

Georgia College's Hillel opens house for Jewish students

Georgia College's Hillel was established 12 years ago—but it never had an actual house. Until now.

Thanks to recent assistance from the GC Foundation, 200 Jewish students have a place to call their own.

"It's mind blowing. This all coincided at the same time. The stars aligned," said Dr. Karen Berman, artistic director and chair of theatre and dance and advisor of Hillel at Georgia College.

"To find a house within walking distance to campus is remarkable on its own," she said, "and we've found a beautiful house. It's like the heavens opened up and rained down gifts on us."

Hillel International—The Foundation for Jewish Campus Life is an organization named after Hillel the Elder, a Jewish sage in the first century known for developing the "Golden Rule." Many universities and colleges have houses for their Hillel groups—which offer Jewish students a safe meeting space.

About a year ago, GC Foundation purchased a brick house on N. Clarke Street as an investment property. The foundation's Real Property Committee, led by Max Crook, had the house renovated, and many potential uses were considered. Berman and local donors hoped to lease the house, but they didn't have the money for long-term payments.

In stepped Elliot Karp, CEO of Hillels of Georgia. He was impressed by what Berman calls "a small and mighty Hillel" and the group's ability to achieve what larger schools accomplish without funding or resources, like hosting Holocaust survivor talks and art exhibits. Karp agreed to set up a sponsorship campaign to collect donations for the lease and additional programming.

The news was published in the Atlanta Jewish Times, and Georgia College President Dr. Steve Dorman provided the first

donation.

"This shows the dedication of both Georgia College and Hillels of Georgia," Berman said. "This tells parents of prospective students there's a supportive environment here for their children. That makes a big difference."

"Now, we'll have the house and a sign out front," she said. "It's real."

Senior communications major Abbie Frankel of Marietta is president of Hillel. When applying to the university, Frankel was discouraged to learn there was no house for Hillel. But she was happy to find a Hillel group, because she said it's important to associate with other Jewish students while away from home.

Although a rabbi visits campus regularly, the nearest synagogue is 45 minutes away in Macon. This makes the campus Hillel a vital link, connecting Jewish students with their culture and religion. Having a house gives them a place to make meals that accommodate a kosher lifestyle.



Hillel members in front of their new house.

Recently, the group held a "Break-Fast" meal at sunset with bagels on their front lawn for the Yom Kippur holiday. They also held a grab-and-go boxed Shabbat dinner and a Rosh Hashanah event with traditional apples, honey and challah.

"It's truly difficult for me to put into words what this means to me as a student," Frankel said. "This home opens so many doors for our current and future students."

"Getting this space makes me feel it's official in a way. That may sound silly," she said.

"But, previously, we were an organization that couldn't hold events if we couldn't find a place to host them."

Hillel Houses also act as an important recruiting tool for prospective students. Berman fields hundreds of calls from parents, inquiring if the university has a Hillel House. It's not always enough to have a group. Without an actual house, she said, many parents simply hang up and look elsewhere.

Hillels of Georgia provides capital for multiple Hillel Houses throughout the state. So, Berman believes funding will continue for many years to come.

The new house has plenty of room for meetings, study areas and a lounge for relaxation and movie nights. The group will hold game activities and multi-cultural events there, as well. The kitchen, bathroom, wood floors, screened-in porch and roof have been renovated. The front sidewalk was also repaired and landscaping done.

Due to COVID-19, dedication of the house has been postponed until large crowds can gather. All former Hillel board members will be invited. A rabbi will come to bless the house with doorposts containing the Ten Commandments.

Until then, the group will meet at the house in small numbers—social distancing with masks.

It's more than they could've hoped for.

"This solidifies our place on campus. I'm eternally grateful for the opportunities being presented to us as an organization right now. Our physical property might seem like a small thing, but it's truly so huge for us," said Frankel.

Did you know?

Members of the GC community recently had the opportunity to get their hands dirty and plant a tree on campus.

Facilitated by the Department of Grounds and Landscaping and the Office of Sustainability, several new trees were added to various locations around campus, including the lawns outside of Ennis Hall, Porter Hall, Russell Library and the Sandra Dunagan Deal Center for Early Language and Literacy.

From Ginkgos to Live Oaks, the GC campus just got a little "greener."

Thank you to all who participated: Alexa Anderton, Ally Esmond, Jackson Tracy, Jackson Wright, Ashley Smith, Mitchell Prowant, Nick Grant, Alexa Anderton, Sophie Petritz, Claudia Hawkins, Alexia Poole, Andrea Villatoro, Matthew Malstrom, Eleanor Williams, Janet Wyndham-Quin, Ruth Eilers, Maria Gordon and Cindy Bowen.

There will be more opportunities to plant a tree on campus in February once everyone returns from the winter break.



Bobcat Athletics earns Presidents' Award for Academic Excellence

The NCAA released its annual list of schools earning the Presidents' Award for Academic Excellence last Wednesday, with Georgia College Athletics bringing in the prestigious honor. The Bobcats were one of 42 schools to earn the honor in all of Division II, and just one of seven public schools on the list.

The NCAA Division II Presidents' Award is presented to all member schools earning an Academic Success Rate (ASR) of 90 percent or better. GC posted a 90 percent ASR.

"Academic excellence is part of our DNA, and I am so proud of our student-athletes and the coaches who lead them," said Wendell Staton, Director of Athletics.

"We have an incredibly attractive university with an absolutely awesome faculty and staff that supports all of our students," he said. "This sustained excellence is another sign post indicating our student-athlete experience is unique, different and appealing. This experience helps prepare them the next phase as we Graduate Champions for Life."

The 90 percent mark is a 4 percent increase over last year's report for Georgia College.

"The graduation rates for our student-athletes places us in an elite group of schools," said Dr. J.J. Arias, GC Faculty Athletics Representative. "This is unsurprising given the high caliber of student-athletes we recruit and our excellent, supportive coaches."

The Academic Success Rate is the percentage of student-athletes who graduate within six years of initial collegiate enrollment and includes virtually all Division II student-athletes.

Unlike the federal rate, the Division II ASR includes nearly 34,000 non-scholarship student-athletes and accounts for those who transfer to a Division II school after initial enrollment elsewhere, while removing student-athletes who leave school while academically eligible. The national ASR for the four cohorts of student-athletes who entered college from 2010 to 2013 is 74 percent.



Congratulations to the class of December 2020

Stephanie Perez-Telon is a theatre major with a double minor on French and psychology.

"My theatre major has helped hone my artistic skills. I feel like I have grown so much as an artist thanks to our amazing theatre department. Other important skills that I feel like I've honed during my time as a theatre major are my communication and collaboration skills," she said.

Some of her best experiences during her time at GC were the ones that involved her getting out of her comfort zone. "The best advice that I can offer to the underclassmen is: don't be afraid to try new things, even if they're out of your comfort zone because seeking new experiences that make you uncomfortable is the only way you can evolve and grow."



Dontavious Wilson is an English major. His favorite courses were British Literature and English Romanticism classes. "British Literature has a lot of wonderful works. I learned about the many different social issues that society has had and that it still deals with now aside from racism. We also studied humanity for their marginalization errors, hierarchy and their dependence on superficiality—things of that nature."

Dr. Katie Simon, associate professor of English, and Dr. Julian Knox, assistant professor of English were some of his favorite professors.