

# The GW Hatchet

## Opinions

The editorial board writes GW's "pandemic era" has come to a close after officials dropped the mask mandate. Page 6

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Meet the alumna who is teaching local Washingtonians the art of acting. Page 7

## Sports

Check out our coverage of women's basketball's final game this season and a recap of their year. Page 8

## What's inside

## WOMEN'S BASKETBALL ELIMINATED AFTER COMEBACK YEAR

### Season comes to close in A-10 women's tourney after loss to URI

### Women's hoops wraps up best year since 2018 with run to A-10 quarterfinals

**BEN SPITALNY**  
REPORTER

**ZACH BLACKBURN**  
SENIOR NEWS EDITOR

They weren't going down without a fight.

Women's basketball lost to Rhode Island 68-56 in a physical quarterfinals battle in the Atlantic 10 tournament Friday evening, putting an end to GW's best season since 2018.

The second-seeded Rams outmatched the seventh-seeded Colonials for most of the game, but a furious GW run in the fourth quarter cut the lead to 4 and put the Colonials within striking distance. But the Rams, led by junior forward Mayé Touré and sophomore guard Sophie Phillips, never gave up their lead as the minutes ticked down.

The game was physical – a total of 39 fouls were called and the teams combined for 37 turnovers. But the Rams, with a height advantage and fresh legs after a double-bye, maintained pressure on the Colonials, limiting GW, who never led, to 30.6 percent shooting from the field.

"I'm just really proud of our team today, playing 40 minutes through a lot of adversity throughout the game," Head Coach Caroline McCombs said after the game. "Rhode Island's a really good team – the top team in the league – so we knew it was going to be a huge battle for us."

Senior guard Nya Lok led the Colonials with 21 points, making seven of her 17 attempts and capturing six rebounds. The Rams held graduate student guard Mia Lakstigala, who nailed Thursday night's game-winning shot to send GW to the quarterfinals, to just 4 points on 1-12 shooting.

Touré, the A-10's Most Improved Player, kicked off the scoring for Rhode Island with a layup just 18 seconds in. But the game quickly settled into a defensive slugfest – neither team made a field goal for the next 3:44 – until Touré banked in a jumper for her second basket of the night.

GW started 0-6 from the field and wouldn't earn a basket until senior forward Faith Blethen sunk a 3-pointer with 3:56



Freshman guard Nya Robertson was able to sink two clutch threes, with GW's press defense forcing the Rams to cough up the ball multiple times.

left in the quarter to cut Rhode Island's lead to 3. Taking advantage of Rhode Island's also-temperid offensive output, a steal by redshirt senior forward Mayowa Taiwo set up Blethen perfectly for another 3 which she sunk to tie up the game.

The first quarter ended in despair for the Colonials when junior guard Asjah Inniss fouled graduate student guard Sayawni Lassiter while she heaved a half-court desperation shot. Lassiter would sink each of her three free throws, and Rhode Island would enter the second quarter leading 13-8.



The Colonials shot 2-12 in the first period, and the Rams made just four of their 14 attempts, with 11 turnovers between the squads.

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RACHEL SCHWARTZ | ASSISTANT PHOTO EDITOR

**BEN SPITALNY**  
REPORTER

**ZACH BLACKBURN**  
SENIOR NEWS EDITOR

A squadron of established seniors and high-scoring

additions led women's basketball to their most successful year since the 2017-18 season, when the team last reached the NCAA tournament.

The Colonials (18-13, 9-7 A-10) finished the year tied

for sixth in the Atlantic 10, and a triumvirate of players earned conference awards in Head Coach Caroline McCombs' second year at the helm of the program. The Buff and Blue exceeded expectations in this year's campaign, highlighted by a heroic 3-pointer from graduate student guard Mia Lakstigala in the A-10 tournament that sent the team to the quarterfinals.

In the quarterfinals, GW lost a hard-fought battle against Rhode Island, putting an end to a season that players said bound them together as a cohesive unit in the game and off the court.

"We're very connected on the court as well as off the court," senior guard Nya Lok said after the elimination loss. "We love each other so much, and we push each other every day, hold each other accountable."

The team instituted a new program before the start of the season based on NBA star Stephen Curry's daily practice routine in an effort to bolster the team's subpar 3-point shooting – and the program paid dividends. GW led the A-10 in 3-pointers made, shooting at a .332 percent clip after finishing

third to last in the conference in made 3-pointers last year with a measly .271 rate. GW skyrocketed from 207th in deep balls among Division I teams to 16th in just one year as of Monday.

But the team didn't let their aggressive presence outside the arc deter them from dominating the boards after flinging up a shot – the team ranked second in the A-10 and 35th in the country in offensive rebounds with nearly 14 per game.

Freshman guard sensation Nya Robertson came off the bench to headline the year for the Colonials, breaking onto the scene to lead the team in scoring with 14.4 points per game and securing the A-10's Sixth Woman of the Year honor.

Robertson, who secured a spot on the A-10's All-Rookie team, found a steady role on the team off the bench. The Texan freshman lit up the scoreboard in the regular season – she finished second in made 3-pointers and 10th in scoring among all D1 freshmen.

Robertson said her work in Foggy Bottom wasn't done after the loss to Rhode Island.

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## Students take to runway in Delta Lambda Phi's fourth annual drag show, honoring late alumnus

**CLARA DUHON**  
CULTURE EDITOR

*Editor's note: This post contains references to suicide. If you or someone you know has experienced suicidal ideation, call the 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline or reach the Student Health Center at 202-994-5300 and ask to speak to a counselor.*

The members of Delta Lambda Phi took to the spotlight runway in the University Student Center's Grand Ballroom Saturday night in their fourth annual drag show, honoring their late brother and transgender rights advocate, Henry Berg-Brousseau.

The queens strutted out in corsets, glamorous makeup and heels higher than the heavens, lip syncing and dancing to songs from the likes of Britney Spears and Amy Winehouse to raise money for the Trevor Project – a nonprofit focused on suicide prevention among LGBTQ+ youth. The Henry Berg-Brousseau Memorial Drag Show celebrated the legacy of Berg-Brousseau, an alumnus who died of suicide in December following a long struggle with mental illness and "difficulty finding acceptance," according to a release his mother issued after his death.

Graduate student Jeffrey Fralick, the philanthropy chair for DLP and the executive producer for this year's show, said the fraternity sent proceeds from the event to the Trevor Project. Fralick said the nonprofit was "near and dear" to Berg-Brousseau, who was the deputy press secretary for politics for the Human Rights Campaign, the nation's largest LGBTQ+ civil rights organization, and his family chose the Trevor Project for donations in his memory following his death. Fralick said



Partnering with WRGW – GW's student-run radio station – to put on the drag show, Delta Lambda Phi gathered more than 200 attendees at the fraternity's biggest philanthropy event of the year.

Berg-Brousseau, one of the founders of the rechartering of DLP's Alpha chapter at GW, performed at the inaugural show in 2018 as his drag persona, Inita Richman.

"Henry had participated originally as a performer, and now, five years later, we're now honoring him with this iteration of the drag show," Fralick said. "So it's a full circle moment."

Partnering with WRGW – GW's student-run radio station – to put on the drag show, DLP gathered more than 200 attendees at the fraternity's biggest philanthropy event of the year.

The drag show follows a recent series of pieces of legislation Republicans have introduced across the country attempting to limit public drag events, largely in the presence of children, and targeting LGBTQ+ individuals. Closer

to campus, locals feared the neo-fascist Proud Boys group would infiltrate a drag story-time brunch in a Capitol Hill restaurant last month, like the group did at similar drag events for children and families around the country. Hundreds of residents gathered to defend the story time, holding up rainbow umbrellas and playing Disney songs in solidarity.

Fralick said the recent attacks are "frightening" and "disheartening" to see, but DLP did not want to let hate get in the way of their performance.

"Carrying on with the show as we had planned and just honoring Henry – which is the ultimate goal of that – I think it's an attempt to kind of rebuke a lot of the hatred out there about drag shows and just the LGBTQ community, generally speaking," he said.

Fralick said to prepare for the show, the consecutive 2018 and 2019 crowned winner, Anna the Hole Smith, portrayed by Jonathan Kvilhaug, gave the queens dance lessons to help enhance their performances. He said he hopes the event introduces newcomers to drag and inspires attendees to support drag queens and LGBTQ+ businesses around the District.

"It's great – if there's anybody out there struggling with their own identity – that they can kind of look to DLP as this brother community or also just introduce them to a broader concept that drag is here, it's in the District and that it is an open and accepting community for anybody who is willing to put themselves out there or just say hello," he said.

See **QUEENS** Page 7

## Biden to overturn D.C. crime bill pending Senate vote

**GRACE CHINOWSKY**  
ASSISTANT NEWS EDITOR

President Biden announced he will sign Congress' override of the D.C. Council's revised criminal code in the likely case it passes the Senate.

Biden said in a tweet Thursday that despite backing D.C.'s ability to self-govern under home rule, he is against signing the code into law because parts of the legislation reduce sentences for property crimes like carjacking. The announcement comes after the GOP-led House of Representatives voted to overturn both the code and a local bill that allows non-citizens to vote in D.C. elections last month with bipartisan support, which the Senate is poised to vote on as early as next week.

Biden's support of the House's measure means members of Congress may successfully block a D.C. bill from becoming law for the first time in more than three decades, infringing on the District's home rule, outlined in a 1973 act aimed at allowing D.C. residents to control their own local affairs.

"I support D.C. Statehood and home rule – but I don't support some of the changes D.C. Council put forward over the Mayor's objections – such as lowering penalties for carjackings," Biden said in a tweet.

The revised code would reduce the mandatory minimum sentence for carjacking from seven to four years and drop the mandatory maximum sentence for more severe instances of carjacking, like those involving weapons, from 40 to 24 years. But the city judiciary frequently does not hand out maximum sentences for carjacking or other property crimes, meaning the proposed mandatory maximums are already higher than what the city judiciary is implementing right now.

31 House Democrats backed Republicans' opposition to the crime bill in the floor vote earlier this month. Del. Eleanor Holmes Norton, D.C.'s non-voting representative in the chamber, said Biden's resistance to the local bill was "news to her" after his seemingly-staunch support of D.C. statehood previously and that she was "very disappointed" with the announcement, according to The Washington Post.

"[President Biden] believes that every city should have the right to self-government. But this is different," White House Press Secretary Karine Jean-Pierre said in a conference Wednesday. "The D.C. Council put changes forward over the mayor's objections."

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# News

## THIS WEEK'S EVENTS

**OUR BODIES, OUR LAND: RURAL & INDIGENOUS WOMEN'S PATH TO SOVEREIGNTY**  
 Monday, March 6 | 10 a.m. EDT | Online  
 Join a panel discussion covering the topic of rural women's rights and their connection with land ownership.

**WHAT'S NEXT? THE FUTURE OF REPRODUCTIVE JUSTICE AND CHURCH AND STATE SEPARATION**  
 Wednesday, March 8 | 7 p.m. EDT | Online  
 Tune into a discussion about reproductive justice and the church and state divide in a post-Roe United States.

**THIS WEEK IN HISTORY**  
 March 6, 2000

Men's basketball fell to No. 5 national powerhouse Temple 98-67 in front of a sold-out, Smith Center crowd.

## Eighth-annual Diversity Summit returns in person after two years of virtual programming

JENNIFER IGBONBA  
 STAFF WRITER

OLIVIA EMERSON  
 REPORTER

The Office of Diversity, Equity and Community Engagement hosted the eighth-annual Diversity Summit last week with more than 50 discussion-based events that highlighted prominent social issues, like antisemitism and transgender rights.

The Diversity Summit made its in-person return to campus after hosting the events virtually since 2020 due to the pandemic with more than 100 students, faculty members and guest speakers hosting workshops and discussions from Wednesday to Friday. Program organizers said this year's theme, "Toward a More Perfect Union: With Liberty, Justice and Civility for All," focused on recent social issues within a campus lens, like the reversal of Roe v. Wade last summer and the onset of the pandemic.

The summit kicked off Wednesday evening with a keynote speech from Negin Farsad, an Iranian American comedian and social justice activist, who spoke to more than 50 students and faculty in the Jack Morton Auditorium about her experiences



JENNIFER IGBONBA | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

The Diversity Summit made its in-person return to campus with more than 100 students, faculty members and guest speakers hosting workshops and discussions from Wednesday to Friday.

navigating her identity while growing up.

Farsad said she appreciated the University selecting her instead of an academic speaker to discuss diversity. She said she hopes the keynote talk builds upon the "camaraderie" of celebrating the University community's diversity.

"I think there's so much in the country right now that's using the rhetoric of diversity against us, and I find it re-

ally frustrating," Farsad said. "And I think that all of this stuff should be more fun."

The summit's 47 events ranged from unpacking the emotional undertones of art during Black Lives Matter protests, which associate professor of art therapy Jordan Potash and professional lecturer Lindsey Vance presented, to a discussion about experiences of ableism in academia with Emily Deckert, a doctoral candidate and

graduate assistant in GW's philosophy in the field of counseling program.

Junior Vee Witzel, who participated in an event on how to balance a university's freedom of speech, said the Diversity Summit has offered minority students on campus a space to "freely express themselves" and educate other students, faculty and administrators on issues impacting their own community.

## CRIME LOG

### DESTRUCTION OF PROPERTY, FALSE FIRE ALARM

Various Locations  
 2/25/2023 – Multiple  
 Open Case  
 GW Police Department officers responded to multiple fire alarm activations. Shortly after, officers located the female subject responsible for the activations and damage to a fire alarm pull station.  
**Case open.**

### EXTORTION

Thurston Hall  
 2/26/2023 – 1:53 a.m.  
 Open Case  
 A male student reported that he befriended an unknown female subject via Instagram. After exchanging sensitive photos, the unknown subject threatened to release the photos and harm the male student if he didn't pay them.  
**Case open.**

### THEFT II/OTHER

University Yard (Breezeway)  
 2/26/2023 – 1:00-7:13 p.m.  
 Open Case  
 A female student reported her electric scooter stolen.  
**Case open.**

### PUBLIC DRUNKENNESS

Duquès Hall  
 2/26/2023 – 8:53 p.m.  
 Closed Case  
 GWPD officers responded to a report of an intoxicated female student. EMeRG officials responded and performed an assessment, then transported her to the GW Hospital for further treatment.  
**Referred to the Division for Student Affairs.**

### TRAFFIC ACCIDENT: HIT-AND-RUN

Public Property on Campus (2400 Block of H Street NW)  
 2/27/2023 – 5:00 p.m.  
 Open Case  
 A female student reported damage to her car after being involved in a hit-and-run.  
**Case open.**

### THEFT II/OTHER

University Yard (Breezeway)  
 2/27/2023 – 6:50 p.m.  
 Open Case  
 A male student reported his electric scooter stolen.  
**Case open.**

### FRAUD 1D/FRAUD

Shenkman Hall  
 3/1/2023 – 6:37 p.m.  
 Open Case  
 A female student reported being the victim of fraud after attempting to purchase concert tickets online.  
**Case open.**

—Compiled by Peyton Gallant

## SNAPSHOT

JORDAN TOVIN | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER



From left to right, Sidwell Friends and Jackson-Reed students cheer on their teams as they play in the D.C. State Athletic Association Basketball State Tournament final at the Smith Center Sunday night. Sidwell took home the win, 62-47.

## Officials to add electronic mail and package kiosks in six residence halls

GRACE CHINOWSKY  
 ASSISTANT NEWS EDITOR

Officials announced a campus-wide transition to self-servicing electronic mail and package service pickup in an email Thursday, slotting the installation of new mail lockers in residence halls for spring and summer.

Officials will implement 24-hour mail and package lockers in JBKO Hall during spring break and in District House and Mitchell, Amsterdam, Guthridge and South halls during the summer, some of which will hold mail for neighboring halls without lockers, the email states. The email states officials are expanding the electronic locker system for mail and package, phasing out the existing mail and package service system after officials noticed a "huge increase" in package deliveries and a decline in postal mail.

Officials said JBKO Hall will service Munson and Fulbright halls, District House's lockers will serve residents of Lafayette Hall, Amsterdam will service Madison Hall residents,

Guthridge will serve 2109 F Street and Mitchell hall lockers will hold mail for 1959 E Street residents.

Residents of Shenkman, Thurston and West halls will continue to use preexisting electronic mail lockers in the lobbies of their buildings, according to the email.

"We set a goal to identify a way for you to pick-up your packages closer to where you live rather than trekking across campus," the email states.

Under the existing system, Mail and Package Services receives student mail in their primary campus hub, the mailroom in the lower level of the Support Building on F Street. MPS then delivers postal mail to personal combination, lock and key mailboxes for all hall residents – except for those in Shenkman, Thurston and West halls, who can already access electronic lockers. Residents without the lockers must pick up packages from the Support Building after receiving an email PacTrac pickup notification.

The preexisting MPS

buildings in Foggy Bottom and the Mount Vernon Campus will continue to be open throughout the summer and next year and will receive packages that are too large to fit in the new electronic lockers, according to the email. The email states officials will remove older mailboxes in the buildings upon installing the new lockers.

The email states officials will install 24-hour kiosks in the lobbies of the buildings, which will receive mail and packages directly and send students a code to open the locker and access their mail upon deliveries.

The email states that officials are still reviewing mail and package services for those in townhouses, including The Dakota, International House, Building JJ and Francis Key Scott and Potomac halls, but that more information will come out this summer.

"As we get closer to installation dates, we'll let the residents of that building know of upcoming work," the email states. "We hope you like these lobby 'makeovers'



FILE PHOTO BY SOPHIA YOUNG | SENIOR STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Residents of Shenkman, Thurston and West halls will continue to use electronic mail lockers in the lobbies of their buildings as officials add electronic systems to residence halls across campus, according to the email.

that will provide you with more convenient ways to pick-up your mail and packages."

Officials first installed the electronic lockers in West Hall in 2018 and added the kiosks to Shenkman a year later. They installed

new lockers in Thurston Hall during renovations of the building, reopening for use in fall 2022.

In November, students without access to electronic lockers said they faced difficulties accessing their mail, including receiving

their election ballots to vote in the 2022 midterm elections. More than two dozen students said they received their ballots days before the election, after the election or never at all, leaving many with little time to cast their votes.

# Appeals court denies GW Hospital's request for sales tax refund

**GRACE CHINOWSKY**  
ASSISTANT NEWS EDITOR

A panel of federal judges struck down GW Hospital's operator's appeal for a sales tax refund after a Superior Court judge previously ruled the hospital was not entitled to reimbursement.

Officials from District Hospital Partners, which operates GW Hospital, requested a refund of nearly \$1 million in sales tax from D.C.'s Office of Tax and Revenue in January 2020 because officials purchased "prepared meals" between April 2016 and July 2019 that DHP said they intended to resell, according to the ruling. A Superior Court judge dismissed DHP's appeal of the sales tax charges, which typically do not apply to resold items, last January because hospital officials did not provide the seller with a certificate proving the purchases were going to be resold.

A GW Hospital spokesperson did not immediately return a request for comment.

DHP's legal defense said hospital officials should receive a refund for \$951,117 worth of purchases despite failing to provide the certificate verifying that they were for resale — as required by the D.C. Code — because the absence of a certificate does not convert resale purchases

to "taxable events," according to the ruling. Appeals Court Associate Judge Roy McLeese said he affirmed the Superior Court's previous ruling that struck down the request because of DHP's failure to provide the certificate.

"We are not persuaded by GWUH's arguments," McLeese states in the ruling.

McLeese said while GW Hospital officials argued the portion of the D.C. Code applicable to the dispute is a "remedial statute" that judges should construe broadly in favor of taxpayers seeking refunds, the Court sees "no such ambiguity" in the rule.

The judge states that hospital officials cite provisions of codes they claim supersede their need to file the resale certificate, focusing on the "substance" rather than the "form" of the transaction. But other parts of the code highlight the certificate rule's importance, overriding any other measure inconsistent with it, the judge ruled.

"We decline to interpret the regulation in that fashion, however, because an arguable implication of a regulation cannot prevail over the plain language of a statute," the ruling states.

The judge said GW Hospital officials argued the flat rule resulted in "double taxation" of the hospital



HATCHET FILE PHOTO

The judge said GW Hospital officials argued the flat rule resulted in "double taxation," and the "ultimate consumers" of the prepared meals should have paid the sales tax, not them.

and that the "ultimate consumers" of the prepared meals should have paid the sales tax, not them.

McLeese ruled DHS paid sales taxes only once, and that GW Hospital officials only had to pay said

taxes because of their failure to comply with the required procedures.



FILE PHOTO BY MAYA NAIR | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Three students who spoke to The Hatchet, each with an online following ranging from 9,000 to nearly 500,000 followers, said the sponsorships aim to elevate ticket sales to nonstudents and amplify school spirit.

# Agency pays student influencers to advertise basketball games

**FAITH WARDWELL**  
ASSISTANT NEWS EDITOR

**THARUNIKA GOVINDASAMY**  
REPORTER

Student and alumni social media influencers said a local consulting firm is paying them up to \$800 to promote basketball games in an attempt to bolster attendance at sporting events.

They said MtoM Consulting, a digital marketing agency based in Falls Church, Virginia, contacted students with up to 500,000 followers on TikTok or Instagram to post promotions for the men's and women's basketball games and link to the GW Athletics Ticketmaster site on their respective social media profiles during the spring semester. Three students who spoke to The Hatchet, each with an online following ranging from 9,000 to nearly 500,000 followers, said the sponsorships aim to elevate ticket sales to nonstudents and amplify school spirit among the student body.

The Hatchet has identified at least seven students who have posted paid promotions of GW basketball games on Instagram or TikTok.

Kamau Louis, a former Hatchet opinions writer who graduated at the end of the fall semester, runs a TikTok account with more than 9,000 followers where he has posted promotions for the games, including a satirical announcement that he committed to the men's basketball team as a "floor sweeper." He said the consulting agency reached out to him over Instagram in January and offered him an opportunity to produce video promotions for GW Athletics.

"They're just trying to increase engagement for sporting events and basketball games and overall with the University," Louis said. "The best way to do that for students is through basketball."

Louis said he accepted the sponsorship and worked with MtoM Consulting to set his pay rate, \$200 per post for a total of \$800 across four

promotions.

The student sponsorships come as the latest in a series of marketing strategies the athletics department and administrators have pursued this school year to boost school spirit and encourage turnout at games. George's Army, GW Athletics' official student section, unveiled new merchandise and ramped up game-day tailgates and halftime fan contests in an effort to connect student-athletes to the GW community this season.

More than 3,700 people attended men's basketball's home game against VCU Saturday — the highest turnout for a Smith Center game since before the pandemic when 4,019 fans turned out at the Feb. 22, 2020 game against La Salle.

Louis said officials in the athletics department approve each of his promotions before he posts them to social media, ensuring that the ad doesn't include copyrighted material or profanities, but the ultimate topic of each post is up to him.

An athletics department spokesperson said officials have signed off on six student partnerships to promote the basketball games this academic year, amassing more than 300,000 views on sponsored videos across TikTok and Instagram. They said the department's marketing team reviewed "more than dozens" of potential influencers to find students who would be "a good fit" for the marketing campaign.

"We like influencer marketing because it is genuine advocacy, with each influencer creating their own content based on what they enjoy about attending games," they said in an email.

MtoM Consulting did not return a request to comment.

Katelyn Power, a freshman with more than 476,000 followers on her ballet-focused TikTok, said athletics department officials contacted her in the beginning of November to promote the men's basketball games, saying they needed a "difference maker" to increase

ticket sales and student involvement. She said she was required to attend at least one basketball game to create two sponsorship videos.

Power's basketball promotions included a vlog of her day on campus attending a tailgate and a men's basketball game and a video teaching the George Washington mascot how to do ballet at the pregame tailgate.

Power declined to comment on the payment she received for the videos.

Abigail Francis, a junior with nearly 297,000 followers on TikTok, said MtoM Consulting messaged her over Instagram in November offering her a contract to post two promotional videos for the Jan. 21 men's basketball game against Dayton on TikTok and Instagram.

Francis said she accepted the contract in December, setting a rate of \$200 per post. She said she signed a second contract in January with the same rate of pay to promote men's basketball with posts for the Feb. 15 game against George Mason, their Feb. 25 game against La Salle and the women's basketball game against Davidson Feb. 22.

Francis said the marketing agency sent her a list of "do's and don'ts" before she started producing content for the athletics department, which encouraged her to wear GW merchandise, post with GW-related phrases like "Raise High" and motivate other students and alumni through the videos to attend the games.

The other students who have posted promotional videos of GW basketball games to TikTok marked as paid partnerships throughout this year's basketball season include senior Kate Carpenter, who has nearly 4,300 followers on TikTok, Danielle Villardi, who has more than 1,100 followers on the app, and Melina Golembiewski, who has more than 6,000 followers. Carpenter, Villardi and Golembiewski have also nearly amassed a combined 12,000 Instagram followers between their respective accounts.

# Law student fills ANC vacancy with plans to enhance transparency

**ERIKA FILTER**  
ASSISTANT NEWS EDITOR

After graduating from GW nearly three decades ago, Kim Courtney has returned to campus as a law student and joined Foggy Bottom's local governing body.

At-Large D.C. Council member Anita Bonds swore in Courtney last week to the Foggy Bottom and West End Advisory Neighborhood Commission to represent single-member district 2A05, which spans the intersection of Virginia Avenue and E Street and includes Shenkman Hall and the Columbia Plaza and Remington apartment complexes. Courtney, a one-year Master of Laws student who studied dance and international affairs at GW as an undergraduate from 1991 to 1996, said she plans to promote transparency within the ANC through monthly email newsletters to her constituents and meeting agendas that the commissioner posts on time.

"Presently, my primary goal is to make sure that there's the transparency and that the process is clear and understandable and approachable for residents to participate," she said. "I mean, we're elected commissioners, but we're residents."

D.C. officials redrew the SMDs across the city's ANCs late last year, a process that began in 2021 to fit their populations with 2020 census data. With her addition to the commission, Courtney fills the ANC's last vacancy and ninth seat.

She said she hopes to send her first monthly newsletter to her constituents March 15, but she still needs to collect their contact information, which she hopes to collect by word of mouth.

Courtney, a Columbia Plaza resident and Hatchet photographer and videographer, said she has worked as an attorney for two decades, currently serving as a contract attorney with the consulting agency Innovative Driven.

She said from November to December, she performed legal research, fact checking and redactions for the report conducted by the U.S. House of Representatives Select Committee to Investigate the January 6th Attack on the United States Capitol.

Courtney said she doesn't consider herself politically active, although she interned for then-President Bill Clinton's White House communications department from 1992 to 1993 during her time as an undergraduate.

Courtney said when she voted in the November election she saw an empty slot on the ballot for her district's ANC commissioner seat, so she submitted a petition with 33 signatures — more than the required 25 — by the Jan. 30 submission deadline, launching her bid to the ANC.

"It's not something that I sought out," she said. "I was concerned that there was nobody in the position, and I just thought that everybody needed to be represented."

Nicholas Dowse, another 2A05 resident who graduated from GW with a master's degree in international affairs in 2015, said he also submitted a petition to fill the vacancy. Courtney said she challenged his petition when she saw some of his signatures came from people who were not registered to vote.

Dowse said after writing his name in "as a joke" for the vacant seat in the November election, the ANC emailed him that the seat was still open and provided directions from the Board of Elections on how to submit a petition. Dowse said he collected signatures from residents from Shenkman Hall and the Columbia Plaza Apartments.

Courtney said she plans to host in-person meetings with constituents where she will share information on upcoming ANC agenda items, and she plans to pay to print a newsletter with information about the ANC to place in the lobbies of buildings in her district.

"That's the hardest part, is getting good communication with everyone," she said.

Courtney said she paid out of pocket for a dedicated ANC phone which she plans to use to communicate with constituents, but she wishes the District paid ANC commissioners.

ANC members and constituents in Courtney's SMD said Courtney will help fill a key gap in the commission, which was missing representation from the 2A05 SMD.

Commissioner Joel Causey, who chairs the ANC and represents SMD 2A06, said commissioners are excited to work with her.

Commissioner and junior Dasia Bandy said she has not yet met Courtney, but she is "open" to working with another GW student on the commission.

Commissioner Yannik Omicton said he was "excited" for Courtney to fill the vacancy in 2A05.

"It's great to have no vacancies on the ANC," he said. "It means we can actually do our job."

John Seichter, the president of Columbia Plaza Tenants Association, said Courtney "was a highly qualified candidate" for the ANC, where she will be "an excellent addition."

Sarah Shapiro, a resident of Columbia Plaza, said before Courtney began her petition, Shapiro spoke with Seichter about finding a resident to fill the vacancy.

She said the ANC commissioner seat is designed to represent constituents on local problems as they arise more than traditionally "political" issues. She said she wanted to ensure she is represented, even in the most local governing bodies.

"Whatever the ANC does, however little power it has, however little it does, I want that little bit," she said.

Shapiro said as long as she is willing to represent the SMD, Courtney has her support.

"Actually, I wouldn't have cared who it was," she said. "I wanted us to be represented."



SAGE RUSSELL | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Kim Courtney, a Columbia Plaza resident and Hatchet photographer and videographer, said she has worked as an attorney for two decades, currently serving as a contract attorney with the consulting agency Innovative Driven.

# Art therapy program receives \$1 million donation to fund graduate fellowships

CADE MCALLISTER  
REPORTER

Art therapy professors said they plan to spend a \$1 million donation to their program on graduate fellowships, aiming to bring “imperative” financial support to their students.

GW parents Ulvi and Reykhan Kasimov donated a \$1 million endowment to the GW Art Therapy Program late last month to fund graduate fellowships, which faculty and students said will decrease student debt and make the program more accessible to low-income students. Heidi Bardot, the director and an associate professor of the GW Art Therapy Program, said program faculty have not started designing the fellowship’s application but plan for it to launch at the beginning of the next academic year.

She said the fellowship will lower the financial burden for art therapy students, who learn to combine their art and counseling skills to help patients “heal” and “communicate” through art exercises.

The American Art Therapy Association found in a 2020 survey that art therapy, which combines art and counseling to help patients process their emotions, is an effective way to treat patients who are dealing with feelings of isolation, grief and trauma. At least 41 percent of U.S. adults have experienced at least one instance of high psychological distress since the early stages of COVID-19, according to the Pew Research Center.

“We have students who really want to give back to the community, who really want to work in the community,” Bardot said. “Yet, as with everything, GW and universities are expensive. So how do you balance those two?”

The 64 students currently pursuing a master’s degree in

the art therapy program, which is housed in the Columbian College of Arts and Sciences, are required to complete 61 credits in courses on the intersections of psychology, art and counseling. The students in the program are also required to complete 900 internship hours that can boost their applications to become registered art therapists.

Bardot said the fellowship is a “huge financial tool” for students who could accrue more than \$100,000 in student loans pursuing the program before earning \$50,000 to \$80,000 per year as an art therapist. GW’s art therapy masters program costs \$1,750 per credit hour and is subject to an annual increase of 3 to 4 percent, according to the CCAS website.

“This is something that they’re passionate about, they actually really want to help people and they really want to give back to the community and society,” Bardot said. “Post-COVID, we know that mental health needs are increasing exponentially so it is something that the Kasimovs were really aware of in terms of mental health and the use of art.”

Bethany Eddleman – a second-year graduate student in the Art Therapy Program – said she will “probably” apply for the fellowship but added that she only has one year left in the program. She said the fellowship will relieve financial anxieties for students, allowing them to focus on their studies.

“The biggest thing is just, especially knowing how expensive grad school is, when you’re able to have that paid for and not really have to worry about the financial part of it, then you’re able to really focus and be more intentional and even more passionate,” Eddleman said.

Eddleman said her desire to help and connect with people through creative expression motivated her to study art



PHOTO ILLUSTRATION BY RACHEL SCHWARTZ | ASSISTANT PHOTO EDITOR

Faculty and students said the endowment will decrease student debt and make the program more accessible to low-income students.

therapy, her “passion career.” She said some common therapy techniques she’s learned about through the program include working with patients through bookmaking exercises where patients learn how to create pages for books, binding them together.

“It fits into all of my different passions – I’ll get to connect with people, I’ll get to help them meet their needs, make artwork and see the science of the artwork and how that can really impact people the same way that it impacted me,” Eddleman said.

Martina Efodzi, an adjunct professor and alumna of the Art Therapy Program, said when she enrolled in the art therapy program in 2008, the interest rates on her student loans were

“ridiculous” because of the 2008 financial crisis. She said she participated in a student loan forgiveness program while working at Whitman-Walker Health, a social service agency and research institute, for about 10 years, and she expects her loans to be “discharged” this year.

“If there was a magic wand that could have been waived in 2008, where someone was willing to invest in the students at that time, that would have been life-changing for myself and for my classmates,” Efodzi said.

The art therapy program’s \$1 million endowment aligns with broader University efforts to make GW more affordable for students. Officials announced the launch of a \$12 million dollar-for-dollar matching scholar-

ship to increase funds for need-based scholarships in fall 2022 and an initiative to increase aid for Pell Grant recipients by roughly \$2 million each year in fall 2021.

Efodzi said financial support will help diversify the “very privileged” art therapy field, which she said historically attracts people from high-income backgrounds who can easily afford the tuition of art therapy programs. She said the fellowships will provide marginalized students with increased access to the program.

“To attract students from diverse backgrounds, socioeconomic statuses, it’s imperative that there be funding to support their completion of the program and so you won’t have that diversity otherwise,” Efodzi said.

# Milken professor receives grant to study food insecurity in Puerto Rico

AVRIL SILVA  
REPORTER

A Milken Institute School of Public Health professor received a \$750,000 grant in December from the National Science Foundation to lead a study exploring food insecurity and climate change in Puerto Rico.

Uriyoán Colón-Ramos, the principal investigator of the study and an associate professor of global health, said she is leading a team of scholars, researchers, non-profits and Puerto Rican food advocates to identify a strategy for nutritional and food insecurity in Puerto Rico as part of the NSF’s Convergence Accelerator program which prioritizes multifield collaboration during research projects. The study will measure the climate-friendliness of food systems in Puerto Rico and if Puerto Ricans have access to healthy food by using data from the digital app PProduce, which connects users with small farmers and food producers in on-line farmer’s markets.

She said the study is currently in its first phase, marked by exploratory experiments to prepare a proposal for phase two, due in August 2023. Colón-Ramos said both phases will gather observational diet data from the app to implement food security policy changes in Puerto Rico like the implementation of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Pro-

gram, a program that financially supports low-income families for healthy food, in U.S. territories.

“I grew up in Puerto Rico, never thinking that I was going to be working in Puerto Rico,” Colón-Ramos said. “Then I started every time I would go by and I started seeing issues in my own country.”

PProduce will help the team track customer’s shopping carts to develop an “eco-score” within the app that will monitor the climate impact and nutritional value of a certain food item.

Colón-Ramos said her inspiration for the study came from her own experience growing up in Puerto Rico and realizing healthy foods listed in textbooks weren’t easily accessible and didn’t taste fresh compared to other fruit she consumed off the island. She said the goal of the study is to let Puerto Rico lead as an example for other regions experiencing food insecurity issues through a global network of data on food production, distribution and consumption.

Puerto Rico imports more than 85 percent of its food due to the damage from recent hurricanes on small farms and cultivation, according to an agricultural assessment by the World Central Kitchen.

“How can we use that technology to collect data that can be used to promote

policy change or structural changes or at least inform what would work best?” Colón-Ramos said.

Colón-Ramos said the team will collaborate with Trito Agro-Industrial Services, Inc. – a large scale composting business in Puerto Rico – in hopes of increasing access to healthy and climate-friendly foods in Puerto Rico.

Natalia Guerra Uccelli, a senior studying public health in Milken and a research assistant for the study, said her interest in the environment and global health and her Puerto Rican heritage through her dad’s side of the family drew her to the project. She said the study incorporates a variety of scientific fields like nutrition, global health and environmental health and addresses food insecurity issues in Puerto Rico.

“What I love about this project is just how overarching it is,” Guerra said. “It’s really interesting to see how all of these roles kind of come together in this project.”

Experts in nutrition and food security said the intersection of disciplines like climate change and food insecurity within the study can help expand the solutions to food insecurity.

Jessica Owens-Young, an assistant professor in the department of health studies at American University, said connecting Puerto Ricans with fresh produce



SOPHIA GOEDERT | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

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through digital platforms could create a positive precedent for other regions facing food and nutrition insecurity across the world like countries in Africa, Yemen and islands in the Caribbean.

She said she wants to stress the intersectionality of the climate and economy with food insecurity because weather events like hurricanes, droughts and fires that stem from climate change can decrease the crop yield of any given year and lead to more food shortages.

“Just because someone is food-secure one month doesn’t mean the next month that they will be,” Owens-Young said. “So there’s ebbs and flows to this, and so any kind of intervention that we design should consider the nature of food insecurity and not just rely on stereotypes about it.”

Eilish Zembilci, an alumna and a nonresident adjunct fellow at Duke University’s Sanford School of Public Policy, said food insecurity typically stems from high food prices that

exceed a household’s income and cost of living.

Zembilci said current food systems interfere with individuals’ access to basic needs. She said the mitigation of food insecurity lies in policies that governments can hopefully implement as a result of the models from this study.

“We need more integrated and more participatory policymaking,” Zembilci said. “That enables us to be able to cover the intersects where food is crossing into other disciplines in a way that’s really meaningful.”

## TWEETED



TWITTER/@BULLFROGBAGELS

it’s coming... #froggybottom

Bullfrog Bagels on 3/1/2023

# Third-straight SA legislator general resigns under President Zidouemba

ERIKA FILTER  
ASSISTANT NEWS EDITOR

The third legislator general in Student Association President Christian Zidouemba’s administration resigned last month.

Freshman Adam Galland, the youngest legislator general in SA history, submitted his resignation Feb. 8. He said he resigned for “personal reasons” and because the SA’s bylaws create inefficiencies within the operations of the body.

“Like many people,

I came to realize and understand that this iteration of the Student Association has lost its way and is definitely inefficient,” he said.

Galland said amendments to the bylaws, like those passed in the SA’s Feb. 21 meeting, create positions that are designed to oppose one another. He said he was “partially” optimistic about the governing documents review committee’s upcoming rewrite of the SA’s bylaws and constitution, but he was concerned

that they would still be overly complex.

“The point is not that the regulations that go into governing the Student Association are wrong,” he said. “It’s that their existence over-complicates and makes participation in the Student Association a very contentious and constantly adversarial thing.”

He said reducing regulations, not modifying them, would improve efficiency in the SA.

Galland is the third

legislator general to resign this year, after Dylan Basescu resigned in July following his attempt to remove Zidouemba from office and Andrew Harding resigned in late October.

The SA Senate confirmed freshman Joe Calcigatrone as assistant legislator general in their meeting Monday. The senate approved sophomore Aditharan Thyagarajan and junior Cradler Volmar as assistant legislators general last October.

# SEAS professor creates disinfectant more likely to kill coronavirus strains

FIONA BORK  
REPORTER

RORY QUEALY  
STAFF WRITER

A School of Engineering and Applied Sciences professor produced a cluster of particles that can make disinfectants two to four times more likely to kill coronavirus and norovirus strains than the commercial standard.

Danmeng Shuai, the study's lead author and an associate professor of civil and environmental engineering, said researchers engineered the nanomaterial – microscopic materials found in nature measured between one and 100 nanometers – that households, health care settings and food production facilities can use to kill diseases on surfaces, water and in the air. He said consumers can use less of the disinfectant because its efficacy is still prevalent in small doses.

Shuai said environmental engineering scientists use nanomaterials as catalysts to create chemical reactions with real-world applications, like powering electronic devices and conducting heat. He said the common practice of adding precious metals, like platinum and gold, to catalyze nanomaterials costs more than his team's strategy of crafting nanomaterials with iron for disinfectants.

He said nanomaterials facilitate oxidation, a chemical process that results in a loss of electrons and releases energy in the form of heat, in common disinfectants like hydrogen peroxide and alcohols to kill pathogens – an organism that causes diseases to a host – and disinfect materials faster.

"Even with a very low concentration of the disinfectant, we can still achieve the desired disinfection performance," Shuai said. "That's the reason why we hope to increase the sustainability of our society."

Shuai said nanomaterials can reduce the consumption of cleaning products on the market, which would be better for the environment because excess disinfectant can seep into natural water through wastewater management and damage ecological systems.

Shuai said the researchers tested the nanomaterial disinfectant in water from the Potomac River and in saliva to ensure it could kill pathogens in water, like norovirus, and those present on hard surfaces, like coronavirus strains. He said the use of saliva in testing, which researchers used to simulate pathogens on surfaces, helped researchers determine that households and health care settings can use the disinfectant.

Shuai said he hopes developing countries will use the disinfectant to purify water where there is limited access to clean water. He said the disinfectant can clean commercial food production facilities that easily acquire pathogens.

"We believe that if we can advance this type of catalyst, it can be potentially utilized to support larger-scale water treatment and indoor applications," Shuai said.

Experts in microbiology and environmental engineering said while the study's disinfectant has a variety of applications – like water, surfaces and air – households and hospitals may not use the disinfectant for months because of the Environmental Protection Agency's one-to-three-month process.

Mark Sobsey, a research professor in the department of environmental science and engineering at the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill, said the nanomaterial could increase sustainability within the disinfectant field because the iron catalyst can disinfect viruses faster with less peroxide. He said the disinfectant can purify air, water and surfaces at food production facilities and recreational water systems that use peroxide disinfectants.

He said the EPA has approved hundreds of widely used disinfectants for health



Danmeng Shuai, the study's lead author, said he hopes developing countries will use the disinfectant where there is limited access to clean water.

care and consumer disinfectant applications, so the researchers would face a "tough market" to compete even with the disinfectant's efficacy.

Sobsey said for the disinfectant to develop into commercial products, the researchers would need to go through a "lengthy" EPA approval process even though the nonmaterial can increase the performance of existing disinfectants when mixed.

He said the EPA can typically take months to years to register a modified disinfectant.

"It's an important and interesting piece of work," Sobsey said. "Sometimes new findings like that do eventually get to make changes and achieve practical use in the real world. It's not necessarily going to result in immediate applications in the short term. It's likely to be measured in timeframes from many months to a few

years."

Donald Schaffner, a professor of food microbiology at Rutgers University, said the disinfectant's two to four-time increase in efficacy is notable, but a rise by at least 10 times would be a more "profound" breakthrough.

"This is an incremental advance, and it certainly is moving us in the right direction finding ways to do more with less," Schaffner said.

## DHS official discusses human trafficking in vulnerable communities

DUC THAN  
STAFF WRITER

A Department of Homeland Security official discussed human trafficking and its effect on communities of color at an event at the Elliott School of International Affairs Monday.

Brandi Bynum, the director of the DHS's Blue Campaign, a campaign focused on combatting human trafficking, spoke about the prevalence, types and methods of human trafficking. The Elliott School's Office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion hosted the event alongside the Leadership, Ethics and Practice Initiative and The Young Black Professionals in International Affairs as part of GW's Black History Month Celebration.

Bynum said according to the DHS Center for Countering Human Trafficking, human trafficking is a crime that makes an estimated \$150 billion worldwide every year, affecting more than 49 million people.

"It is happening in our neighborhoods," Bynum said. "It's happening right here in Washington, D.C. If you've watched the news or read the news, you've seen different cases of missing little boys and girls that have been trafficked."

Bynum discussed common misconceptions



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about human trafficking, like traffickers using a "white van" to kidnap their victims, and said the method isn't as popular as people think.

"That is the exact opposite of what is happening," Bynum said. "I'm not saying that people are not getting snatched up in white vans, but that is not the primary way that traffickers are roaming and luring their victims."

Bynum said the three elements constituting human trafficking under U.S. federal law are force, fraud and coercion. She said there is an exception if a victim of sex

trafficking is under the age of 18, in which case the law does not require prosecutors to prove the three factors.

Bynum said even though anyone can be a victim of trafficking, the crime disproportionately affects people of color. Despite only making up about 14 percent of the U.S. population, about 40 percent of sex trafficking victims during a two-year review period identified as Black women, according to a Congressional Black Caucus report from 2020.

Bynum said the six most vulnerable groups for minor victims of traf-

ficking are runaways, children in foster care, prior victims of trafficking, people experiencing homelessness, LG-BTQ+ individuals and people living in poverty. She said adult victims include victims of substance use, financial debt and undocumented immigrants.

Bynum said the public should report potential instances of trafficking they see.

"You're thinking about these risk factors and these vulnerabilities that individuals have, these traffickers are trying to meet a need," Bynum said.

## White House to block D.C. crime bill, infringing on home rule

From Page 1

The D.C. Council unanimously passed updates to the more than a-century-old code in November, putting forth updates including eliminations of some mandatory minimum sentences and allowance of jury trials for misdemeanors. Mayor Muriel Bowser vetoed the Council's updated code in January with concerns about the legislation's policy on crime in the District and its potential to burden the District's judicial system, which already faces numerous vacancies. The Council overrode her veto in a 12-1 vote later that month.

Leading up to their override, Council members showed their frustration with Bowser's veto of the revised code, claiming she and her staff neglected to frequently attend meetings where city officials went over specifics of the bill during the 16 years they were drafting it, with some council members decrying Bowser was fear-mongering through her resistance to support the finalized bill.

Ward 6 Council member Charles Allen said in a statement following Biden's announcement that the criminal code is the result of "extensively debated" and "meticulously crafted" reforms. He said Biden's resistance to the Council's proposals is not based on the bill's contents but rather a signal for his "tough on crime" policies, showing his "hollow" past support of D.C. statehood.

"Today is an unprecedented violation of America's core principle of self-governance and the latest painful reminder that until the nearly 700,000 residents of the District of Columbia have full statehood and autonomy, we will be seen and treated as a colony, even by those who purport to support us," Allen said.

D.C. attorney general Brian Schwalb sent a letter of support from other Council members and local organizations to Majority Leader Charles Schumer, D-NY, last week asking them to vote against the House's overturn of the criminal code and voting bill last week.

"I urge the Senate to reject calls for disapproval of D.C. local laws, and instead, to stand up for democratic values, stand against disenfranchisement, and stand with the residents of our Nation's capital," Schwalb said.

Just a handful of key Senate votes determine the potential of the bill's override resolution landing on Biden's

desk for his signature. Sen. Joe Manchin, D-WV – a frequent holdout member for the Democrat-led Senate – and Bob Casey, D-PA, said last week that they would join the chamber's Republican minority in voting for the criminal code's override. The vote of Sen. John Fetterman, D-PA, also remains in the air after he took a step back from the Senate earlier this month after checking himself into the hospital for depression.

The District faced an uptick in vehicle thefts during 2022 that has continued so far this year but crime, in general, has dropped, despite House Republicans like Rep. James Comer, R-KY, and Tom Cole, R-OK, sounding alarms about the bill's "soft on crime" policies that reduce mandatory minimum sentences and increase jury trials prior to the House vote.

"All Americans should feel safe in their capital city, but they don't because of D.C. Democrats' leniency towards criminals at the expense of American safety," Comer said earlier this month.

The Senate will also soon vote on the Local Voting Rights Amendment Act, which allows non-citizens, including undocumented immigrants, to vote in local elections after the House GOP voted to overturn the legislation earlier this month with support from 42 Democratic representatives.

The legislation, penned by Ward 1 Council member Brienne Nadeau, grants non-citizens the right to vote in mayoral, D.C. Council, attorney general, State Board of Education and Advisory Neighborhood Commission elections, as well as local ballot measures.

"I think that that has always been left up to local communities to decide who should vote in local elections," Rep. Jamie Raskin, D-MD, said during a meeting last month.

This post has been updated to reflect the following:

The Hatchet incorrectly reported that the vote to pass the revised criminal code was 12-1. The revised criminal code passed unanimously and the council overrode Bowser's veto in a 12-1 vote. We regret this error. The Hatchet has also updated this story to include a statement from Ward 6 Council member Charles Allen. The Hatchet has also updated this story to clarify the proposed mandatory maximums in the revised criminal code are already higher than what the city judiciary is implementing right now.

## Experts in public health, maternal health discuss Black maternal mortality and complications in US

JENNIFER IGBONOA  
STAFF WRITER

A panel of health experts discussed Black maternal health problems and their history in the U.S. health care system at the University Student Center Thursday.

Experts in maternal health Uwaila Stewart, Sydney Durrah, Allison Stewart and Brenice Duroseau discussed issues surrounding the health of Black people giving birth, who often have the worse maternal outcomes, a symptom of "broader" inequities, according to the Kaiser Family Foundation. The event was a part of a series of presentations during the annual Diversity Summit last week.

Uwaila Stewart, a first-year master of public health student, said the U.S. is the "most dangerous industrialized nation" to give birth

in, with about 700 maternal deaths occurring annually within its borders. She said for Black women in the U.S., the risk of child delivery is "far greater" than white women, as they are about three to four times "more likely" to die of pregnancy-related complications, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

"As a nation, we spend more on health care than any other country in the world, yet our maternal health outcomes are some of the worst in the world," Stewart said.

Stewart also gave a brief history on the treatment of Black women's bodies throughout U.S. history, including sexual violence against Black enslaved women during the Jim Crow era, James Marion Sims' gynecological experiments on enslaved women

in the late 1800s and teaching hospitals forced sterilization in the 20th century.

"As we move through the 21st century, the policing of Black women's bodies has become intertwined with every single system we've come in contact with," Stewart said.

Stewart said the historical mistreatment of Black women by the American medical system is causing deaths like April Valentine, a woman who died in January in California after experiencing pain in her legs that nurses at the hospital she delivered at "ignored."

Stewart said reproductive health is an issue for everybody and encouraged the audience to consider it when voting on the ballot for the upcoming 2024 election.

"Be very aware and be cognizant of what's going on," Stewart said. "We can-

not afford any more, we've never been able to, but we definitely can't afford any more to just let things go and let them slide and be like, 'You know what, somebody else will take care of it,' because if you're not upset about it, who's to say anybody else will be?"

Duroseau, a family nurse practitioner, said doctors may not listen to patients' concerns and suggestions about their own health because of their own confidence in their skills and position of power, and she encouraged patients to counteract these common occurrences and advocate for themselves in the doctor's office.

"We need to take it down a notch and realize we're humans, these are humans, and we don't know it all and medicine changes," Duroseau said.

Durrah, a first-year mas-

FROM GWHATCHET.COM/OPINIONS

“Politicians mold their personalities around their campaigns and careers, which can elicit obsessive dynamics with constituencies.”

—PAIGE BARATTA on 3/2/2023

# Opinions

## Officials must be more transparent about GW’s data privacy measures

Cybersecurity dilemmas are the difference between a door and a wall, according to my research methods professor Kerric Harvey. Online privacy protections should act as a wall between hackers and the private data they seek to steal. But once someone turns that wall into a door, it’s impossible to keep track of the keys to your personal information.

Matthew Donnell  
Columnist

While GW still holds the keys to our private data, every member of our community needs to know if our personal information is secure. History proves that we can’t take the University’s word for it.

While most students rarely read the University’s emails in-full, I woke up to one last month whose subject line and sender both caught my attention – “Alert: GW Cybersecurity Incident” from [privacy@gwu.edu](mailto:privacy@gwu.edu). The email states “a malicious intruder” broke into GW’s directory and downloaded students’ information, but the hacker did not steal any data that was “sensitive” or “personal.”

The GW community received a fairly similar email from interim University President Mark Wrighton last February notifying them of a secret program that tracked their movement across campus in aggregate without their consent. Wrighton said that while “the technical capacity may exist to track individuals across our campus,” officials did not track individual people across our campus.

There’s clearly a pattern in how GW handles data privacy – trust us, whoever has your information hasn’t done anything bad with it. At least not yet. But that pitiful response to our data privacy concerns raises several questions. How do we know that hackers can’t cover their tracks better than the University can chase them?

After hackers executed a ransomware attack at North Carolina Agricultural and



MAURA KELLY-YUOH | STAFF CARTOONIST

Technical State University last April, they claimed to have stolen personal information like contracts and Social Security numbers. North Carolina A&T’s administrators said no students or faculty were affected in last April’s incident. Would we be so certain that our information is secure when – not if – GW is hacked?

There are two different data privacy issues facing every member of the GW community right now. The first deals with dangerous cyberattacks to which our campus continually falls victim. The second concerns GW’s reckless use of our data to advance its development projects. Both lead to one conclusion

– the University isn’t responsible enough to handle our private information.

A total of 44 colleges and universities were attacked with ransomware in 2022, up from 26 campuses in 2021, according to Emsisoft, a company that works to decrypt ransomware and recover data lost in attacks.

Since May 2021, the GW community has suffered at least two ransomware attacks, one data breach and a credit-card hack on the University’s cap and gown vendor.

When a cyber attack struck GW Law’s academic database in December 2021, several students lost their completed final exams in the system’s crash. In the same week, hackers

broke into Kronos, GW’s employee payment platform, and launched a ransomware attack compromising faculty and staff members’ GWIDs, NetIDs, campus addresses and other sensitive personal information.

The cyber attacks on GW Law School and Kronos each occurred while members of our campus community served as unwitting participants in a school-sponsored surveillance system. The University’s then-secret tracking program – ostensibly meant to assess population density across campus buildings – outraged students and faculty whose movement the program monitored throughout fall 2021.

Cybersecurity experts said news of the University’s extensive tracking capabilities actually made GW more vulnerable to ransomware attacks because it showed GW could access individualized data. And after officials touted a remodel of GW’s data privacy principles last fall, industry professionals were quick to point out that they were too brief, broad and outdated for students to feel safe. Before officials updated the University’s data privacy notice in January, experts noted “there’s certainly no details” in the outline of how they collect certain University data.

The University has renewed its public commitment to “safeguarding and maintaining the privacy of your personal information” with its updated data privacy notice. But has GW’s cybersecurity system become more of an open door than a brick wall? The data concerns of students, staff and faculty deserve GW’s absolute attention. But if officials can’t be clear about their commitment to our data privacy, we shouldn’t trust them to protect it.

From their email accounts to their location on campus, GW community members are correct in their concerns about the safety of their personal information. As the University continues the scramble to improve its outdated data privacy measures in 2023, we must demand that officials are transparent through every step in its process.

—Matthew Donnell, a junior majoring in political communication and English, is a columnist.

## The end of GW’s classroom mask mandate signals the start of a new era

### STAFF EDITORIAL

Much like an ill-fitting face covering, compliance with GW’s classroom mask mandate was slipping well before the University ended the policy last Monday. But after three years of COVID-19, GW can finally breathe easy, or at the very least, maskless.

Though COVID is not over, the pandemic that infected GW’s community and culture with a cocktail of fear, uncertainty and doubt has come to an official close. GW was one of the last holdouts of the near-extinct mask mandate as the only “large,” “urban” campus in the U.S. with such a requirement still in place for its instructional settings. The writing is on the wall – the “new normal” we have long waited for is officially upon us.

The end of the indoor mask mandate is the official close to this pandemic era of GW’s history. It is the last of the University’s major COVID restrictions to drop since students returned to a fully reopened GW in fall 2021. After experiencing GW from their own homes and or in a tightly regulated campus environment, students have joined an array of student organizations, made the most of DC’s nightlife scene and prepared for commencement on the National Mall since campus reawakened a year and a half ago.

Now, it feels like that effort to make the most of what GW and the District have to offer has gone into overdrive. Call it making up for lost time or not realizing what you have until it’s gone. Either way, students who have never known a pre-pandemic GW and those who still have

distant memories of the 2019-20 academic year are following one simple idea – do something and do it now.

The end of the mask mandate was the finish line of a three-year-long marathon that tested each of us physically and mentally. While some mastered Blackboard, Webex and Zoom better than others, we tuned into class from childhood bedrooms, kitchen tables and impromptu offices. The year 2020 was an age of sourdough, sing-alongs and sorrow, a time when toilet paper ran low and emotions ran high.

When in-person learning resumed, every cough, snuffle and sneeze was an ill-omen. Rain or shine, from dawn till dusk, we waited in line at the COVID testing trailer at H and 20th streets. Cases surged in September 2021, backed off, then spiked again before the week of final exams in December 2021, ensuring a virtual start to the spring 2022 semester.

We mourned the losses of those closest to us as 2021 came to a close. In a sea of white flags that grew so large it moved from the Robert F. Kennedy Stadium to the National Mall, we remembered those who died by the hundreds of thousands.

The University’s regulations waxed and waned along the way as we entered 2022, providing tantalizing glimpses of a post-pandemic GW – and dashing our hopes just as quickly. After briefly lifting the mask mandate in June 2021 and reimposing it the next month, officials did so again in April 2022 after only a week.

If past attempts are any sign, officials’ decision

to drop the mandate last Monday may not be final. But both the state of COVID measures across the country and at universities has changed. GW’s community has a high COVID vaccination rate, and cases of COVID infection and hospitalization in the District have remained low for more than six months. So our attitude has changed, too. We are ready to move on.

The scars this virus has left will always remain, but the overwhelming fear of catching COVID, uncertainty about the University’s response to the pandemic and doubt about GW’s ability to manage caseloads has faded.

Thanks to multiple rounds of vaccinations and boosters, this virus is no longer the difference between life and death for most. But that’s not the case for everyone. So whether you prefer to wear a mask to protect your health or choose not to wear one, we all can and should explore these opportunities to the extent that we’re comfortable.

The pandemic showed each of us just how fragile our world and the people in it are. From the professors who teach us to the staff who keep GW running day to day and our friends and family, few of us have escaped the last three years unscathed.

The mask mandate has already been gone for one week. From every week hereafter, it will be up to each of us to navigate Foggy Bottom, D.C. and beyond in a world that is quickly moving past the pandemic. With a little courage, we can make the most of this new normal.

## My sister survived a college shooting. When will these tragedies end?

*Editor’s note: This post contains references to recent shootings at the University of Virginia and Michigan State University. Contact Counseling and Psychological Services at 202-994-5300 for on-campus counseling or the National Helpline at 800-662-4357 for confidential, free 24/7 support.*

When I got a Twitter notification on Feb. 13 that Michigan State University was on lockdown, my thoughts instantly flashed back three months earlier to Nov. 13, 2022 and the University of Virginia. “There is a shooter,” my sister, Elizabeth, texted me that night. Elizabeth, a freshman majoring in biology at UVA, was considering going to the campus gym when she realized she couldn’t even leave her room.

Caroline Moore  
Opinions Writer

My heart stopped when I got that text. I left in the middle of my musical theater rehearsal and called her to make sure she was OK. Huddling around my phone in the hallway of West Hall, I listened to her describe the all-caps texts that UVA’s emergency response had sent telling her she should “run, hide, fight.” I told her about everything from what I did that day to the highlights of my Tiktok For You page to keep her calm and distracted. I continued to talk to her as I jumped on the Mount Vernon Express to ride back to my residence hall in Foggy Bottom. UVA remained on lockdown for hours with the shooter still on the loose. Even from about 100 miles away, I wanted to be sure my sister was safe. Elizabeth told me she

was sheltering in place in her room. A few months ago, I helped her move into campus. Now, I was hearing the muffled voices on the UVA Police Department scanner reading the names of familiar campus locations, like the Culbreth Road Parking Garage, where the shooting took place, and Rugby Road, where law enforcement believed the suspect had fled.

The level of uncertainty was one of the hardest parts of grappling with the UVA shooting as a family member of a student there. We knew nothing – when it was going to end, where the shooter was or how many people had been injured. The UVA Police Department scanner kept describing random spots around campus as locations where the suspect could possibly be. But nothing was for sure.

The lockdown ended up lasting more than 12 hours, finally ending around 10:30 a.m. UVA took a collective deep breath when Henrico County police finally apprehended the shooter the next morning nearly 70 miles away from UVA’s campus. Students could finally grieve the loss of three of their peers and hope for the recovery of two others. In the aftermath, UVA officials canceled classes for two days while the university community, native Virginians, friends and family mourned those who lost their lives in the shooting. Those who survived lost their sense of safety and now carry the burdens of grief and fear.

Days later, while my sister was still afraid to walk alone at night and the campus was still trying to cope with the unimaginable fallout, I felt like barely anyone outside UVA remembered what had happened. She was still grappling with the violence

at UVA when I got to see her over Thanksgiving break.

The shooting at MSU took me back to that night in November. I couldn’t stop reading about the situation while it was unfolding, listening to the MSU Police scanner and constantly refreshing Twitter just trying to get the latest information. MSU also told its students to “run, hide, fight” – the terrifying advice colleges share with students to respond to mass shootings. The lockdown at MSU lasted for four hours instead of 12, but the university’s community faced the same unimaginable grief as those at UVA. At MSU, three students also lost their lives in the shooting.

When I graduated high school last year, a part of me thought I wouldn’t have to worry about finding the best hiding spots or running from a shooter as a college student.

But after two college shootings only four months apart, I’ve reverted back to my high school mindset, now more vigilant and wary of mass shootings. I don’t want to miss any texts from my family and friends in case they are in an emergency. And while my sister has started to feel safer on campus, the shooting at MSU reminded her of her own lockdown experience. She also stayed glued to the police scanner as MSU Police officers continued to investigate the scene and surrounding area.

How many more times will Elizabeth and I see tweets from emergency responders, monitor police scanners or wonder where we’d go in a mass shooting? When will these tragedies end?

—Caroline Moore, a freshman majoring in international affairs, is an opinions writer.

# Culture

## THE SCENE

**THE SHAMROCK CRAWL 2023**  
Saturday, March 11 | 15+ Dupont Circle bars | \$25  
Get into the St. Patrick's Day spirit at this D.C. bar crawl with discounted drinks and prizes. Be sure to wear green.

**GAY MEN'S CHORUS OF WASHINGTON PRESENTS WHITNEY**  
Starting Saturday, March 11 | Lincoln Theatre | \$25  
Listen to the Gay Men's Chorus of Washington honor the life of Whitney Houston.

**RELEASED THIS WEEK:**

**NEW SONG: "FANTASY (FEAT. DON TOLIVER)" BY KALI UCHIS AND DON TOLIVER**

## Drag queens thrill audience at Delta Lambda Phi fundraiser

From Page 1

Sophomore David Rangel, the president of DLP who performed as a queen in the show, said the event provides a space for both audience members and queens to "be themselves" and not feel judged.

"Last year I helped to co-run the drag show because I didn't really have the confidence yet to do it, but now I do," Rangel said. "And I'm just excited and ready and can't wait to feel beautiful on that stage."

Junior Nolan Phillips, the emcee of the event who has performed as his drag persona Patricia Diamond at shows in both D.C. and around his home state of South Carolina, said the event helps bring drag to people who haven't had the opportunity to see it out for themselves.

"There's a lot of young people, especially who see stuff on TV and they want to go to drag shows but they don't know where they are," he said.

Patricia Diamond was the first to grace the stage Saturday night in a stunning, hand-crafted black and red patterned dress, warming up the crowd with Amy Winehouse's "Back to Black" and "Rehab." She explained the plan for the compe-



The queens strutted out in corsets, glamorous makeup and heels higher than the heavens.

– each of the five queens would perform their own arrangement, after which the judges awarded them points based on four qualities: charisma, uniqueness, nerve and talent, an acronym not lost on many.

The judge's table consisted of Vice Provost for Student Affairs and Dean of Students Collette Coleman, champion of last year's drag show Blood Mistress and WRGW's events director, Emma Westcott.

Mia Gooner, portrayed by sophomore Kai Nilsen, was up next. Dressed in a leopard with sky-high heels, Mia Gooner gave a heartfelt performance to Lady Gaga's "You and I" as she rode a stick unicorn. Carly Rae Jepsen's "Run Away With Me" started up as the next queen – Stank, portrayed by sophomore Max Co-

hen – teased the audience under a pink spotlight before a dramatic ending as she stretched out across the front of the runway.

A sensual performance from sophomore Dalton Juan's drag persona, Sarah Jessica, featured cartwheels off the stage to the tune of Spears' "Toxic."

Patricia Diamond picked up with a Reba McEntire mix, paying homage to the old-school country artist in a full-length gown and red wig. She ripped off the dress to reveal a sparkly, tight-red midi, much to the audience's excitement.

Emerging with a leopard-print coat and platform heels, Mary A. Richman – portrayed by senior Cameron Cayer who honored Berg-Brousseau's drag persona, Inita Richman, with his drag name – jolted across

the stage with an American flag to Bonnie McKee's "American Girl." Ophelia Myoats, portrayed by Rangel, strutted to Ariana Grande's "Into You" with a corset and red boa before throwing her sleeves stuffed with condoms to the audience.

A face-off between the judge's top candidates – Stank and Ophelia Myoats – spared no energy nor charisma. Patricia Diamond capped off the show with a song from French singer Louane while the judges deliberated on their top pick for the evening. Ophelia Myoats walked away victorious, crowned the ultimate queen of the show.

By the end of the night, the queens delighted and exhilarated their audience – all while raising upward of \$2,000 for suicide prevention efforts in the process.



## Alumna talks journey from GW acting school to teaching D.C. theater

**JACKSON LANZER**  
STAFF WRITER

Tucked inside the gray, stone walls of an old Lutheran church in Georgetown, a GW alumna opens a hidden portal to Hollywood and the D.C. theater scene.

Natalie Cutcher, a 2019 graduate of GW's Master of Fine Arts in Classical Acting program with the D.C.-based Shakespeare Theatre Company, serves as the director of education of the National Conservatory of Dramatic Arts, the only accredited acting school in D.C., which offers courses on improv, screenwriting, scene study, Shakespearean theater, stand-up comedy and the acting business. Students at the conservatory went on to book roles at local theaters and venues including Ford's Theatre, Arena Stage and the Kennedy Center in addition to Hollywood movies and hit TV shows like "The Wire."

Cutcher said her passion for

acting began during childhood, and her training at GW prepared her for a career in acting that has extended from local D.C. theater to science-fiction radio plays beyond her teaching career.

"If I'm not actively in a rehearsal process, then teaching is the next best thing," Cutcher said in an email. "To encourage students to be brave and vulnerable in their work and then to watch them blossom or tackling something they never thought they could do, that's the most rewarding part."

Cutcher said she was living in D.C. and active in the D.C. theater scene when she decided to pursue a Master of Fine Arts in acting at GW, graduating in 2019. She said she chose GW because she wanted to study Shakespeare and classical acting, and earning a degree would help her become an acting teacher by providing her with a repertoire of acting skills she could incorporate into the classroom.

GW and the Shakespeare Theatre Company – a D.C. theater founded in 1986 that organizes productions of classical plays, offers classical acting courses and has won a Regional Theatre Tony Award – partnered in 2000 to offer a Master of Fine Arts degree in classical acting. The program lasts 44 weeks during which students study classical plays and hone acting skills, like character analysis, dramaturgical research and stage combat.

She said she studied alongside actors she considers to be D.C. greats at GW, including Floyd King, an actor with the Shakespeare Theatre Company who has performed in plays in D.C. since the 1980s, and Dody DiSanto, who was Cutcher's movement teacher and has taught at Cirque du Soleil and the Yale School of Drama.

"What was really humbling for me, already being a part of the D.C. community, was then I got to be in the classroom with these

D.C. greats," she said. "I respect them so much as artists and as teachers, and they were certainly some of the highlights of our training."

Cutcher said she oversees the Conservatory's curriculum and ensures that classes reflect industry changes via equipment upgrades and teacher training to prepare students for their acting careers and support faculty's passion and knowledge behind their craft.

She said the Conservatory offers audition and business classes, including instruction about networking, budgeting, unions and taxes, which are subjects that can be difficult for actors to manage when beginning their careers.

She said she also leads a series of Friday acting workshops that expose students to topics outside the typical curriculum and connect them with industry professionals. Past workshops have covered stage combat, sitcom writing, shadow puppetry, theatrical intimacy and costume design.

Cutcher said most students are DMV natives and carry a variety of backgrounds, from recent high school graduates to locals to past political science students to former graphic designers, looking to pursue acting careers in television, film and theater.

"You'll get students who are fresh out of high school and maybe don't want to go right on to a college program just yet and use this as their gap year," she said. "And on the reverse side, we have folks that have had full careers and finally decided to pursue this craft. So it's a really great diverse range of students and backgrounds."

Based near the center of D.C. politics, Cutcher said the Conservatory's location offers local actors opportunities to "leap" into vital conversations and incorporate different perspectives into the community.

"You can avoid it if you'd like, but it also produces a lot of great work, a lot of work that is really topical and important to what's happening in our society right now," she said of D.C. politics.

In addition to teaching at the National Conservatory of Dramatic Arts, Cutcher said she works as a dramaturg, a playwright who supports the work of other playwrights as an "outside voice," for Arts on the Horizon – a company producing nonverbal plays for families and children under the age of six.

Cutcher also works as a voice actress for a radio play podcast called EOS 10, a science-fiction drama set on a space station. She plays a "feisty nurse" who has climbed cliffs, fought dragons and been revived from death.

She said EOS 10, which is rated 4.8 out of five stars with more than 1,500 Apple Podcast user reviews, is one of her "favorite projects." With crafty dialogue, she said the "unpredictable" characters evolve through an engaging arc across five seasons.

"I absolutely love being a part of it," she said. "It's kooky and wonderful. And it's always a treat to hear it come together because we sort of give them the raw ingredients in our acting, and then they add all of the crazy sound effects. And then it really becomes something bigger than ourselves and special, and that's just a whole lot of fun."

Cutcher said her training at GW helped hone her "vocal instrument," which she said is crucial for podcasts without visuals. She said the podcast recorded its fifth season in Los Angeles in January.

For her next project, she said she will act in a play on 14th Street called "The School for Lies" next month with the Constellation Theatre Company, a performing arts venue that puts on shows about fantasy and adventure. She said she will play the role of Celimene, "a recent widow with a sharp wit and even sharper tongue."

Whether she's teaching or performing, Cutcher said her sight is set on acting for the rest of her life.

"I'm in it for the long game," she said. "My goal is longevity. So I can't wait to tackle the roles where I get to be a little old prune, an old lady."



ERIN LEONE | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Natalie Cutcher, a 2019 graduate of GW's Master of Fine Arts in Classical Acting program with the D.C.-based Shakespeare Theatre Company, said her passion for acting began during childhood, and her training at GW prepared her for a career in acting.

# Sports

## GAMES OF THE WEEK



**MEN'S BASKETBALL**  
vs. TBD  
Wednesday | 5 p.m. | USA Network  
The No. 7 Colonials will face the winner of Saint Joseph's vs. Loyola Chicago in the second round of the A-10 Championship.



**GYMNASTICS**  
vs. Towson, Maryland and William & Mary  
Friday | 7 p.m.  
GW will compete with local rivals as they honor their seniors at the Smith Center.

**NUMBER CRUNCH** **21.5**

James Bishop's points per game in A-10 play this season, marking the first time a Colonial led the conference in scoring since 1999-2000

## Men's basketball falls to VCU in senior-night nail-biter, closing out regular season

**JADEN DIMAURO**  
MANAGING EDITOR

Men's basketball fell to Atlantic 10-leading VCU Saturday in the Smith Center 74-68 in their final regular-season game despite a furious, late-game comeback from the Colonials.

Graduate student guard Brendan Adams and senior guard James Bishop, who were both honored in the pregame, senior-night ceremony, led the Colonials with 14 points each. Senior forward Hunter Dean, who was also honored, chipped in 14 points to go along with seven boards.

Right off the bat, GW struggled against the Rams' aggressive, full-court press, but neither team could establish any consistent offensive rhythm. The score sat at just 6-6 after the first four minutes of play.

With the GW offense stagnating, Dean kept them afloat, scoring 4 of the team's

first 6 points while patrolling the paint on the other end of the court.

A 3-pointer from redshirt freshman Maximus Edwards was followed by a stop on the other end, igniting the already-rumbling, senior-night crowd in the Smith Center and appeared to breathe some life into the Colonial offense. GW trailed 18-15 with 11:37 to go in the first half.

With just under eight minutes remaining in the half, a signature, low-post jam from Hunter Dean sent the GW crowd into a state of pandemonium. The dunk gave him a game-high 8 points and kept the momentum on GW's side.

GW went into the half down a manageable 35-32, thanks in part to VCU's putrid 2-5 first-half 3-point shooting.

VCU came out of the break swinging, going on a 6-0 run in the first two minutes of the second half

and pushing their lead to 41-32.

With 3:35 left in regulation, the Colonials cut the Rams' lead to 68-55 and seemed to be on the brink of a run.

That run materialized, as an Adams elbow jumper, which he followed with a layup plus a foul on the ensuing possession, cut the VCU lead to just 5 with 2:23 to go in regulation.

A goaltending call on a layup attempt from senior forward Ricky Lindo Jr. had the Colonials within just 3. But a Rams dunk on the other end pushed the VCU lead to 70-65 with 25.1 seconds remaining in regulation.

An Adams 3 kept GW's hopes for a senior night miracle alive with 8.8 seconds to go, but the Rams sank their free throws on the other end to seal the VCU victory.

The Colonials will enter the A-10 tournament as the No. 7 seed with a first-round



SAGE RUSSELL | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER  
Graduate student guard Brendan Adams and senior guard James Bishop, who were both honored in the pregame, senior-night ceremony, led the Colonials with 14 points each.

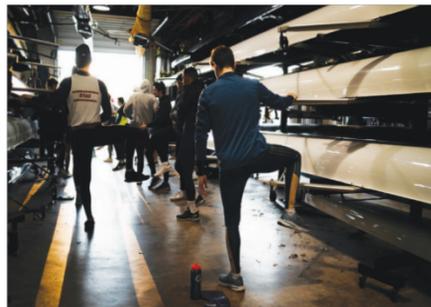
bye. The team will face off against the winner of the game between No. 10 Saint

Josephs and No. 15 Loyola Chicago in the second round. GW's game tips off

Wednesday 5 p.m. at the Barclays Center in Brooklyn, New York.

## Athletes in Action: Scenes from the rowing dock

JORDAN TOVIN | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER



## Average student-athlete GPA levels off in 2022: athletic department data

**LUKE WIENECKE**  
CONTRIBUTING SPORTS EDITOR

**MARK RAPPAPORT**  
REPORTER

Student-athletes' GPAs plateaued in 2022 following a momentary surge that coincided with the onset of remote learning during COVID-19, according to data released by the athletic department last month.

Multiple semesters of department data show student-athletes' average GPA rose to 3.37 this fall from 3.35 last spring – a slight uptick from the nearly two-year low in fall 2021. Average GPA among student-athletes skyrocketed during the early stages of COVID – jumping from 3.22 during the final pre-pandemic semester to three straight semesters of a 3.50 GPA or higher when the pandemic set into effect.

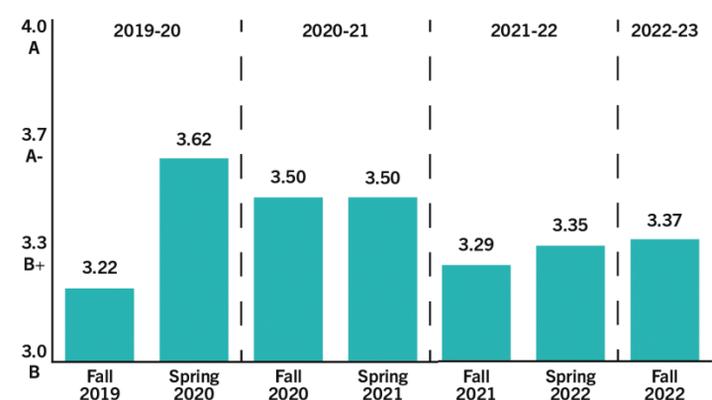
Experts attributed the overall post-pandemic GPA decline to the readjustment from online to in-person learning, but they said limited data and sample sizes constrain

broader takeaways from these academic trends associated with the pandemic. Nellie Drew, a professor of practice in sports law and the director of the University of Buffalo Center for the Advancement of Sport, said transitioning back from the more relaxed distance learning method may have posed challenges for some students depending on their learning styles.

"I can tell you from personal experience working with some students, some of those who had bad challenges in typical learning environments may actually have done better in the pandemic," Drew said. "And then when they transition back into the normal environment, that may have lost some of the coping skills and the mechanisms they had developed prior to that."

The Sports Science Institute conducted a study in the NCAA that shows about 85 percent of certified athletic

Average GPA of GW student-athletes between 2020 to 2022



Source: GW Athletic

NICHOLAS ANASTACIO | GRAPHICS EDITOR

## Women's basketball A-10 tourney run falls short

From Page 1

If the first quarter was an offensive trickle, the second quarter was a flood.

GW closed the half out strong as two of Lok's shots from inside the paint cut the lead to 7, and GW entered the break trailing 33-26. Lok scored 12 points in the quarter. The teams scored 38 points in the high-scoring period after combining for just 21 in the first.

In the fourth quarter, three quick GW turnovers helped the Rams to go on a 7-2 run and 56-41 lead, leading to a GW timeout.

The break was able to recharge the Colonials, who went on an incredible 13-0 run of their own, led by freshman guard Nya Robertson, who scored 13 of her 19 points in the final quarter.

Freshman guard Nya Robertson was able to sink two clutch 3s, with GW's press defense forcing the Rams to cough up the ball multiple times. With just under three minutes remaining, Taiwo was able to steal the ball while administering a full-court press and immediately slung the ball to Robertson, who swished in a

3-pointer.

Just a minute later, senior guard Essence Brown blocked a URI jumper and grabbed the rebound, passing the ball to Robertson who hit another 3, bringing the Colonial bench to its feet and cutting the deficit to 58-54, the lowest since midway through the third.

With the Colonials focused on their press defense, URI graduate student guard Madison Hattix-Covington was able to sneak behind and was found wide open for a layup attempt, increasing the lead to 6 with just under 90 seconds remaining.

After a GW foul on Touré granted URI an extra pair of points, Robertson sunk a floater to bring the Colonials within 6 with a minute left.

Both teams committed a turnover and a GW foul sent Phillips to the line, where she sank both with 0:54 left.

After an offensive foul by Blethen, URI took one more trip to the line before the final buzzer sounded, pushing their lead to the final score of 68-56, sending GW home from the A-10 Championship.

Despite a valiant comeback effort, the URI defense and free throw shooting proved too strong for the Colonials, who finished their season 18-13.

## Seniors anchor women's basketball in rebound year

From Page 1

"Just staying locked in for the next couple of years, we're going to be back for sure," Robertson said.

Lakstigala, also a first-year Colonial after transferring from Penn, led the team in assists and averaged 13.8 points.

Teammates of Lakstigala, whose last collegiate season ended with the team's loss to Rhode Island, said the guard brought stability and star power to the team in her sole year wearing the Buff and Blue. Lok said Lakstigala is known in the locker room as "Mi-star," a nickname she proved with a game-winning 3-pointer against Duquesne in the second round of the A-10 tourney that launched GW to the next round.

McCombs said Lakstigala showed "true leadership" with her strong work ethic in the gym and the classroom – Lakstigala, an A-10 All-Academic Team honoree, was one of three Colonials to earn A-10 awards.

Redshirt senior forward Mayowa Taiwo was another key force on the team who showed athleticism on every inch of the court. She earned

A-10 All-Defensive Team honors while leading the conference in offensive rebounds by more than 20. Taiwo secured the third-most rebounds per game in the conference with 9.7 per game and finished eighth in the A-10 in shooting percentage with a .491 clip.

Senior forward Faith Blethen, a four-year Colonial, wrapped up her collegiate basketball career with almost 20 starts and nearly 90 rebounds on the season.

Lok came alive during the A-10 tournament, leading the team with 41 points over the pair of games. The Australian guard started each of the team's last seven games after an injury to senior guard Essence Brown. Lok averaged 14 points per game along that span.

Brown maintained a strong year as a starter before her injury, maintaining 6.4 points and 2.8 rebounds per game before her Feb. 5 injury.

McCombs said the experiences of the season, from the joys of a winning streak to the adversity of tough losses, showed the team's character and love for each other.

"They teach me things every day. I really learned from them," McCombs said after the loss to Rhode Island.