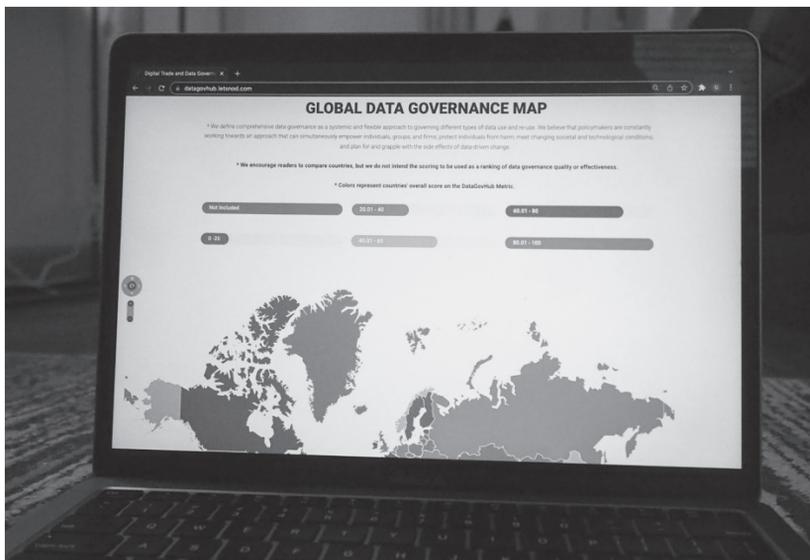


PHOTO ILLUSTRATION BY GRACE HROMIN | SENIOR PHOTO EDITOR

Experts in data informatics said the project is an accessible compilation that can help governments improve their democracies.

further discussion on data governance next month.

"Changing the internet is changing the world," she said. "It changed the economy and now it's changing what we research, how we teach and when and what we teach."

Experts in data informatics said the project is an accessible compilation of various data governance factors that can help national governments determine which attributes need improve-

ment to better democracies.

Jim Samuel, the executive director of the informatics program at Rutgers University's Edward J. Bloustein School of Planning and Public Policy, said the principle behind the data governance consists of national governments respecting individuals and entities' rights associated with data like images and statements.

He said the project can analyze whether data ownership in countries is pro-

ected and motivate national governments to behave more responsibly with data governance strategies.

"If in the process of gathering this information, we are able to collect information on best practices that are implemented at various points around the world, then it might be interesting to take a careful look at those best practices and analyze where it is that the true owners rights are being protected," he said.

## TWEETED



TWITTER/@PRESWRIGHTONGW

**The Purrfessor is joining me in Washington DC this evening. Watch for the movie about his work there! 😊**

Mark Wrighton on 01/25/2022

## Metro needs to get its act together

The rollout of the University's U-Pass system represents a much-needed success for students and Metro, but the D.C. area transit agency continues to face serious issues. After a train derailment in October, Metrorail has experienced delays and long wait times, while the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has meant fewer riders, sick employees and a looming cash crunch. Moreover, Metro General Manager Paul Wiedefeld recently announced his decision step down from his position over the summer.

Ethan Benn  
Opinions Writer

Metro is in crisis – or rather, crises. Interconnected operational, safety and fiscal problems have left tens of thousands of commuters in transportation limbo. It's hard to fault anyone who'd rather avoid public transportation than rely on the agency's teetering rail and bus networks. Metro riders deserve a transportation agency that functions. As more substantive solutions remain in development, Metro can begin to move past these crises by returning to its original mission – connecting people and places.

Despite the precautions taken by Metro and other agencies, riders have abandoned public transportation systems en masse during the pandemic. A drop in passengers translates to a drop in fare revenues, a major source of income for Metro. Put simply, people who don't ride don't pay. Yet as the pandemic wanes – or at the very least, becomes endemic – those riders haven't returned. The federal employees whose commutes are so key to Metro's operations have transitioned to telework and working from home. They aren't avoiding riding – they just don't need to.

In response to Metro's budget shortfalls, congressional stimulus and relief legislation has included tremendous sums of money to keep the agency solvent. But such relief is only temporary: without further federal action authoriz-

ing additional spending, that emergency funding appears set to expire. While politicians in and around the District, like Sen. Mark Warner, D-Va., try to rally support for more funding, Metro management sees the agency hurtling toward fiscal disaster.

The only thing worse for a cash-strapped transit agency with low ridership is an event that requires costly investigations, further shakes the public's confidence and keeps riders off trains. Enter the October 2021 derailment. While there were no fatal injuries, this accident could be the death knell of Metro – it is a microcosm of the crises the agency is facing.

The October derailment outside Arlington occurred because the train's wheels moved out of position between the tracks, an issue Metro has been aware of since at least 2017. In response, Metro pulled all its 7000-series cars out of service. Five- to 10-minute waits immediately jumped up to 20 to 30 minutes as older cars were pressed into service to fill the gap. After making a brief return in December, the 7000-series cars were again pulled out of service after Metro deviated from the instructions of the safety commission overseeing the investigation into the cars. An avoidable safety issue has set Metro further behind as it

attempts to climb out of its pandemic lull. Yet it takes more than empty buses and trains to run a network. COVID-19 has struck Metro employees hard, especially amid D.C.'s Omicron surge. Pandemic-related workforce shortages only compound the delays and service outages affecting the region, which are particularly severe on Metro's bus network. Additionally, a 2020 audit by the Washington Safety Rail Commission urged Metrorail to address an ongoing culture of "racial and sexual comments, harassment and other behavior." Combined with an abusive workplace culture



SOFIJA JUODAITIS | CARTOONIST

and sense of complacency, Metro is simply not in good health. While earlier initiatives have brightened stations and replaced crumbling platforms, Metro itself needs an overhaul. Though it's difficult to shepherd the massive concentric bureaucracies that comprise Metro to a singular solution, especially as these crises continue, it is clear that it must do something for riders with no other options – or those who simply prefer it over other modes of transportation.

Staff shortages and an already tight schedule would make replacement bus services, like those offered between stations closed for platform improvement projects, largely unfeasible. Walking and biking, particularly during the winter months and especially for those with mobility needs, is a nonstarter. Pouring money into hiring and training new staff, whether to operate trains and buses or to accelerate the rate at which the 7000-series cars reenter service, is equally unlikely.

If policy solutions and large financial commitments remain elusive, perhaps the attitudes that inspire that policy can shift. Upon its debut in 1976, Metro promised an exciting, effective glimpse into a future that was quite literally a stop away. Whoever succeeds Wiedefeld should leave us proud of Metro, not cursing at it.

In a city that can sometimes feel like it houses more three-letter offices and guarded government buildings than people, Metro does, albeit sometimes infrequently if at all, connect us to one another. For residents around the region, it connects them to family, friends, loved ones and workplaces. For GW students, Metro is our way out of the confines of Foggy Bottom or the beginning of our journeys to and from home at the beginning and end of each semester.

I intend to use my U-Pass this semester. I only hope Metro will be able to get me there – and that it'll be around long enough to do so.

—Ethan Benn, a sophomore majoring in journalism and mass communication, is an opinions writer.

## Shared governance should involve student input

### STAFF EDITORIAL

Officials finally made concrete progress this month on a topic that the GW community and administrators have wrangled over for years: shared governance. Faculty members on the Shared Governance Task Force have been meeting with interim University President Mark Wrighton and members of the Board of Trustees for conversations about how to move past the unilateral administrative decision-making that hallmarked the past few years at GW.

Meaningful engagement between administrators and faculty is an important first step to building a more inclusive and harmonious way of running the University – but it is just a first step. Not only must University leadership keep its promises to actually hash out a shared governance framework, but students need to be involved too.

The Board first announced these shared governance efforts when it delayed the presidential search process back in September. The Board has committed to establishing a formal structure by which faculty can provide input and be consulted on decisions that the University's leadership makes.

The term "shared governance" gets

thrown around a lot and oftentimes ends up sounding like a buzzword. Shared governance at GW has become so warped over the past few years that the initiative is largely focused on pinpointing what the term actually means.

Generally speaking, the concept of shared governance at universities refers to the system by which faculty, administrators and trustees can come to collective decisions after hearing each other out. But at GW, this collaboration reached its nadir when former University President Thomas LeBlanc introduced the 20/30 Plan to cut enrollment and boost STEM – faculty felt blindsided, and already-frayed relations broke down even more.

But the usual understanding of effective shared governance – and the University's plans to improve it – leaves out students. Board Chair Grace Speights did say that officials intended to seek student input in the presidential search process, but soliciting input from the people who pay to go here has occupied a place somewhere between second-fiddle and an afterthought in the Board's communications about moving away

from unilateral decision-making.

Although individual students are at GW for just a few years, there will always be a student body on campus, and it's crucial that the University take its needs and views into consideration. Officials make decisions about the very character of the University, ranging from how diverse and inclusive the crop of admitted students is going to be, to what fields and majors the University prioritizes. GW's reason for existence is more than just research and prestige – the students who choose to spend years learning here are the beating heart of the University. Not only do administrators need to understand that, but that concept should inform their decision-making to a greater degree.

Wrighton's newly minted place in the GW community seems to be a step in the right direction. The most recent town hall meetings with faculty are an indication of the new administration's intentions to move past the grievances between the GW community and LeBlanc. But administrators should continue to tinker with their ideas for the University and extend their plans for shared governance to students.

## Hating on GW isn't a personality trait

During University President Thomas LeBlanc's disastrous time in office, student activism took an oppositional and contemptuous posture toward LeBlanc and his missteps. Now that the dust is settling and his successor is in place, it's a good time to make an uncomfortable point – a lot of the discourse around LeBlanc, administrators and GW as a whole was immature and over-the-top. Not only did this reflect poorly on those who participated in it, but unless it changes, it is likely to jeopardize future efforts at getting administrators to accede to student demands.

Andrew Sugrue  
Opinions Editor

Most of the criticism of LeBlanc was in bounds, and most of it was deserved. No one should be expected to observe strict decorum when talking about a president who made racially insensitive comments or who tried to hire someone who protected Michigan State University during the Larry Nasser investigation. But in the time between these specific, high-profile screwups, it seems like much of the way the GW community talked about administrators – especially LeBlanc – was decoupled from any specific critique about policy or personality. Criticism took on a life of its own, and people dunked for the sake of dunking.

This is just a generally unhealthy and immature

way to behave. A handful of memes about a blundering college administrator is well and good, but there was a bizarre fixation on LeBlanc that crossed the line of how mature adults should talk about another human. It's odd for college students to walk around with stickers on their laptop that have their university president's face on them with the caption "this man ate my son." It's weird and gross to distribute a satire piece speculating about an administrator's sex life.

Most current GW students don't remember a pre-LeBlanc era, and the consensus on campus when most of us came in was already that LeBlanc was a disaster worthy of contempt. This was, of course, true by almost any measure. In substance and style, LeBlanc did a poor job in countless ways. But the barbs, dunks and withering criticism eventually became decoupled from any actual substantive critique. Students came to GW, entered an environment where people were constantly dunking on the chief administrator without quite knowing why, and joined in. By the time LeBlanc would make a distasteful comment or bad decision, the chorus of contempt would get louder, but it had never been quiet to begin with. Dunking on LeBlanc and on GW as a whole eventually became a means of scratching the itch to gang up on people in many cases.

This is just wrong on its face – but if the same

thing happens with a new University president, it could kneecap actual efforts to collaborate and improve the University. Student activists – of which there are many at GW, and I would consider myself one of them – have a particular responsibility to be constructive and fair-minded in the criticism they level. Considering that interim University President Mark Wrighton seems to be presiding over an effort to mend fences among the GW community, students interested in fixing what's broken at GW should take special heed to not let the dunk reflex manifest itself again. It could squander the first opportunity in a while to make positive changes without having to beg, plead or protest for them like they did under LeBlanc.

The relationship between students and administrators is at a low at GW. It is Wrighton and all new admins' responsibility to step up their game. It's also students' responsibility to find quite literally any other way of spending their time beyond obsessively memeing University bureaucrats. Doing so is not only immature, but it trivializes the real missteps that officials have made – and it makes it harder for good faith efforts at collaboration that could benefit everyone to be successful.

—Andrew Sugrue, a senior majoring in political communication and political science, is the opinions editor.

# Culture

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## THE SCENE

### WHERE DO WORDS COME FROM?

Friday, Feb. 4 | Planet Word | Free  
Learn about the story of the English language and the origins of the words we use today at the Planet Word museum.

### ICE SKATING AT CAMERON RUN

Saturday, Feb. 5 | Cameron Run Regional Park | \$12.50  
Grab some friends and enjoy an hour of ice skating in Alexandria this weekend.

## RELEASED THIS WEEK:

NEW SINGLE: "NOSTALGIA\*" BY MATVEI

## Events to recognize Black History Month for every day of February

NORA FITZGERALD  
REPORTER

Spend all February long recognizing Black History Month with a variety of in-person and virtual events throughout the District and beyond.

We've compiled a list of lectures, movie showings, poetry nights, walking tours and other culturally enriching activities to learn about Black and African American history and culture. From a walking tour about the history of Frederick Douglass' life and a presentation on the impact of the Black Lives Matter movement to a brunch event where you can support Black-owned businesses, check out these events to celebrate Black History Month in the District and beyond.

### Feb. 1 | I Dream a World, A Community Celebration of Black Poetry

Participate in the D.C. Public Library's initiative to celebrate the work of Black poets by sending in a video reading passages from your favorite Black author.

### Feb. 2 | Community + Conversation, with a Docent, Creative Griots

Join an online discussion to hear a docent from the African American Museum of History and Culture speak about African American performance, music, cultural expressions, visual arts and their role in fueling social change.

### Feb. 3 | Manumission Tour Company Virtual Tour of Local Black History: Freedom's Fight in Alexandria

Participate in a virtual tour of Alexandria, Va. to learn about the experiences of African Americans during the early days of Alexandria.

### Feb. 4 | The Colors and Forms of History Art Exhibit

Stop by the Zenith Gallery for this Black History Month-inspired exhibit featuring works by Doba Afolabi, Sheryll Cashin, Bernie Houston and Chris Malone.

### Feb. 5 | The Journey: Tales of Africa to America

Enjoy this interactive program held at the Arlington Public Library, which uses folktales to tell stories that "transport the audience from West Africa to the eastern coast of America."

### Feb. 6 | Walking Tour of Frederick Douglass' Old Anacostia

Participate in a walking tour, led by historian and author John Muller, that explores the history of Anacostia, its folklore and the stories about the residents who lived there, especially abolitionist Frederick Douglass.

### Feb. 7 | History Alive! Coming Home: African Americans Returning from World War II

Partake in the virtual event put on by the National Museum of African American History and Culture to learn about the experiences of Black veterans.

### Feb. 8 | An Afternoon Lecture with the Equal Justice Initiative

Attend an afternoon walk led by a project manager with the Equal Justice Initiative to learn about two lynchings that occurred in Alexandria in 1897 and 1899.

### Feb. 9 | Make Good the Promises at Busboys and Poets — Conversation Featuring Kinshasha Holman Conwill and Paul Gardullo

Learn about the lasting impact

of Reconstruction and voting rights and education equity at this virtual event hosted in collaboration with the National Museum of African American History and Culture.

### Feb. 10 | Dear Maple

Buy tickets for this play performed by Psalmayene 24, a prominent player in hip-hop theater, about his coming-of-age story from Brooklyn to D.C.

### Feb. 11 | Black History Program — A lecture concert series on "Roland Hayes: Trailblazer of the Negro Spirituals."

Take part in a lecture and concert celebrating Roland Hayes, one of America's first international African American concert singers, held at Busboys and Poets in D.C.

### Feb. 12 | 2022 Black History Month Black Business Expo

Stop by the Sebrof Forbes Cultural Arts Center in Kensington, Md. to browse a variety of Black-owned businesses in the DMV.

### Feb. 13 | Celebrating the Legacy of Lucille Clifton

Join Enoch Pratt Free Library in honoring the literary legacy of poet Lucille Clifton, whose work focuses on African American experience.

### Feb. 14 | Visionary Artists Of Color

Participate in a self-guided tour of the American Visionary Art Museum to view work by artists of color.

### Feb. 15 | Homewood Museum Guided Tour

Take an award-winning tour exploring relations between free and enslaved residents of Homewood in 1805.

## Black History Month 2022 Calendar

- 1 | I Dream a World, A Communication Celebration of Black Poetry
- 2 | Community + Conversation, with a Docent, Creative Griots
- 3 | Manumission Tour Company Virtual Tour of Local Black History: Freedom's Fight in Alexandria
- 4 | The Colors and Forms of History Art Exhibit
- 5 | The Journey: Tales of Africa to America
- 6 | Walking Tour of Frederick Douglass' Old Anacostia
- 7 | History Alive! Coming Home: African Americans Returning from World War II
- 8 | An Afternoon Lecture with the Equal Justice Initiative
- 9 | Make Good the Promises at Busboys and Poets — Conversation Kinshasha Holman Conwill and Paul Gardullo
- 10 | Dear Maple
- 11 | Black History Program — A lecture concert series on "Roland Hayes: Trailblazer of the Negro Spirituals."
- 12 | 2022 Black History Month Black Business Expo
- 13 | Celebrating the Legacy of Lucille Clifton
- 14 | Visionary Artists of Color
- 15 | Homewood Museum Guided Tour
- 16 | Virtual Film Screening and Discussion of "Odessa's Reign"
- 17 | Community Talks: Measuring the Influence of BLM Protests with Dr. Bai Linh Hoang
- 18 | Thaddeus Mosley: Forest
- 19 | National African American Roller Skating Archive Exhibit
- 20 | HARRIET: Black History Month Free Film Series at the B&O
- 21 | City Within A City: Greater U Street Heritage Trail
- 22 | Left Behind: Stories from the Underground Railroad
- 23 | Honor the life of Rosa Parks at The Mansion on O Street Museum
- 24 | Dream Big! An Interactive Playback Performance
- 25 | Opening Premiere of Attacks on Democracy Through Black Photojournalism
- 26 | Black Business Brunch & Shop
- 27 | SELMA: Black History Month Free Film Series at the B&O
- 28 | African American Civil War Memorial & Museum

NICHOLAS ANASTACIO | GRAPHICS EDITOR



FILE PHOTO BY SOPHIA YOUNG | SENIOR STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

We talked to local Black designers, vendors and creators who shared with us where they find inspiration for their art.

## Local designers talk inspiration and D.C.'s fashion scene

ABRIGAIL WILLIAMS  
STAFF WRITER

The District's fashion industry is booming with designers who draw inspiration from childhood, cultural influences and even D.C. streetwear.

All of Starbille Cooper's friends know her as "Star" and in the fashion business as "Star the Visionary" for her whimsical, fairytale inspired pieces she designs for her brand, Once Upon a Time.

Cooper said as she watches her daughter's excitement when putting on a tutu or dressing like a princess, she is reminded of the childlike joy everyone should feel when they put on clothes.

"I want women to embrace their inner child," Cooper said.

**"You have to block out all of the noise around you and you have to live life as if you're living your own fairytale."**

STARBILL COOPER  
DESIGNER FOR ONCE UPON A TIME

Cooper said the fashion industry typically caters to a certain look: smaller people who require less fabric

to design, usually from a nondiverse pool of models. But for Cooper's brand, taking inspiration from designers like Rihanna, embracing diversity was a must.

"When I was selecting my models, I wanted to have someone of each race," Cooper said. "I wanted to have someone of different heights, just because to me, that's beautiful."

Taseen Abdulbarr, or "The Grand V" as his friends call him, is the founder and designer of the luxury brand Lines-trax. Abdulbarr described his garments as "artifacts," saying his pieces are works of art that aren't limited to the fashion industry.

Abdulbarr got his start hand-painting canvases and jackets in college and then transferred his designs to shoes, which got the attention of Nike footwear designer Lee Gibson. Abdulbarr's brand, which he prides because of its originality, took off from there and he secured a feature in New York Fashion Week 2017.

Abdulbarr said he's faced challenges within the fashion industry when it came to advocating for originality. The creator noted disparities between

larger brands unfairly taking designs from less-known designers, and he hopes to create a system of protection in the future.

Delight Dzansi creates African prints for her brand alkeBULAN. The Ghana-born designer recently graduated from the University of Maryland and currently works in the District in international development.

She said one of the first fashion shows she was invited to featured all Black designers.

Founder of the fashion brand Generation Typo Doncel Brown started out as a graphic designer and had the idea for the brand after noticing a disconnect and prejudice between generations.

All of his designs feature a signature red line meant to represent the 'typo' and the labeling of people as mistakes because of differing beliefs or identity. Being able to integrate this messaging into his brand is a big part of what Brown said streetwear is about.

Brown also said being based in the DMV area lends to his appreciation for the District's fashion community as well as his own upbringing.

## The history of soul food and its roots in D.C.

CHLOE KEARIN WILLEFORD  
REPORTER

D.C.'s soul food scene is at risk, and some local chefs are hoping that bringing more awareness to the African American roots of southern cooking will help.

Oji Abbott, the chef at Ooh's & Aah's Soul Food on Georgia Avenue in Northwest D.C., said soul food-specific Southern restaurants have been disappearing in the District. Soul food restaurants have historically operated in Black communities in D.C., while Southern-style restaurants are more common in white areas of the city, he said.

Abbot explained how nonsoul Southern restaurants sometimes appropriate soul food dishes like chicken and waffles or shrimp and grits as "southern-inspired cuisine" without explaining the meals' origins. This obscures their history and erases the unpaid labor of African American chefs who created those dishes, he said.

Christopher Carter, the author of The Spirit of Soul Food and a professor of theology and ethics at San Diego State University, echoed the importance

of the African American contributions to Southern food, which many fans of Southern cuisine don't recognize.

Jerome Grant, the executive chef at the local soul food fusion restaurant Jackie and the inaugural executive chef of Sweet Home Café at the National Museum of African-American History and Culture, said deciding what dishes to put on the menu at the café was difficult. He said between every regional cuisine influenced by African American cooks, there was a huge variety of food to choose from.

Culinary historian Michael W. Twitty focuses his research on the food traditions of enslaved Africans in the New World and wrote the book "The Cooking Gene," which won a 2018 James Beard Award. Twitty underscored the legacy of enslavement in the District, which laid the foundation for the area's soul food.

He added that soul food is a way of creating a feeling of togetherness in the face of racial oppression and communicating coping tools to handle it.

Twitty also pointed out the importance of differentiating between the terms "African American" and "Black" when discussing

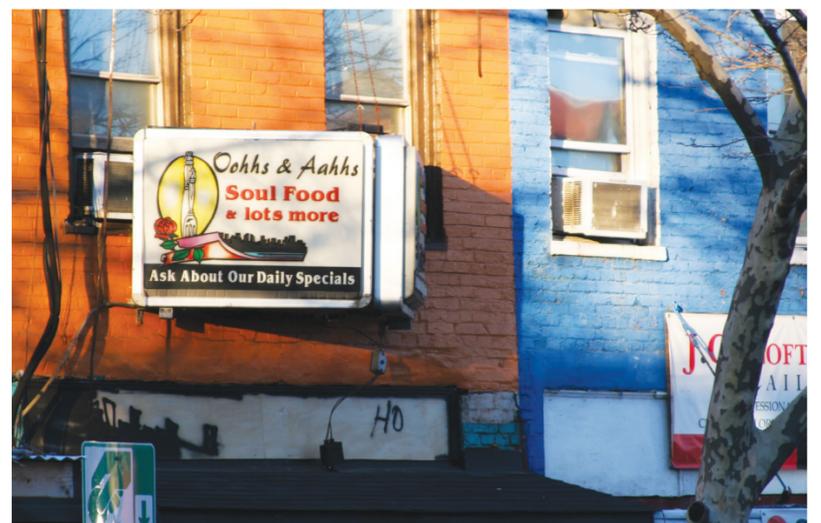
soul food, saying that African American specifically refers to the ancestors who were forced from Africa during enslavement, while Black is a broader category.

Twitty also differentiates the soul food "canon," the genre of traditional soul food as a whole, from the soul food "construct," foods experimenting with the soul-food tradition by taking the flavors and experience of soul food and remixing it.

Adrian Miller, who won the 2014 James Beard Award for Reference and Scholarship for his book "Soul Food," added that another myth about soul food is that it is unhealthy.

Miller also said many people have never learned about the strong influence soul food and Black and African American culinary traditions have had on Southern cuisine. He said the most notable example of this is Nashville hot chicken.

Miller also pushed the importance of celebrating the origin of famous soul-food dishes being served by Black chefs, saying that Black food hasn't had a "cheerleader" the way that Black music, sports and fashion have and giving the examples of Snoop Dogg, LeBron James and Beyoncé.



JORDAN YEE | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Ooh's & Aah's Soul Food's chef said the disappearance of soul food restaurants is erasing the influence of African American chefs' unpaid labor, which is how the dishes were first created.

## GAMES OF THE WEEK



**MEN'S BASKETBALL**  
vs. Davidson  
Saturday | 2 p.m.  
The Colonials play against the No. 25 Wildcats to wrap up a three-game homestand.



**GYMNASTICS**  
vs. Long Island, Eastern Michigan, Kent  
Sunday | 1 p.m.  
GW hosts the Pink Meet at the Smith Center.

**NUMBER CRUNCH** **.421**

The combined average field goal percentage of sophomore guard Joe Bamisile and freshman guard Brayon Freeman throughout the 2021-22 season.

## Star men's basketball alumnus commemorated during NBA game

**LIAM O'MURCHU**  
STAFF WRITER

The Washington Wizards held a Japanese Heritage Night last Friday night to commemorate the relationship between the United States and Japan and the impact it has had on the D.C. area during their game against the Toronto Raptors.

Playing in the game were the only two Japanese players in the NBA, Rui Hachimura of the Wizards and alumnus Yuta Watanabe of the Raptors. Watanabe's Raptors emerged victorious over the Wizards 109-105.

The Japanese Heritage Night celebration included matchup animations on the jumbotron throughout the night, as well as player headshots in Japanese, and graphics with facts on Japanese culture during breaks in the game. Fans attending the game received a commemorative Japanese heritage scarf.

Watanabe and Hachimura guarded each other on the defensive end when they were both on the floor. Watanabe finished the night with two rebounds and no shots attempted, playing only six minutes in the first quarter. Meanwhile, Hachimura had 11 points and eight rebounds while going 5-of-12 from the field in 20 minutes.

Watanabe, who was born in Yokohama and attended high school in Kagawa, is among GW men's basketball's most well-recognized alumni after

graduating in 2018 and leading the team to an NIT Championship in 2016, the first postseason title in program history.

He was the first Japanese-born basketball player to earn an NCAA Division I scholarship under the GW basketball program and was labeled as "The Chosen One" by The Japan Times in 2013.

As a freshman in Buff and Blue, Watanabe was an important contributor off the bench. He averaged 7.4 points and 3.5 rebounds per game, making 42 percent of his 2-point shots and 34.8 percent of his 3-pointers.

In his sophomore year, he emerged as a force on the defensive end, leading the team in blocked shots with 40 blocks, the second most in the Atlantic 10 that season. He averaged 8.4 points and 4.0 rebounds per game while shooting 50.7 percent from inside the arc and 30.6 percent from three.

Watanabe was a key member of the team that won a record-breaking 28 games and the NIT Championship, starting 37 of 38 games.

As a junior, Watanabe took on a more prominent role on the team, ending the season as the second-leading scorer. He made the A-10 All-Defensive Team and averaged 12.2 points, 4.8 rebounds and 1.1 blocks per game while making 50.5 percent of his 2-point shots and 31.4 percent of his 3-pointers.

In his final season in Foggy Bottom, Watanabe was the star of the show, leading the team in scoring with 16.3 points per game and coming second on the team



HATCHET FILE PHOTO

The Toronto Raptors' Yuta Watanabe is among GW men's basketball's most well-recognized alumni.

in rebounding with 6.1 per game. He had a 2-point percentage of 47.6 percent and a 36.4 percent clip from three.

Despite spending much of the season with the Grizzlies G League affiliate, the Grizzlies were third in the league in merchandise sold in Japan thanks to Watanabe's presence. In the 2018-19 G League season, Watanabe averaged 14.2

points, 7.2 rebounds and 2.6 assists while starting 32 of 33 games.

Watanabe was named to the midseason All-NBA G League Team for the Western Conference and started all 22 games, finishing the year with 17.2 points, 6.0 rebounds and 1.9 assists per game. Watanabe signed with the Raptors back in April of last year, making him the first Colonial to sign a

contract with the NBA since 2017.

This season he has played in 21 games and started four of them while averaging 6.1 points and 3.6 rebounds per game with a field goal percentage of 48. He recorded a career high in points and assists in December with 26 points and 13 rebounds as many of the team's star players were out due to COVID-19.

## Men's and women's swimming and diving look ahead to A-10 Championships

**MATTHEW GARFINKLE**  
REPORTER

As the Atlantic 10 Championships draw near, the men's and women's swimming and diving teams are gearing up to repeat their success from the previous season.

Despite a pandemic-induced shortened season last year, the men's and women's teams still managed to finish successfully at first and fourth in the A-10 championships, respectively. Both teams are coming back off of fresh wins against their biggest rival, Georgetown, in which the women's team pulled away with a 165-127 win, while the men's team won a closer battle with a score of 159-141.

"I think we did pretty well," senior Grace Olivardia said. "We like to get our hand on the wall first a lot of the time, if not all of the time. So I think that moving into A-10 with that race confidence of just continuously winning races is important moving forward."

The women's team embodied this mentality at the meet. The team had many individual performances that resulted in race wins, contributing to their team win against Georgetown.

Additionally, many members contributed to second- and third-place finishes behind the races won, only adding to the success of the team.

Junior Becca Brown won both the 50 and 100 free while freshman Julia Knox won the 200 free and the 200 individual medley. Senior Erin McCarthy took home wins in both the

1,000 and 500 free.

On the diving side, junior Jamie Doak and freshman Dara Reyblat secured the top two finishes in each event and Doak put up a season-best score of 282.98 on the 3-meter board.

Meanwhile, the men's team put on a strong performance highlighted by junior Durde Matic, who won the 100 fly and led the team in the 50 free. He also contributed to the victory in the 200 medley relay and 400 free relay.

"The Georgetown meet for me was mostly about racing and not about having good times," Matic said. "And I feel that was the case for all of the swimmers from our team. It was pretty much practicing a lot of racing, a lot of trying to compete with the swimmers next to you rather than fighting the clock."

This mentality has set the men's team up for success so far this season and only made them more poised for the rest of the season.

Before the A-10 tournament, both teams have their sights set on the Cavalier Invitational at the University of Virginia for swimmers and the Duke Dog Diving Invitational at James Madison University for divers. Preparation for each team is important, but so is keeping their bodies healthy for the championships.

"Not our whole team is going to the Virginia meet," Olivardia said. "I think that's a pretty selective meet for some people. But moving into the A-10, we are definitely lightening up a little bit to get ready to gear up and race hard."

The men's team is taking

a very similar approach, also emphasizing proper preparation rather than continuous practice, which would put too much stress on the players' bodies.

"Pretty much coming down to the end of the season and the A-10 we're swimming less in the next couple of weeks," Matic said. "So we can get our best results."

Looking ahead to the A-10 tournament, it is important to note how much different this season has been compared to last season being shortened because of COVID-19. The team did not get to participate in any fall meets last season and endured some canceled meets in the spring as well.

"The thing that sticks out most is that it's just been vastly different than last year," Head Coach Brian Thomas said. "So getting back to some rhythm and normalcy in terms of the timeline of the season has been good."

This increased practice and game cycle has helped contribute to what will hopefully be an even more successful season than last.

"The men are in position to repeat," Thomas said. "I think it's a good conference, and we never want to discount that by any means. I just like the way we match up. I think we look pretty good there."

While the men's team looks like it is going to repeat its championship, the women's team does have more on their slate, especially after finishing fourth in the championship tournament last season.

The women's team does have other strengths that could easily propel them to A-10 success in the future.



COURTESY OF KEVIN BURKE

When Joe Bamisile isn't on the court, you can find him meditating, recording his own music or painting.

## Pair of guards light up men's basketball scene

**LIAM O'MURCHU**  
STAFF WRITER

Joe Bamisile and Brayon Freeman both came to GW looking for a chance at consistent playing time under a coach that they trusted.

Bamisile is a sophomore guard who transferred to GW from Virginia Tech last summer and has burst onto the scene with the Colonials this year. He has appeared on the SportsCenter Top 10 three times already thanks to his dunks and has no plans to stop.

Bamisile said he was attracted to the idea of playing for Head Coach Jamion Christian, who he said was different from most other coaches.

Bamisile has shown his development throughout the season, averaging 30.1 minutes, 14.8 points, 5.7 rebounds and 1.2 assists per game, along with a 44.3 field goal percentage.

But Bamisile's interests go beyond just basketball. He said he has been making music since he was a kid while also painting on the side. He said he made two songs between December and January and plans to release more music once the season is over.

Bamisile, who releases music under the name Phouelisi, has 117,731 monthly listeners on Spotify and has two songs with more than a million listens.

In August of last year, Bamisile walked around campus, asked

GW students to dance with him and turned his journey into a music video for his song LOCO. The video has racked up more than 80,000 views.

Bamisile said he has been into meditation ever since his grandparents introduced it to him at the age of seven. He meditated off and on throughout his childhood but started his own practice of meditation while in high school, and it's been a crucial part of his daily life ever since.

Bamisile, who is studying communications and psychology, said he hopes to get a masters degree in psychology after college. He said he has been enjoying all of his classes, and his favorite is called Philosophy of the Mind.

Bamisile deactivated his Twitter last summer and unfollowed everyone on Instagram recently after having a discussion with one of his friends that led him to make the decision. He said he doesn't want his attention and mind to be controlled by algorithms.

In high school, Bamisile said he dealt with a nagging knee injury that prevented him from playing his sophomore and senior seasons. During the first surgery, he had a screw put in his knee, but it caused degeneration of his cartilage.

Though he knew he had to get another surgery to fix it, he said he only had two offers to

play in college heading into his junior year, so he decided to play the season on the injured knee. That season, he averaged nearly 29 points per game and was named all-region and all-state in Virginia.

Freeman, a freshman guard who picked GW over offers from Oklahoma State, VCU and Ole Miss, has also thrived in GW's environment.

He said he wanted to play at a school where the style of play catered to his abilities and Christian's offense fit the bill.

Freeman has also taken advantage of the opportunities he's gotten as a Colonial, averaging 23.4 minutes, 8.9 points, 3.1 assists and 1.8 rebounds per game with a 41.6 field goal percentage. And he's done it all with an injured knee.

Freeman said he has lived in the D.C. area for most of his life and said his favorite part about the city is the people and the culture.

Freeman said he likes to listen to hip hop, especially D.C. artists, in addition to writing and drawing in his free time. He said he describes himself as an "artsy" person and has a few tattoos on his left arm, on which he plans to get more.

Freeman said it's odd going to a school where sports aren't very popular on campus and games are sparsely attended.



FILE PHOTO BY SYDNEY WALSH | ASSISTANT PHOTO EDITOR

Before the A-10 tournament, both teams have their sights set on upcoming invitational competitions.