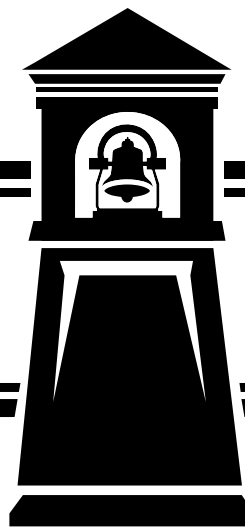


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STUDENT NEWSPAPER OF AUGUSTA UNIVERSITY

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The entrance of the Summerville campus the morning after Helene. (photo by Makenzy Veldboom)

Augusta University's response to Helene

By Makenzy Veldboom
Editor-in-chief

Nearly two months after Hurricane Helene swept through the region, Augusta is still grappling with the aftermath of its devastating impact. Linemen remain hard at work repairing downed power poles, while trucks steadily haul away the thousands of fallen trees and branches scattered across roadways. The effects of the storm are still visible everywhere, including on Augusta University's campus.

During the hurricane, Augusta University used various methods to reach students and offered resources to those impacted by the storm in our community.

The Bell Ringer had the opportunity to sit down with President Keen to discuss the university's responses, the impact Helene had on AU and the plans for future events such as these. Check out the exclusive interview on our website: www.aubellringer.com.

Devastated and rebuilding: How Hurricane Helene reshaped AU

By Daniela Harris
Staff Writer

Hurricane Helene brought massive destruction to the Augusta area, leaving a lasting impact on the city and its residents. For many who have lived in Augusta for years, this storm was unlike anything they had ever experienced. AU, in particular, faced significant damage and the changes to the campus have affected its students. From disrupted classes to altered campus spaces, the storm's aftermath has reshaped the everyday experience.

"As I walk the campus, the damage is evident," said Marc Maldonado, a student organization leader at AU. "It's truly heartbreaking, but what's even more saddening is the damage to the hearts of some of the students."

Maldonado stated that the dynamic of campus has

shifted. He noticed that some students felt hopeless as they explored campus after Helene.

With benches and trees gone, caution tape marking off damaged areas and walkways blocked for safety, students at AU are now navigating a campus that looks and feels completely different. The missing benches, once spots for studying and socializing, and trees that once provided shade and beauty are no longer there. These changes have not only altered the campus landscape but also many students' daily routines, causing them to readjust to the new, temporary campus setup.

"There was this one particular spot I used to sit at to breathe and regroup while I was on campus," said Thomas Lollis, another student organization leader at AU. "But now it's entirely blocked off by caution tape."

Although the initial appearance of the campus was shock-



Caution tape blocks of sitting area for students on the Summerville campus. (photo by Daniela Harris)

ing, efforts have been made to restore what was lost.

Workers have been removing fallen trees and repairing buildings and as a result, the campus is beginning to look more like it did before the hurricane.

"Augusta University is looking good post-hurricane con-

sidering the time frame we've had to recover," said Phillip Tran, a junior at AU.

While the campus is still not fully back to the way it was before the hurricane, things are looking up. Students are taking initiative to aid both the city and the campus. Now that classes are back in ses-

sion and most people have returned to campus, the AU student body, staff and supporters are working together to bring life back to the university.

"It's going to take a village," said Lollis, "but if we all work together, AU will be brought back to life."

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Hurricane Helene recovery: the herculean effort to clear more than a million cubic yards of debris

By Butch Cross
Staff Writer

As Columbia and Richmond Counties continue their post-Hurricane Helene recovery, local officials face a daunting task: clearing mountains of debris across hundreds of miles of roads in an operation likely to impact daily life for months to come.

“Columbia County is about 308 square miles and no part of the county was spared,” said county manager Scott Johnson in a recent address to residents. “That means the entire county has debris, all over it.”

Johnson explained that just Columbia County by itself includes around 72,000 homes, each generating its own share of fallen branches, uprooted trees and other storm remnants that are now familiar sights along streets and sidewalks.

Since the storm’s land-fall, Columbia County has collected over 400,000 cubic yards of debris, with clean-up crews actively working across seven different sites. Johnson added that about half the debris is being processed at a single staging area on Gibbs Road, underscoring the sheer volume of material left in Helene’s wake.

“This is a minimum 90-day process just for the first pass,” Johnson said.

He added that the next step involves larger debris, including uprooted stumps and logs. While small branches and leaves have been the focus so far, larger items require specialized equipment, which will be deployed during the second wave of clean-up operations for Columbia County.

The county’s primary partner in this effort is Ceres Environmental Services, a company contracted in 2020 to be activated if a severe storm ever impacted our region. The company has provided trucks, work-force and logistical support. According to county documents, this contract could cost up to \$6 million.

Cere’s unique approach includes utilizing the county’s mapping division along with contracted environmental aerial photography companies to “heat map” the most affected areas, logistically planning out more efficient routes and timelines.

For students and resident commuters, the widespread debris continues to create significant delays and frustration. Roads that serve as main thoroughfares such as Walton Way remain partially obstructed, and travelers must navigate around the debris or seek alternative routes.

Augusta University commuter and Nursing sophomore, Heather Quinn, described the challenges she faces daily.

“I drive from Grovetown to AU every day and the 15-20 minutes it has taken me to get through traffic is a struggle,” she said. “It’s like the normal traffic is sometimes clear, sometimes not, but just exaggerated so much.”

For many residents, understanding the physical scale of the cleanup has been challenging, with many wondering why the debris has not been picked up yet and how long it is going to be sitting there. Johnson used a powerful analogy to clarify.

“Making one pass across the county’s 308 square miles equates to driving from here to Dallas, Texas: about 800 miles,” he said.

“Each truck has to stop multiple times loading and unloading. Imagine stopping 72,000 times along that route, and you’ll get a sense of the scale of our task.”

Johnson added that the logistics of each truck filling up with debris, going for drop-offs and returning makes the actual driven distance closer to driving to Santa Fe, NM and back.

In comparison to Columbia County’s 400,000 cubic yards of debris from one month of clean-up efforts, Richmond County is reported to have picked up more than 560,000 cubic yards in the same time frame. Additionally, Columbia and Richmond counties reported they have 76 and 95 pick-up trucks out daily, respectively.

As both counties work with private and public partners to accelerate cleanup efforts, residents are being asked to do their part by ensuring debris remains off roads, keeping clear of storm drains and staying away from critical infrastructure, like fire hydrants and driveways.

Each counties’ officials emphasized that parked cars should not obstruct debris piles awaiting collection.

“We understand everyone wants to get it removed, and we’re going to get it moved just as quickly as we can, but you have to do your part as well,” said Johnson. “We are committed to getting this county back to what it was pre-Hurricane Helene and we hope you’ll continue to stand with us as we work to make our community stronger.”

Despite the significant progress made in the first month post-Hurricane Helene, the region’s recovery process is far from over. The later planned pass for larger debris is almost guaranteed to extend into early 2025 and officials acknowledge the need for continued patience from the community.

Both counties emphasize that residents should practice resilience and unity, in hopes that they will continue to support each other and maintain flexible in their daily routines.

“We are committed to getting this county back to what it was pre-Hurricane Helene and we hope you’ll continue to stand with us as we work to make our community stronger.”

- Scott Johnson, Columbia County Manager



Oct. 14, 2024, Augusta, Georgia. A tree remains on top of a car parked on McDowell Street. Augusta residents continue the cleanup after Hurricane Helene swept through the area. Merrily Cassidy/USA TODAY network



Oct. 22, 2024, Grovetown, GA A massive fallen tree blocks passage on the Euclhee Creek Trail. Butch Cross/Augusta University

Augusta University athletics per-severe through hurricane Helene



By Jaxon Garner
Staff Writer

As Hurricane Helene swept through the area, Augusta University’s athletics department faced the challenging task of rescheduling games and repairing damaged facilities. Athletic Director Ryan Erlacher recently shared how the department responded to these obstacles, emphasizing both the well-being of student-athletes and support for the campus community.

“Volleyball was impacted the most,” Erlacher said, noting Coach Quarles’ efforts to adapt by rescheduling matches. “The institutions we were scheduled to play were very accommodating and understanding.”

Cross-country canceled one meet but kept another out-of-area contest, while tennis and golf teams traveled out of state once conditions were safe.

“Scheduling remains fluid, but we believe 95 percent of previously scheduled contests will take place,” Erlacher said.

Reflecting the department’s commitment to stability for athletes and fans alike, Erlacher stated that facilities across the Forest Hills campus saw varying levels of storm damage.

The baseball field sustained the most extensive impact, including lost windscreens,

damaged fencing and out-field warning track issues. The softball team’s batting cage also sustained damage, requiring replacement. The golf house experienced exterior damage and leaks in the hitting bays, while the JAG House suffered minor roof damage from a fallen tree. Additionally, Christenberry Fieldhouse dealt with flooding and exterior and office damage.

Despite these setbacks, Erlacher praised AU’s facilities and athletic staff for their swift restoration efforts, which are well underway.

In addition, protecting student-athletes during and after the storm remained a top priority.

“We followed all safety protocols outlined by AU administration,” Erlacher said.

Coaches and staff maintained daily contact with student-athletes, providing updates and answering questions about campus safety. On-campus practices and competitions were paused until facilities were deemed safe.

“Our coaches and staff showed exceptional leadership during the storm and we are very proud of all their efforts,” Erlacher said.

The storm highlighted the resilience and compassion within AU’s athletic community.

Photo courtesy of augustajags.com

“Our student-athletes have been, and continue to be, active in serving the community and assisting with storm recovery,” Erlacher said.

Student-athletes have cleared debris, helped with yard work and distributed food and water to those affected by the storm. In turn, AU’s facilities team worked tirelessly to bring athletic spaces back into operation, with a notable quick turnaround to prepare the court within days.

Hurricane Helene presented Augusta University athletics with considerable challenges, but the response showcased the department’s resilience and commitment to its student-athletes and community. The dedication to safety, adaptability and community support demonstrated during recovery has further solidified the unity within Augusta University’s athletic family.

As the end of the fall season approaches with the winter and spring season right around the corner, Erlacher and his team remain committed to restoring facilities, rescheduling games, and moving forward with renewed determination. All the Jaguars programs are poised to continue their season with the same spirit they showed in recovery, both on the field and throughout their community.

AU student reactions to Helene

By Payton Carter
Staff Writer

Hurricane Helene has severely impacted all of Augusta on some level. The city has not seen an event like this in a very long time and students at Augusta University were especially affected. Many of them have never dealt with anything like this before. The week following the hurricane was a tumultuous one.

“It was a long week,” said AU student Isay Gonzalez-Juarez. “I was out of power for a long while and my fence got destroyed.”

“I had three trees fall through my house,” said AU student Jackson Lovett. “One fell right through my bedroom. Repairing it all is going to take a while and cost us a lot of money.”

The hurricane also has some on alert for the future.

“We’ve already invested in a generator,” said Lovett. “If something like this has the possibility of happening again, we will be as prepared as we can be.”

Some students feel the local government could have handled the storm response more competently and been better prepared.

“I think both Richmond and Columbia County governments could have been more prepared for the storms,” said Gonzalez-Juarez. “It honestly felt like we were hopeless for the first few days.”

Many students also feel incredibly burnt out due to the hurricane. The crisis resulted in setbacks in their schedules.

“It’s been rough,” said AU student Wright Andrews. “Coming back, I had so many other things on my mind that school was the last thing on my mind when we got back.”

“I feel like the rescheduling has just weighed everyone down, including me,” said AU student Laili Azfali.

Augusta University’s handling of the crisis has also come into question by some students. Resident students who were staying in university housing were relocated to a campus in another part of the state in order to provide sufficient housing.

“I think the relocation was [a] necessary inconvenience,” said student Schneider Hatfield. “The university did what they could to provide resources for the students living on campus.”

The hurricane has left a serious mark on the university, its students and Augusta as a whole. The aftermath has many carrying heavy burdens with some preparing to potentially face another crisis in the future.



Damage near Summerville after Helene. (photo by Makenzy Veldboom)

Going the non-traditional route

By Cody Robertson
Staff Writer

As a mother, Addison Colvin experiences college in a unique way. The health and well-being of her one-year-old boy are constantly on her mind, on top of her already demanding final semester at Augusta University.

“With the phase my son is in right now, he is walking everywhere and wants to go everywhere,” said Colvin. “It’s a challenge trying to manage time between being a mom and working on school.”

Colvin, a communication major, is graduating at her projected date thanks to her hard work and caring instructors.

“Thankfully, ever since I was pregnant my teachers were very accommodating to my situation. They would work with me when I needed to be absent due to my son being sick and when his daycare was closed after the hurricane,” said Colvin.

While her studies have been going smoothly, Colvin still believes more could be done by the university to provide for its student parents.

“I remember reading something that AU offered childcare in the past. I think they should bring that back. It would be more convenient for moms to stay on campus to work on school,” said Colvin.

Augusta University’s Child Care Center closed in the fall of 2019, but most instructors are very understanding, and accommodations will be made to every student’s situation.

As a father myself, I understand these needs and have been able to stay on track to graduate despite the challenges.

My instructors have never given me a reason to believe my two-year-old son was a burden on my schoolwork and I am very thankful for that.



AU senior Addison Colvin enjoys bonding time with her son (photo by Cody Robertson)

Capturing memories: Lydia Williams revives her passion for photography

By Makenzy Veldboom
Editor-in-chief

For senior communication major Lydia Williams, photography is more than a skill. It’s a deeply personal journey that connects her to cherished memories of her father and a passion she’s rediscovered in college.

Williams’ love for photography began in middle school when she “borrowed” her mother’s Canon Rebel camera, a gift from her father.

What started as playful experimentation with friends and family posing for her, quickly became a serious interest inspired by her father, a former film photographer.

“There was no one I looked up to more than him,” she said. “He was my best friend and he will always be that. He encouraged me to continue working on my photography skills so I continued dabbling in it through high school.”

Despite her early enthusiasm, Williams’ journey paused when she began college. Balancing academic challenges and her father’s declining health, she stepped away from photography.

“It was hard to find the energy to focus on anything else,” she said.

Williams eventually faced the profound loss of her father’s passing during her sophomore year in October.

Last semester, Williams decided to revisit photography by enrolling in two photography classes—a decision that changed everything.

“It was the best choice I’ve made in my college career,” she said.

Her professor, Dylan Wilson, played a pivotal role offering guidance and encouragement to help Williams refine her craft.

“He pushed me to excel and build a portfolio I’m truly proud of,” she said.

Williams has now been able to capture moments, blending her rekindled passion with professional growth.

“Being able to catch memories through my lens has been such an amazing experience,” she said.

She added, “It has been so rewarding and fulfilling to love the same craft my dad did, it makes me feel connected to my dad in a way. I don’t plan on putting my camera down anytime soon.”



AU Cheer team. (Photo by Lydia Williams)

Capturing the excitement of cheering for your team.



Player thirteen heads for the ball. (Photo by Lydia Williams)

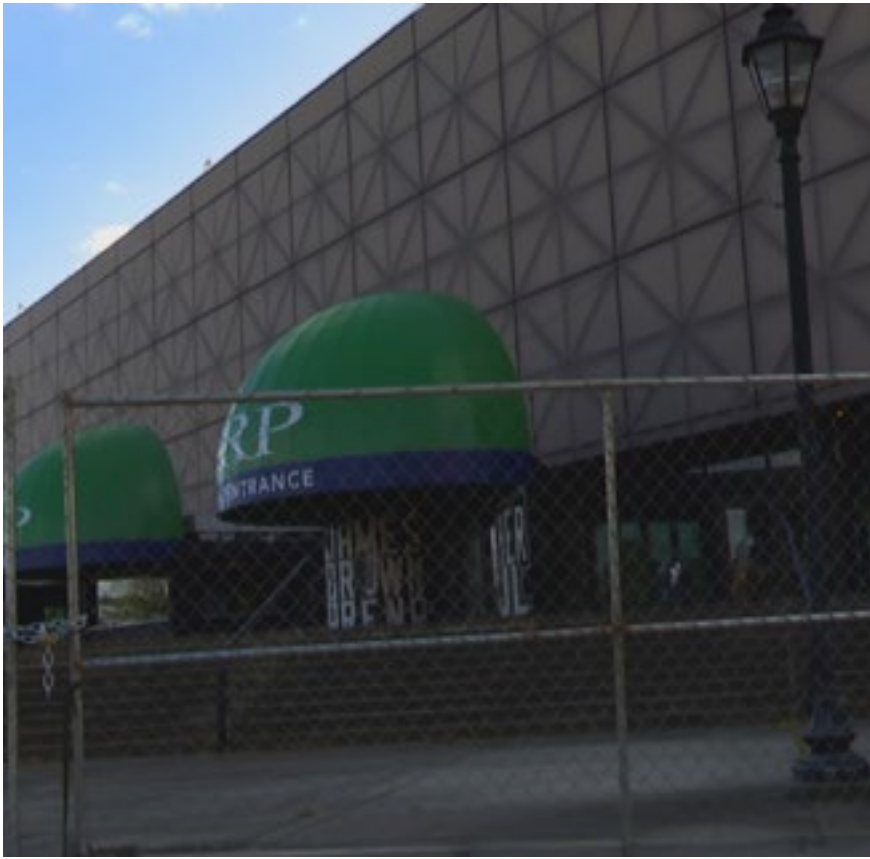
New James Brown Arena brings hockey back to Augusta

By Andrew Chalker
Staff Writer

Decades ago, the James Brown Arena was home to the Augusta Riverhawks hockey team. Unfortunately, things like eroding pipes and lack of maintenance and upkeep was enough to end the hockey team's season prematurely back in 2013. The current James Brown Arena was built in 1979 and has become more of a hassle to maintain than it would be to just rebuild. Since 2013, Augusta hasn't had an official hockey team. Luckily, for those who love hockey and would like to see it back, the city recently announced that it will be

making its return very soon. This would mark the third time since the Augusta area has had hockey and the first time in over ten years. The group responsible for the renovations is Oak View Group. The city just recently entered an agreement with them and is now making them responsible for the construction of the new arena. Oak View Group has also been tasked by the city to bring a new hockey team to Augusta and to make sure that they remain operational and successful. Nearly ten million dollars has been donated by Oak View Group to ensure that tax payers will not have to

spend a single dime on the project. Leaders from Augusta have said that this new venture will bring new jobs into the area and will increase downtown spending overall. Demolition of the old James Brown Arena is slated to start late this November. Proof of concept renderings show what the new arena will look like and those can be found at newaugustaarena.com. With this new renovation project, there will also be an expansion of the Bell Auditorium as well. The full project is set to be completed by 2027 at the latest.



The James Brown Arena with a construction fence set up. (Photo by: Andrew Chalker)

Understanding the election outcome

By CM Wahl
Managing Editor

America has elected a new president. On Nov. 4, Donald J. Trump won the majority vote in 30 states, garnering a total of 312 electoral votes, according to the Associated Press. Though Trump led the Republican party to victory by nearly three million votes, for some, the change in leadership came as a surprise. Professor of Political Science Craig Albert said, "I think, unfortunately, many folks let their hope that now President-Elect Trump would not win, cloud their forecasting and realistic outcome. If one followed the polls carefully, it was clear that the two candidates were, for a majority of the race, within the margin of error." Albert is the graduate director for the doctorate in Intelligence, Defense and Cybersecurity Policy and master of arts in Intelligence and Security Studies here at AU. He stated that

many people who voted for Trump may not admit it due to fear of backlash from the political left. "Would you admit," said Albert, "that you are voting for someone if you knew most of your friends would disown you or chastise you because of this?" Albert stated that what we need now is a "return to civility on both sides" so the focus can move to policy, and that the election outcome was ultimately about the economy. Gregg Murray, political science professor and editor-in-chief of Politics and the Life Sciences journal, agreed that the top issue for many voters this year was the economy and that inflation was among the most important economic metrics. "In my opinion," said Murray, "the Republicans won the election because the Democratic candidate [Kamala Harris] failed to distance herself from the

Democratic president who had very low favorability ratings and was strongly associated, rightly or wrongly, with alarmingly high inflation." According to U.S. News and World Report, President Joe Biden's approval rating fell to just 39 percent after inflation reached a 40-year-high in 2022, which lowered overall consumer sentiment. The news outlet stated that every president "back to Richard Nixon" who ran for reelection only won if they had an approval rating of at least 50 percent. Although it is not yet clear on how the leadership shift will impact current inflation rates, Albert stated that under President-Elect Trump, several changes are likely, such as more decisions given to states and localities rather than the national government, more conservatives installed in the court system, and a crackdown on illegal immigration. Now that the House and

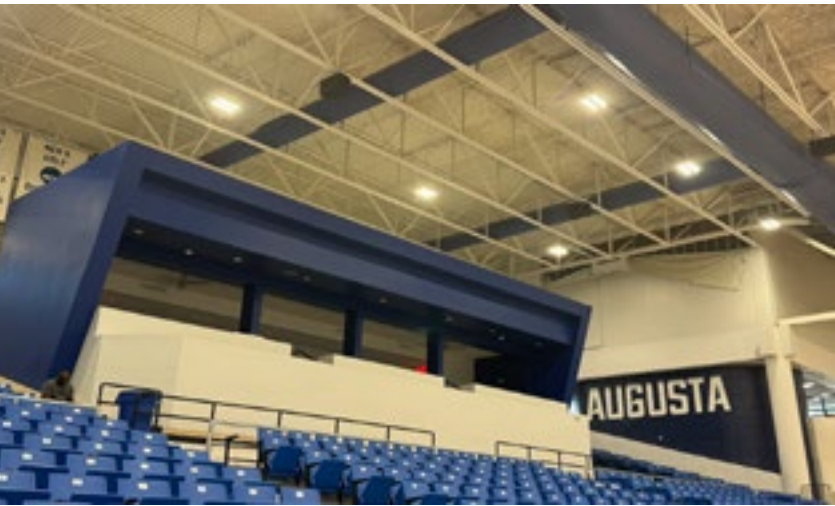
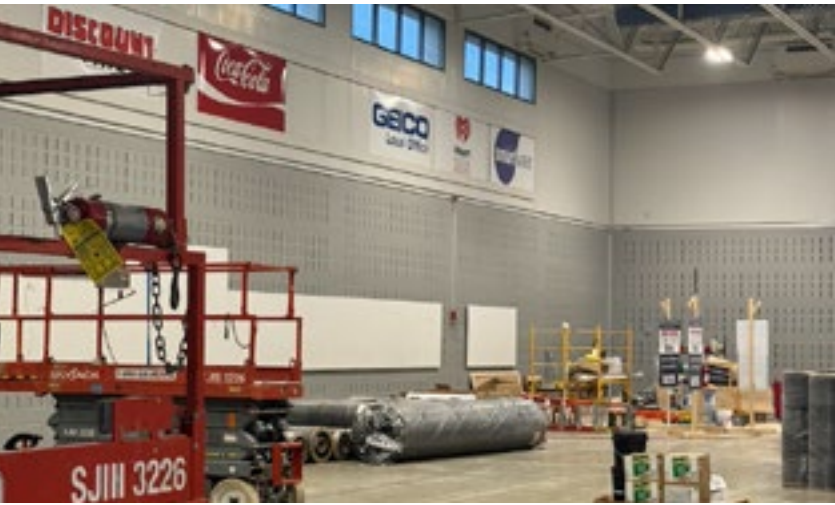
Senate are majority Republican, Albert said that Congress and the President are likely to "present a unified front" on many conservative issues that have not been passed in the last few years. He stated this "unified government," where the President and Congress are all from one party, will "likely make the country tilt slightly to moderately more conservative on the political pendulum." Although some voters may be disappointed with the election outcome or fear what this change will mean for the country in the long run, Albert went on to remind those worried that in two years, the pendulum can shift again as elections for the House will come up again, as it also will for one-

"This is the beauty of a limited-federal-representative government. It always shifts!"
- Craig Albert, Professor of Political Science

Christenberry Fieldhouse renovations continue

By Makenzy Veldboom
Editor-in-chief

Christenberry Fieldhouse continues to be renovated from the inside out. With the new sky box suite coming up quickly, this space will be used to host donors during basketball and volleyball games and in addition, hosting events on non-gamedays. The exterior of the fieldhouse is also being renovated. Once finished, the exterior will have a new design with AU's school colors implemented. With progress still being made in the renovations, students may have to find alternate ways to get to their classes. Beginning Nov. 21, the main entrance to Christenberry will be closed until Feb. 3, 2025. An email that went out to faculty, staff and students indicated that there will be signs in place that will be directing students and other visitors an alternate route to enter the building, which will be at the entrance that is located down the hill. The Christenberry renovations should be complete during the spring semester. It is part of a larger improvement plan to athletics that included adding lights to the baseball and softball fields last year and adding bleachers to the baseball stadium this academic year.



Interior of Christenberry Fieldhouse currently. (Photos by: Makenzy Veldboom)



Exterior of Christenberry Fieldhouse. (Photos by: Makenzy Veldboom)

Explore the world with AU Study Abroad

By Karleigh King
International Education Coordinator

Are you ready to expand your horizons, experience new cultures, and gain valuable international experience? The AU Study Abroad Office is excited to announce incredible opportunities for students to study abroad in Spring and Summer 2025. **Why study abroad?** Studying abroad offers more than just an academic adventure—it's a chance to grow personally and professionally. Here are just a few of the many benefits: **Cultural immersion:** Gain a deeper understanding of different cultures, which

enhances both your personal growth and professional skills. **Academic enrichment:** Study in unique environments that complement your field of study, making your education more dynamic and global in perspective. **Career advantages:** Employers highly value international experience, as it demonstrates adaptability, cross-cultural communication and problem-solving abilities. **Global networking:** Build friendships and professional connections across the world, opening doors to new opportunities in your career and beyond.

Applications are open and the deadline to apply and submit your deposit is December 3, 2024. Spots are limited, so don't wait! Whether you're exploring the business world in the UK, diving into environmental research in Kenya, developing your leadership skills in New York or immersing yourself in Puerto Rican culture, Augusta University's Study Abroad programs are designed to help you grow academically, personally and professionally. Visit our website at www.augusta.edu/studyabroad/ for more information on how to apply and start your journey today!



Meet the New Mister and Miss Augusta University



Alyssa Pearson and Quintus Williams after being crowned. (Photo by CM Wahl)

By CM Wahl
Managing Editor

A new Mister and Miss Augusta University have been crowned. This year's pageant had seven women and four men competing for the coveted titles in categories such as evening wear, strength and talent. In the end, Quintus Williams and Alyssa Pearson were announced as this year's winners, respectively.

"This opportunity has been such a blessing," said Pearson, "and I am so thankful for the opportunity to represent this university well."

Pearson is a junior and transfer student majoring in Nursing. She will now go on to represent the school at the Miss Georgia competition, locally hosted events like the Jag Gala and as a spokesperson for the student body.

"I have loved being in the position so far," she said. "I have had so many opportunities to meet and interact with people in addition [to] seeing myself become more comfortable in this school environment as a transfer student."

Pearson plans to promote her community service initiative "Serving Through Self-Defense" as well, so she can bring awareness to the AU community about the value and importance of being able to defend one's self.

"Self-defense is a great way to take control of what you can in an unpredictable world," she said. "Through my community service initiative... I intend to give everyone, especially women, that control back, as well as build community relationships and personal resilience."

Pearson also took home an award for Best Talent after her display of defensive maneuvers and

board-breaking. Her fellow contestants showcased other talents including dance, poetry, song and flag-throwing.

Likewise, Williams, the first freshman to run in the pageant's history, was awarded Best Talent for his spoken word piece. He also won the People's Choice Award and Best On-Stage Question.

"Since I won, I've hit the ground running," he said. "My responsibilities as Mister Augusta University include representing myself, my university, my culture, my family and most importantly, my peers with dignity, respect, class and decorum."

Williams intends to make his community service initiative "Pillars of Promise: Empowering Tomorrow's Leaders" relatable, especially for the current freshman class.

"I aim to support first-generation African American male and female students," he said, "as well as students from other minority backgrounds. I want to provide guidance that will not only get them through college but also life beyond."

One approach he's taking is through a mental health campaign inspired by the TikTok dance "Tripping Out" in order to help students manage stress and redirect anger. He also intends to emphasize the importance of "accountability in academics, friendships and life in general."

"Winning this title has been incredible, but it hasn't come without challenges. Some may feel a freshman shouldn't have won, but I believe change is essential!" said Williams. "I put in the work, showed

dedication and had the drive to succeed, and I'm honored to have achieved this."

Both winners received substantial scholarships to help with school expenses and will utilize the opportunity afforded them to represent the school through example, encouragement and empowerment of the student body.



The two posing with Augustus. (Photo by CM Wahl)

Scholarship program for women returns for sixth year

By Tyliyah Mosley
Staff Writer

Augusta University's Women's Leadership Academy (WLA) began their sixth cohort this 2024 Fall semester. Though coordinated by the Hull College of Business at AU, the scholarship program is open to all majors.

Along with a \$1,000 scholarship, the program includes mentorships, workshops and Hull College merchandise and swag.

"It just sets them up for success in the future," said Stacy Roberts, the facilitator of the WLA. "We are looking for the ladies that are humble, that know where they are but still know that there's so much room to learn."

Since inheriting the program in 2020, Roberts has seen a surge of confidence, personal goal achievement and even the blossoming of personal relationships from the ladies.

With a background in leadership development and HR, Roberts has built a career dedicated to influencing and impacting women.

"Create the life you want," she said.

Roberts highlighted the many challenges that women may face in the workplace such as discrimination and other conflicts between colleagues.

"If I can save you from some of the hardships that I dealt with climbing the ladder, that's the type of leader I try to be," she said.

The Women's Leadership Academy was first

introduced to the business college in 2019. It was initially facilitated by Melissa Furman, who had always wanted to launch a leadership program of some kind. Before becoming the dean of Hull College in November 2024, Mark Thompson was associate dean and brainstormed alongside Furman at that time.

"It's turning into one of our hallmark type programs," he said. "It's a really great program."

The initial idea of the WLA was in favor of community outreach. Though still a focus of the program, the WLA's main intentions are to support the women of the business college and to further implement the growth of their skills, granting them "the proper resources to help advance their careers," according to Thompson.

At the beginning, the Women's Leadership Academy was exclusive to the juniors and seniors in Hull College. But Thompson explained they "have always looked to improve it and adapt it."

Lorelei Culbreth, a junior and Business Administration major, is a peer mentor within the WLA.

Culbreth heard about the Women's Leadership Academy shortly after meeting Roberts at an event her freshman year and then took the opportunity to reach out about joining. To her surprise, she was unable to join due to being a rising sophomore at the time.

"Dr. Roberts was far more upset than I was," joked Culbreth.

This interaction ultimately led to the programs expanded availability to more women on campus such as rising sophomores and those pursuing a major outside of the business school.

"I was just excited to network and get to know people within the community," said Culbreth. "That drive and that excitement to do those things really gave me a passion for wanting other women to have the opportunity to do the same thing and to kind of help show them how important that is while we're still in college and have the resources that we do."

Since the start, ADP's Augusta team has utilized their foundation that supports various projects and proposals at the local level to contribute to the WLA. Back in 2019, Dave Brenza, one of the ADP leads, encouraged Hull College to submit a proposal for programming that aligns with the goals and values of the company.

From there, the partnership between the WLA and ADP has flourished into a strongly impactful program that's influence has echoed throughout the university. Though limited to 25 spots, students are strongly encouraged to apply.

"Sometimes we miss opportunities because we don't go for them," said Roberts.

The Women's Leadership Academy takes applications every Spring. To stay up to date, follow their Instagram: @au_hull.



Women's Leadership Academy 2024. (Photo by Tyliyah Mosley)



“‘Last Christmas’ by Wham! This is the ultimate Christmas song. Probably one of the best songs of all time. If Mariah Carey is the queen of Christmas, then George Michael is the king.”

- Makenzie Brocato, senior

“Silent night, because singing it during the candlelight Christmas Eve service and remembering the reason for Christmas is celebrating our Savior’s birth.”

- Haydn Karamath, junior



“What’s your favorite Christmas song?”



“My favorite Christmas song is Ella Fitzgerald’s ‘Sleigh Ride.’ The reason: Ella’s mellifluous voice and the outstanding orchestra behind it!”

- Jaylan Richardson, senior

“My favorite Christmas song is ‘That Spirit of Christmas’ by Ray Charles. I first heard it while watching ‘Lampoon’s Christmas Vacation’ and immediately thought it was incredible. It hits all of the aspects of what makes Christmas the most enjoyable holiday.”

- Brandon Barton, senior



My years at AU and how they changed my life



Some of the amazing friends met through the Comm department, the “Comm girlies.”

By Makenzy Veldboom
Editor-in-chief

Going into college was unlike anything I had ever experienced before in my life, and not because it was a new chapter.

When I started college, the world was shut down due to COVID. For the first year and a half of college, my classes were online. It felt like I was in an online school and I was not really getting a true college experience. I was also majoring in something I was not passionate about at the time and felt very lost as an individual.

Then 2022 came around and on top of having a crisis of what to do with my life, I struggled immensely in my personal life and had no clue what the future would hold.

That year, I changed my major to communication and felt better about the road ahead. In-person classes were coming back into full swing and despite this, I felt very alone at the time. I earnestly hoped I would

make some friends at college. Little did I know, that fall semester would change the course of my life forever.

The first week back in classes, I met a girl in my media literacy class who spoke to me like she had known me my entire life and was incredibly kind to me. Just hours into meeting her, she invited me to come sit with her and hang in the JSAC. She later invited me to a club she was a part of. I wanted to make some friends so I thought, “hey, why not give it a shot?”

After attending, I realized the club was a ministry called Campus Outreach and at that time, I did not have the best relationship with Christianity. Although I wasn’t completely sure about it, I kept going.

As time went on, I got to meet various students and staff who really poured into me as a person and genuinely cared about who I was. They also presented me with

the gospel and explained who Jesus really is to me in a different way than I had understood previously.

At the end of that year, I attended their conference and went to some amazing talks that helped me understand how much Jesus cares for me and loves me. This was the moment my life completely changed!

I felt the immense love that Jesus gave and I decided that I wanted to follow Him and live according to His plan.

After that conference, I continued going to Campus Outreach and began to really enjoy my classes. I was also able to make wonderful lifelong friends through the communication department and campus ministry.

I am eternally grateful to the Lord and to AU for this experience and opportunity! I am looking forward to seeing what is in store for my fellow classmates and students, and for my own future.

Go jags!

A.I. within education

By Payton Carter
Staff Writer

Artificial intelligence has quickly gained prominence in the past couple of years. Its sudden rise has brought many questions and concerns in multiple industries worldwide.

While some may feel the advantages of the new technology can result in many benefits for humanity, many feel it will cause more problems than it may solve.

One place where A.I. is an area of concern is in education. It has been the topic of serious debate specifically in higher education among both students

and educators.

“I think it can be helpful but it’s a slippery slope,” said AU master’s student Dan Martinez. “If people aren’t careful using it with their work, then they’ll just become dependent on it.”

“I personally find it to be a useful tool,” said AU student Jackson Lovett, “but I know some students that abuse it. I think professors are catching on though.”

Lovett added, “It can be used in a good way. I think there just has to be an understanding that it cannot be used in a way that devalues your education.”

Although some feel A.I. has a place in the classroom, others feel it does not belong.

“I just can’t agree with it,” said AU student Judson Deal. “I don’t think it has a place in education.”

“There’s just too much risk with it in my opinion,” Deal added.

Whether we like it or not, A.I. is something we will have to address in the upcoming years. How big of a role it will play in our everyday lives, specifically in our classrooms, will be ultimately decided by us.



Technology is an integral part of our campus life. (Photo by: Payton Carter)

AU’s Student Government Association



Photo courtesy of augusta.edu

By Makenzy Veldboom
Editor-in-chief

For those students seeking to make a difference within their school, gain leadership skills and get involved on campus, joining the Student Government Association may be an avenue to explore.

At AU, the SGA is committed to representing, serving, promoting and resolving. Their main function is to be the voice of the students by providing an environment for students to communicate with them, along with working with the staff and faculty.

Maddie Edwards, one of SGA’s senators, shared that their goal for this year has been to

get more students and clubs to learn about SGA and its function.

“We want to let students know that we’re here for them,” Edwards said.

Along with student engagement, clubs are also able to receive \$1,000 for events through SGA as long as the event is open to all students.

Students can also submit topics of concern or ideas and SGA can write a bill depending on what it is and it could be potentially added to school legislation.

Edwards explained that a student can have any major and still get involved in SGA.

“Your major doesn’t matter and we always encourage people to apply, especially people who want to make a difference on our campus,” said Edwards.

She added, “I do really want students to know that it’s not just them. Faculty is also here to help as well and I want students to know that they are not alone and always can talk to someone. Whether it is personal, academic or belonging; anything. We are here to help.”

For more information about SGA, visit www.augusta.edu/student-life.

AU volleyball wins regular-season finale; will host Ga. College in PBC tournament opener



Rylie Harris (3) gets one of her match-high 23 digs in the win over the Bobcats. (photo by Lydia Williams)

By J. Ben Haynes
Sports Writer

The Augusta volleyball team was dominant in a win over Georgia College at Christenberry Fieldhouse on Friday, Nov. 15. AU won the sets by scores of 25-11, 25-13, 25-14. The Peach Belt Conference matchup was the third between the Jaguars and Bobcats this season, with Augusta dominating all three matchups, winning each by a 3-0 match score. The Jaguars started the match by winning the first seven points behind the serving of Mikayla Kline and were never challenged. In the second set, both teams traded points on their way to a 7-7 tie, but Augusta responded by going on a 10-1 run to take a commanding 17-8 lead. With a 2-0 lead, the Jaguars did not hold back in

the third set, winning by 11 points to secure their eighth straight sweep of the Bobcats over the last three seasons. Marin Freeland led Augusta in kills, finishing with 11 on a .250 attack percentage. The Jaguars were coming off a tough loss at Lander on Nov. 13. “We had good energy as a team,” Freeland said. “I think we recognized what we did wrong [at Lander] and that helped us bounce back.” AU Coach Sharon Quarles was happy with the bounce-back victory. “We came with a mission,” said Quarles. “We weren’t getting down like we did the other night at Lander. And then Marin lit it up.” Madelyn Eden was a force both offensively and defensively for the Jaguars, totaling nine kills as

well as eight block assists. Rylie Harris, the senior from Mechansville, Va., led the way on defense with 23 digs. Harris also had three aces. Kline, the sophomore from Evans, chipped in five kills and 12 digs. Marah Zenner and Janvior Buggs quarterbacked the Augusta offense. Zenner finished with 19 assists and Buggs had 15. Buggs had gone over the 2,000 mark for her career against Lander. Jada Suguturaga totaled six blocks and three kills for Augusta. Jacklyn Simms had six kills with a .250 hitting clip. Camryn Carlton led the Bobcats (8-20) with four kills. AU hit at a .183 pace and held Georgia College to a .102 night. Before the match, the AU players were introduced with members of

the university faculty. With the win, Augusta finished the regular season with a 4-4 record in Peach Belt conference play and 18-6 overall. Augusta’s next action will be in the Peach Belt Tournament, as the Jaguars take on Georgia College (8-20) once again on Tuesday, Nov. 19, at 6 p.m. The winner of Tuesday’s match will advance to the semifinals of the Peach Belt Conference tournament at Lander University on Friday, Nov. 22. AU will enter as the No. 4 seed, while the Bobcats enter as the No. 5 seed. The winner will play regular-season champion Lander in Greenwood, S.C., on Friday, Nov. 22, in one semifinal. Flagler will play USC Aiken in the other semifinal.



Marin Freeland (18) had a match-high 11 kills to lead the Jaguars past Georgia College. (Photo by Paula Toole)



AU's Abigail LeVines (10) and Madelyn Eden (15) get the block in the Jaguars' straight-sets win over Georgia College. (Photo by Lydia Williams)

AU men’s cross-country team returning to NCAA Division II nationals

By Christian Austin
Sports Writer

The Augusta University men’s cross-country team secured a spot in the 2024 NCAA Division II National Championship with a second-place finish at the Southeast Regional Championship on Saturday, Nov. 9, in Spartanburg, S.C. The Jaguars, who had six runners in the top 30 at the regional, earned a trip to Sacramento, Calif., where they will compete at the national level on Nov. 23. Leading the Jaguars was Peach Belt Conference (PBC) runner of the year Avery Jaynes, who took an impressive eighth place with a time of 29:44.9 on the 10-kilome-

ter course. Senior Jordan Robertson was close behind, finishing 10th in 30:05.6, followed by PBC freshman of the year Ani Tesfaye in 13th place with a time of 30:28.7. Senior Brandon Martin finished 20th, clocking in at 31:06.5, and sophomore Tripp Miller placed 23rd with a time of 31:17.9, rounding out Augusta’s top five. Tesfaye reflected on the team’s strong performance, highlighting their dedication and hard work in the face of challenges. “The men’s team did really well,” Tesfaye said. “We executed our plan and showed up when it mattered. Some of the guys were dealing with sick-

ness, but it didn’t stop us from securing second place and making it to nationals.” Tesfaye was satisfied with his own performance. “I just aimed to stay close to Avery and help the team as much as I could,” he said. “In the end, I’m happy with how I did and I’m proud of the guys for doing great too.” The Jaguars scored 74 points overall, a solid team effort that placed them behind region champion and No. 1 ranked Wingate University, which had 15 points and took the top-six positions. Anderson University finished third with 102 points. AU’s performance represents the culmination of months of rigorous training and determination for the team, which has been focused on national qualification all season. For senior Patrick Motes, who finished 29th in 31:27.9, and sophomore Nasrudin Mohamed, who took 42nd place in 32:03.7, the opportunity to compete at nationals is a testament to the hard work and commitment demonstrated by every team member. With runners peaking at the right time, Augusta is well-positioned for a competitive run at nationals. Augusta’s cross-country team now looks ahead to the championships in Sacramento, where they hope to build on their regional success and represent their school on the national stage. They will be after a top-10 finish as a team, and runners like Jaynes will be looking to finish in the top 40. That’s the standard for making the all-America team. Jaynes, Martin, Miller, Robertson and Tesfaye each made the all-region team. The Augusta women finished sixth. Emily McBride finished 16th and Madison Kennedy 17th in the 6K race for the Jaguars. Both were named to the all-region team. For future updates on nationals and the team, visit www.aubellringer.com.



Avery Jaynes was the top finisher for the Jaguars, who had six runners in the top 30. Jaynes ran the 10-kilometer race in 29 minutes, 44.9 seconds, good for eighth place in the individual race. The senior led AU to a second-place finish. (photo by Churchill Ezeokonkwo)



Emily McBride (L) and Madison Kennedy were the top finishers for the AU women. Both made the all-region team. (photo by Churchill Ezeokonkwo)



Check out The Sports Squad on Spotify and YouTube livestreams!





Mone Florence shoots a floated over Newberry defenders in Jaguars' most recent home contest. (Photo by Paula Toole)

Augusta women pulls off upset win over No. 10

By Justin Gray
Sports Editor

The Augusta women's basketball team traveled up to Fayetteville State and beat the No. 10 team in Division II, 56-52.

Fayetteville State only lost three games last year and it went undefeated at home, so for the Jaguars there was nothing working in their favor and they found a way to pull it out.

Augusta has played team basketball and that's a big reason they are off to a 4-0 start, and there were no real outlier performances until senior Mone Florence stepped up big and dropped 21 points in the win.

She knocked down four three-pointers and had four combined blocks and steals, but for Coach Celeste Stewart that's not what changed the game.

"Late in the game, Mone took a charging foul and that was a momentum shift-er, then came down and hit a three," said Stewart.

The Jaguars led the game by as many as 12 points after the end of the first quarter, but as good teams do, FSU fought back and made it a four-point game at the break.

The third quarter was a wash as both teams scored 11, but when the fourth quarter came around, it looked like AU might run away with it, extending their lead to 10 at the 5:08 mark. But the Broncos wouldn't go down without a fight as they went on an 8-0 run, cutting the lead to just two.

Then, the aforementioned Florence scored the final five points for the Jags leading them to the victory.

Coach Stewart's squad is

showing early that they are made of the right stuff. The AU women only trailed for 21 seconds in this one, and though FSU made their run, they bent but didn't break.

This kind of mentality is what Stewart has instilled in these ladies in her first two years of her Augusta tenure as head coach.

"I think for us this just shows what we're capable of," she said. "We're still developing our chemistry, figuring out what that dynamic is going to look like for our team going forward, but even through that we've been able to pull out wins, which is great."

For a team that averaged 68 points per game a season ago, you'd expect them to be pretty offensive-oriented, but this team is going to break you down defensively and make you make



Augusta forward Tyasia Freeman (22) goes to the basket for the Jaguars; she had 12 points and four rebounds in the win over Newberry. (Photo by Lydia Williams)

Jaguars upend Lander, USC Aiken in key PBC matches

By J. Ben Haynes
Sports Writer

On senior weekend, the Augusta University volleyball team went undefeated, beating the first-place Lander Bearcats 3-2 on Friday, Nov. 1, and the second-place USC Aiken Pacers 3-1 on Saturday, Nov. 2, in Peach Belt Conference action.

With the two wins, the Jaguars moved to 3-3 in PBC play and 15-5 overall.

Against Lander on Friday, the Jaguars found themselves down 2-1 after the first three sets, but rallied to win the fourth and fifth sets—and the match.

In the fourth set, the Jaguars were down 21-18, but went on an 8-3 run, which was led by three Sophia Kruczko kills, to win the set 26-24.

Augusta used all the momentum from the fourth set comeback to dominate the fifth set, winning 15-6 behind two crucial service aces from Marah Zenner.

Jacklyn Simms finished with a team high of 15 kills on a .140 attack percentage. The Jaguar's defense was stellar, with four players eclipsing 15 digs, led by Rylie Harris' 26 digs.

Senior Janvier Buggs had 30 assists and 15 digs. Mikayla Kline had nine kills for AU.

The Bearcats were led by



Jaguars' Sophia Kruczko (8) knocks down one of her eight kills in the four-set win for Augusta (Photo by Paula Toole)

outside hitter Katie Miller, who had 22 kills and 26 saves. Madde Blake added 15 kills and 17 digs. Lauren Dow had a game-high 41 assists.

Jaguar Coach Sharon Quarles made a key substitution to start the fourth set, inserting Layne Witherspoon into the lineup. The sophomore middle blocker from Wildwood, Mo., was sensational with five kills in the fourth set and the set winner on an assist from Buggs. Witherspoon would finish with seven kills.

AU hit at a .169 clip, compared to a .156 evening for Lander. The Jags had 69 kills, compared to 54 for the Bearcats.

The blocking tandem of seniors Madelyn Eden and Jada Suguturaga played a key role in the AU victory. Eden finished with eight kills and five blocks. Suguturaga had seven kills and five blocks. Senior Marin Freeland had seven kills on a .250 hitting night.

In a quick turnaround, Augusta took care of business once again, this time in a rematch with rival USC-Aiken.

en.

After dropping the first set 25-19, the Jaguars won the next three sets by scores of 25-17, 25-19, 25-14.

Eden was dominant for Augusta, finishing with 12 kills on a stellar .476 attack percentage. Witherspoon was also a force offensively, finishing with 11 kills on a .381 attack percentage.

However, the story of the match was Augusta's defense, finishing with 32 block assists and 3 solo blocks as a team. Eden finished with 12 kills on a .476 hitting percentage and six blocks. Suguturaga had nine blocks and five kills. Suguturaga now leads the country in blocks per set, and the Jaguars as a team our seventh.

"They understand that this is late in the season," said Quarles of her players. "We are getting close to tournament time. And we just have to go out there and compete



Madelyn Eden slams home a kill in the Jaguars' five-set win over Lander. (Photo by Paula Toole)

and play and do what is expected of us."

Witherspoon chipped in 11 kills at a .381 clip for the Jaguars, and Harris led the defense with 22 digs. Marin Freeland bombed home nine kills with seven blocks, and Kruczko added eight kills and three blocks.

Setters Zenner and Buggs had 24 and 19 assists, respectively. Harris and Simms each had two service aces. Simms continued her strong weekend with seven kills.

For her outstanding weekend, Harris was named Peach Belt specialist of the week.

The Jaguars hit at a robust .229 clip and held the Pacers (4-3, 12-6) to a .026 afternoon. AU had 50 kills, while USCA had 34.

Emily Lammers led USC Aiken with nine kills and 14 digs.

The Jaguars' weekend sweep of Lander and USC Aiken tightened up the PBC standings with two weeks left in the regular season. Augusta is a half-game behind the Pacers for third place and one behind Flagler for second place, although the Saints won the regular season series between the two teams.

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