

PHOENIX

Augusta University

Fall 2024



Gray Matters

EDITOR'S LETTER

Dear reader,

Gray is many things.

In both color and idea, it's a mix of black and white. It's that undefined in-between not fully wrong or right. It's the mark of experience when woven into hair and the finality of ashes that just lingers there. It's clouds warning us of a storm on its way and dense fog blocking us from seeing the day. It's the rocks on the ground and pebbles under streams. It's the shadow of something that's not what it seems.

It's armor, it's chains, it's concrete and stone. It's our sentiment when we're feeling alone. It's silver, it's platinum and even white gold. It's the coat on our dog when he's gotten old. It's part of our spine and all of our brain. It's the fogged-up windows when we look out at rain. It's metal and medals and trophies and tin. It's the line we walk on between good and sin. It's the fur on some mammals and scales on some fish. It's the bricks on the well that swallows our wish.

Whether billows of smoke or classic TV, the moon's bumpy surface or dull cutlery, a rich man's rings or a poor man's tatters, gray is all around us and it matters.

Em Wahl

Table of Contents

The Silver Lining 2

*Augusta Esports:
Dominating the Game* 4

Third Spaces 8

The sole of personality 12

Wingspan 16

Tongue-tied 17

Connecting dots 18

Lines 19

The Silver Lining

By Denaisha M. Cain

The National Library of Scotland defines gray as “a [color] intermediate between black and white, as of ashes or lead... without interest or character; dull and nondescript.”

One of the many signs of aging is gray hair. Transitioning to gray is a journey and everyone’s is different. Some may see it as an evolution or a symbol of a new confidant. For many others, it becomes a newfound insecurity. Many people experience a range of emotions as they see their first gray hairs.

“[I] don’t think about it too much,” said David Bulla, the silver-haired chair of the AU communication department.

Many societies place a high value on youth and associate youthfulness with beauty, energy and opportunity. Individuals who notice gray hair as they age are often taken by surprise.

“I thought that it was lint or something that had gotten in my head from my shirt,” said mother and daycare teacher Malika Holder.

The scientific terms for “going gray” are canities or achromotrichia. It is a naturally occurring process. As we get older, melanocytes, or skin cells that produce pigment, decrease in number and produce less melanin, causing silver-like gray hair.

Some embrace gray hair as a sign of maturity or confidence, or as a shift into a new stage of life. Others find it challenging and distressing as they navigate their relationship with aging.

Studies show that most women see going gray as unattractive and many try to hide or cover it. For men, however, going gray is usually seen as attractive and shows signs of wisdom and success.

Though going gray comes with age, there are rare occasions when people go gray early. This can cause low self-esteem among younger-aged individuals who often cover up their graying hair. Deciding what to do with gray hair is a battle that most people will face.



Image generated by Adobe.

The decision to embrace it, color it or cut it is considered by many. Some find themselves scurrying to the salon to get the first gray strand covered, experimenting styles or plucking them out. Some also say stress causes a great deal of gray hairs.

“When I want to feel good about it,” Bulla said, “I think, ‘hey, you look like you might know a few things. Yeah, maybe having gray makes you [look] dignified.’”

The transparency of gray hair gives it a glass-like appearance and makes it extremely sensitive to sunrays, which can give it a yellow look. Coarseness and dryness are common when it comes to gray hair, so it is important to use good products.

“You definitely want to find a good purple shampoo,” said master cosmetologist Bethany Simpson. “Using purple shampoo neutralizes those yellow brassy tones and gives it that silver cool tone.”

Gray hair is sensitive because it lacks density, shine and the pigment it once had.

“I always use 20-volume developer when doing low lights and highlights because the [gray] cuticle is tight,” said Simpson.

Gray hair is more than just a physical change. In an article posted on

Healthday.com, Dr. Robert Priedt stated research suggests race plays a role in when and how your hair goes gray.

“The average ages are the mid-thirties for whites,” he said, “late thirties for Asian people, and mid-forties for Black people.”



Image generated by Adobe.

Gray is not just a representation of hair. It can also make a statement on whether one will follow society's expectations by covering it or let the gray flourish and embrace the broader meaning of life.

Embracing the gray is Holder's new motto. She sees her gray strands as not just hair but as part of her, and she's content with the process.

Today, many individuals embrace the gray. Something that was once not heavily represented is now

all over the media. The process and journey take patience, but once fully gray, it becomes a symbol of wisdom and long life. Celebrities like Morgan Freeman, Sarah Jessica Parker, Anderson Cooper, Whoopi Goldberg, and many more gracefully flaunt their grays.

From red carpets to magazine covers to movie screens, there has been a cultural shift toward celebrating natural beauty, including gray hair. It's a visible reminder of life's journey and a testament to the experiences, challenges and joys that have shaped each person.

“Gray hair is a crown of glory; it is gained in a righteous life.”
-Proverbs 16:31

Augusta Esports: Dominating the Game

Story and photos by Jaxon Garner

As collegiate athletics evolve to incorporate emerging trends, Augusta University is at the forefront of embracing the rise of esports, offering students innovative avenues to excel in digital competition. Founded in 2019, AU's esports team has quickly gained recognition, both on campus and nationally, as it transforms the way students engage with competitive gaming.

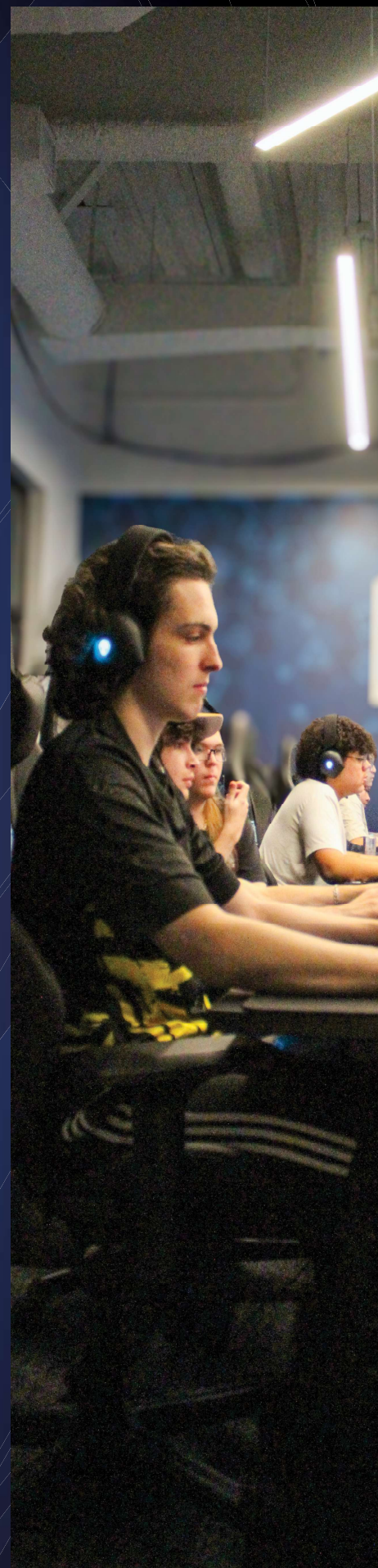
A New Era of Competition



Esports at AU is more than just a pastime; it's a fully-fledged program that emphasizes teamwork, strategy and skill development. Led by General Manager Noah Bowers, the team has built a reputation for excellence, competing across a variety of popular games, including "Rocket League," "Valorant," "Overwatch," and "League of Legends."

The program has recently strengthened its competitive edge with the addition of Zack Pye, head coach of the Rocket League team and one of its standout players. Known in the gaming world as "realpyeguy," Pye brings a unique perspective to the AU esports program, having previously played college football at Berry College.

"I've been able to bring the discipline and teamwork from the field into my approach to coaching 'Rocket League.'"
-Zack Pye, Rocket League HC





The Growth of Esports at Augusta University

In the past year, Augusta University's esports program has seen remarkable growth and engagement among students. Since its resurgence in 2023, the team's Discord server, a primary communication hub, has expanded dramatically from 20 to over 300 members. This surge reflects the increasing interest in esports as well as the community spirit cultivated within the program. Additionally, the program has significantly increased its varsity rosters from two to seven, demonstrating its commitment to providing opportunities for more students to participate.

"Esports has allowed students from all walks of life to come together and share something we're all passionate about. It's inspiring to see how gaming can unite people and foster friendships."

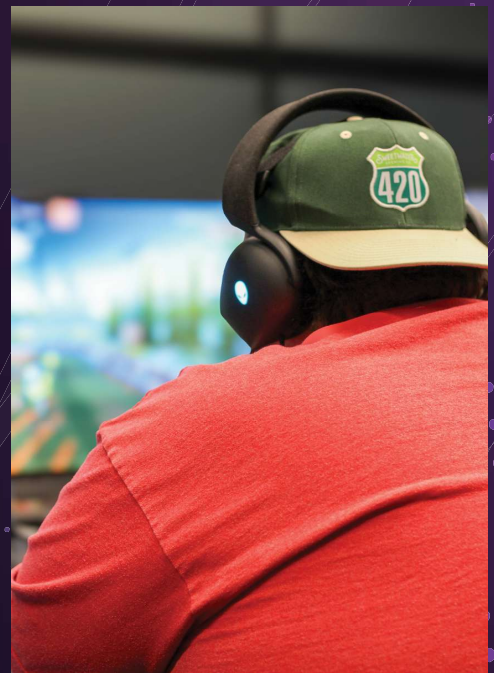
-Noah Bowers, AU Esports GM

Bowers attributes the rise in esports popularity to the accessibility of gaming, both in Augusta and globally, and to the strong community it fosters.

"Anyone who wants to play video games can do it in today's world," he said. "The communities that are really passionate about certain games are accepting of almost everyone, which makes it easier for new players to jump in and feel welcomed."

Unlike traditional sports, esports has fewer barriers to entry. Conventional sports often require costly equipment, access to practice facilities and extensive coaching, which can be challenging for students and aspiring players to secure. In contrast, gaming has grown largely because almost everyone has access to a device for mobile games, which are increasingly played professionally, and platforms like YouTube and Twitch, which allow fans to watch their favorite gamers in action.

"With video games, all you need is one device," Bowers explained. "Once you have that, you have access to an entire community in the palm of your hands. This level of accessibility is a game changer."



What Separates Esports from Traditional Sports?

Recruiting

When it comes to traditional NCAA sports like football and basketball, programs are built on recruitment, with coaches scouting high schools and investing heavily in finding and developing talent. This recruitment process involves evaluating athletes' physical skills, statistics and commitment to demanding training schedules.

In contrast, esports often sees players from diverse backgrounds join teams based solely on skill, without the structured recruitment pipelines found in traditional sports. The accessibility of esports allows talent to emerge naturally from within the community, cultivating a different kind of competitive atmosphere that prioritizes merit over conventional pathways.

"Augusta University esports isn't at the same level as the AU men's basketball team," said Bowers, "where they can reach out to almost any player in the world."

"We aren't skimming through the top leaderboards and asking the highest-ranked players to come play at AU. Eventually, that will hopefully be the case, but right now we are dependent on word of mouth and students showing up."

-Noah Bowers, AU Esports GM

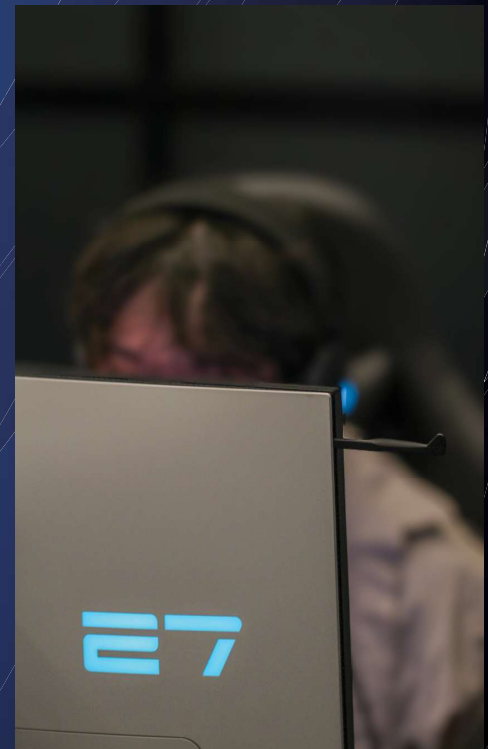
Funding

While athletics at AU are primarily funded by student athletic fees, esports operates under a different structure. The esports program is funded mainly through university support under Campus Recreation and Cyber Innovation.

Unlike traditional sports, the esports program serves multiple purposes beyond gaming. It provides students with hands-on opportunities in broadcasting, graphic design, animation and event operations, allowing them to gain valuable practical experience in these fields while pursuing their passion for gaming.

In a significant investment, AU recently unveiled a new esports arena in the Hull McKnight Building at the Georgia Cyber Innovation and Training Center. This state-of-the-art arena is equipped with 12 high-spec Alienware desktop computers, designed to meet the demands of competitive gaming. Additionally, last spring, the program added three racing simulators to the JSAC game room, enhancing the resources available to AU's racing sim teams and broadening the range of esports experiences offered.

Although the esports program may not yet rival traditional athletics in scale, its funding and university support continue to grow rapidly, reflecting the increasing importance of esports within the academic and athletic landscape.



Spectating



Most AU athletic events are live-streamed by the Peach Belt Conference with a full production team, providing a polished viewing experience similar to what you might see during college football on a Saturday afternoon. However, the esports program utilizes its own Twitch account, “AugustaUniversity_Esports,” for live-streaming, run by students and staff. The account currently has 118 followers, with a significant portion of its viewers being casual participants who do not formally follow the channel.

Twitch is a live-streaming platform where users can watch others play video games, chat in real-time and broadcast their gameplay. It functions like a live TV channel for gaming, also featuring streams of music, art and other activities. Viewers can interact with streamers through a chat window, creating a dynamic and engaging social experience focused on gaming and community.

Looking Forward

With a busy season of tournaments and championships ahead, AU esports is focused on solidifying its reputation as one of the premier esports programs in the region.

“We want to become the headquarters for all things esports in the Southeast,” Bowers said. “Our prime location and the resources available to us position us to be the biggest program around, and we are committed to making that a reality.”

From securing titles to fostering an inclusive campus community, Augusta University esports exemplifies the evolution of competitive gaming at the collegiate level. As more students find inspiration in esports, AU remains at the cutting edge of this exciting field, led by passionate talents like Bowers and Pye, whose journeys continue to redefine what it means to be a collegiate athlete in the digital era.



THIRD SPACES

STORY AND PHOTOS BY HOLLY ALISA PORTERFIELD

College life is often described as a whirlwind of academic opportunities, late-night assignments and endless coffee runs.

Augusta University students have access to a wide range of resources and spaces designed to transform the college experience into something truly meaningful.

Academic advisor Stephanie Nicholson emphasized the broader impact of students getting involved on campus.

"Not only does it enhance your academics," she said, "it also enhances other aspects of your life, like social and... overall self-care and mental health."

Quiet corners designated for studying or student organizations are examples of third spaces that help bridge the gap between campus life and home. They offer students a much-needed respite to foster social connection, facilitate personal development and provide them a platform for creative expression. Such environments are an important and often overlooked part of college life that enhances the experience by encouraging collaboration and innovation among peers.

But what is the real day-to-day experience like on the Summerville campus? Only students can reveal the true essence of student life.

Robert George began studying music education at AU in

2018. Referring to the Fine Arts Center as "the music building," George became more familiar with its walls over time and came to consider it a personal sanctuary.

Nestled within the Summerville campus, the Fine Arts Center cultivates a lifestyle and community for music majors that many other students overlook.

George's connection to the Fine Arts Center began long before he became a student. Even in middle school, he knew where his passion for music would take him.

"I've known that I was going to be a music education major since I was in like, sixth grade," he said.

George described himself as "really, really young" when he discovered theater. He was going through his mother's old CDs and found one from "Phantom of the Opera," a musical which spurred his love for music.

Little did he know, the Fine Arts Center would become more than just a place to study and practice, it would also be where George met someone very special: his future wife. Tied together by their mutual love for this iconic musical, for George and his fiancée, music isn't just a shared passion, it's a key part of their love story.

One of George's most memorable moments was his senior recital, where he

performed the song "All I Ask of You" from "Phantom of the Opera" with his fiancée. The performance held personal significance for both of them.

"The musical... is the reason that both of us got into singing in the first place," he said. "It's a love song, so we decided to sing it on my recital."

Beyond performances, the Fine Arts Center serves as a hub for students in the music department to connect and support one another. Between classes, George and his peers fill the common areas with a sense of community by sharing laughs, helping each other with homework and doing what he calls "college student shenanigans."

"You could be studying on your own," he said, "and then five other people could be like, 'Oh, well, I have to learn this too, so, I'll come help you with this.' And then we'll all chime in and help each other, especially if somebody doesn't understand something."

For music majors, the road to graduation can be particularly challenging due to the program's demands, and students in the department often face disbelief about the hardships and challenges of the program. Scheduling conflicts, or missing or failing core classes, can sometimes delay graduation by a year because of the limited availability of some classes.



Yet despite these challenges, George sees the Fine Arts Center as a place where musicians and artists at AU can create lasting friendships, share futures and create memories. Whether through recitals, study sessions or shared laughter over a few “shenanigans,” the Fine Arts Center encompasses the core of George’s college experience; one note, one performance and one conversation at a time.

Augusta University also helps cultivate club engagement and success across campus through social media posts, informative websites and promotional events that encourage student

participation. By highlighting various clubs and their activities, the university helps to create a supportive community and valuable connections among students where they can feel a true sense of belonging.

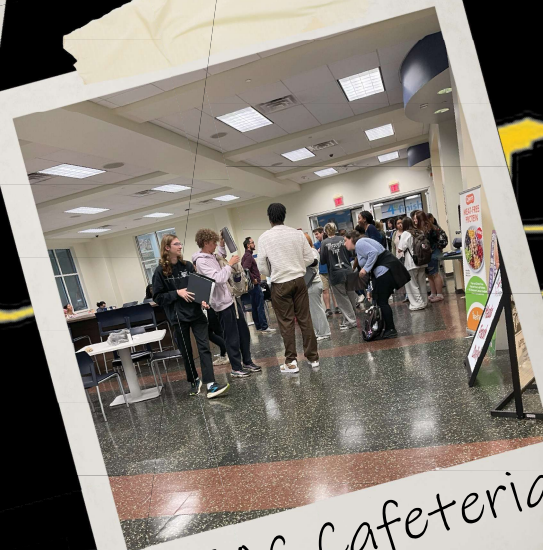
The club called “She Blossoms On Campus” encourages college women to discover and pursue their passions through various meetings and events. Dedicated to empowering, connecting and supporting female students, She Blossoms has become a sanctuary for female students who seek friendship, inspiration, belonging and self-discovery.

Cerise Pollard, a nursing major at Augusta University who also works part-time, takes part in various student organizations and is the current president of She Blossoms. Pollard has held the position for almost a year, having joined She Blossoms as a member in 2022 after transferring to AU from Albany State.

“Albany State was definitely just different for me,” said Pollard. “I was in my dorm for the most part. I went to class, I went to the [cafeteria] and I went to my dorm. I guess the environment there wasn’t as welcoming for me.”



JSAC Breezeway



JSAC Cafeteria



Allgood Hall Atrium



Allgood Hall Bulletin Board

She Blossoms members strive to promote sisterhood, self-identity and volunteerism among female students through event planning, guest speakers and interactive meetings focused on self-care and building connections.

"We try to have... speakers come to [teach] about self-care; we talk about hair as well, just loving yourself and just finding your identity," said Pollard.

For many members, these events have been a reminder that connecting with others is an important step to managing the demands of college life.

Some students might hesitate to commit to a club because of the potential to stretch out their schedule too thin between classes, social life and club duties, or they may not know where to start. However, others feel that student organizations are not about taking on another obligation but are instead about finding a place to connect with like-minded individuals. Friends who can offer advice, stress relief and a sense of balance.

Pollard said, "As president of an organization, it gets a little overwhelming sometimes."

She explained that having a team that can be relied on helps to take away the stress. Pollard said that she never forgets that she has an entire club full of members who are there with her every step of the way when planning and organizing events.

She Blossoms also invites guest speakers, conducts fundraisers and holds interactive meetings that focus on embodying the club's mission of creating sisterhood.

Continuing to bring its mission to life by providing a safe and welcoming environment to AU students, clubs such as She Blossoms help to provide the steppingstone needed for students to find their place.

For students struggling to start getting involved in campus activities, Nicholson recommended beginning with "something that you like to do, and if it's not here on campus, create it."

To Pollard, She Blossoms is more than just a club on campus; it's a second home for many female students navigating the challenges of college life, and its members continue to make a lasting impact on the community.

While Augusta University offers a wide range of opportunities to its students during their time on campus, there is always room for improvement. Improving student engagement can start with understanding the challenges students face and implementing creative outreach situations to speak directly to them.

For some, attending college means that they are away from home for the first time and according to Nicholson, "it [can] be a lonely thing." It is important to provide students with small, achievable steps they can take to explore their interests.

"Propose a challenge," said Nicholson, "like attending at

least two activities a semester."

She stated this will help students further connect to their campuses.

Reaching out to the student body is becoming more important with the rise in online classes and the decrease of personal interaction among students on campus. While Pollard believes the university's current method of communication on bulletin boards and bathroom stall doors is adequate, she also feels there is a need for further outreach to the student body, especially in Allgood Hall.

Ultimately, she reminded people that "we're all students at the end of the day" and fostering a sense of a shared community means utilizing all potential third spaces on campus.

These areas are more than just spaces; they are vital bridges that connect student interest to their degree pathway. These environments provide a place for students from all walks of life to settle into a place where they can feel as if they belong.

By embracing third spaces and the opportunities they provide, AU students can transform their college experience into one that leads to success after graduation through social connection, mental well-being and skills learned along the way. Students like Robert George and Cerise Pollard prove that finding and creating a place to call a second home is key to making the most out of the college journey.

"Whatever it is you need," said Nicholson, "you've paid for it. Use it!"