

GCSU's Emily Wright claims inaugural PBC Total Student-Athlete Award

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Georgia College & State University women's cross country runner Emily Wright has claimed the inaugural 2025-26 Total Student-Athlete Award at the league's annual Awards Dinner.

The Peach Belt Conference announced that Georgia College & State University women's cross country runner Emily Wright has claimed the inaugural 2025-26 Total Student-Athlete Award at the league's annual Awards Dinner Tuesday (May 26) evening.

The Peach Belt Conference and the Vice Chancellors/Vice Presidents of student affairs introduced this award in an effort to encourage student-athletes to pursue a life that is well rounded and focused on leadership, campus engagement, resiliency, personal growth and holistic wellbeing.

Wright exemplifies the definition of a total student-athlete through her exceptional balance of academic excellence, leadership, service, and resilience. Deeply engaged across campus, Wright has held many impactful roles, including Supplemental Instruction Leader for an upper-level political science statistics course, Student Government Association Senator, Student-Athlete Advisory Committee Liaison, and President of the Young Democrats chapter. She has also served as a leadership consultant, first-year mentor in the Honors College, and Ethics and Integrity Officer for the Student Research Circle, proving her commitment to mentorship, integrity, and community building.

Wright's academic achievements are equally impressive. Her research on U.S. state abortion bans was published in a national undergraduate political science journal, highlighting her ability to contribute meaningful scholarship at an elevated level. She has presented multiple research projects at professional conferences and even brought her work to policymakers in Washington, D.C., advocating for undergraduate research funding.

Her engagement extends beyond academia through published opinion pieces and national recognition, illustrating her ability to connect research with real-world impact. As a leader, Wright has created tangible change on campus. Through her work in student government and SAAC, she successfully advocated for increased student wages, improved campus programming, enhanced public safety collaboration, and greater representation of women's athletics. Notably, her efforts led to the inclusion of women's sports merchandise in the campus bookstore, addressing inequities and amplifying support for female student-athletes.

Wright's resilience further distinguishes her. After experiencing a traumatic incident while running, she transformed adversity into action by collaborating with local law enforcement and campus officials to improve safety measures in the community. Her advocacy resulted in increased monitoring of local trails, directly helping fellow students. This experience reflects her determination to create positive change even in the face of personal hardship.

Beyond her accomplishments, Wright prioritizes holistic growth, actively taking part in programs focused on financial literacy, leadership development, and female empowerment. Her ability to balance personal wellbeing with rigorous academic and athletic commitments underscores her maturity and discipline.

"Running cross country has been one of the most meaningful parts of my college experience," said Wright. "While I have had the opportunity to compete at conference and regional levels, what has shaped me most are the challenges I have faced along the way.

"Injuries and setbacks pushed me to become more disciplined, teaching me the importance of consistency, accountability, and taking care of my body," added Wright. "Over time, I developed stronger habits, regular recovery, daily stretching, and working closely with my athletic trainer, which have helped me stay healthier and perform more consistently. I've also learned that success isn't just about being the top runner, but about contributing to the team in any role. Whether leading or supporting, I take pride in showing up every day with a positive attitude and giving my best effort for my team's success."

Wright's many honors, including valedictorian, Presidential Scholarship recipient, national honor society memberships, and repeated academic athletic awards, further confirm her excellence. Altogether, her leadership, scholarship, resilience, and service embody what it means to be a total student-athlete, making her an outstanding recipient of this inaugural award.

The native of Evans, Georgia, graduated from GCSU earlier this month with her bachelor's degree in philosophy and political science with a pre-law concentration.

