

Graziani named GCSU softball coach

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By GCSU Sports Information



The Georgia College & State University Department of Athletics has announced the hiring of Stephanie Graziani as the Bobcats next head softball coach.

“Ms. Graziani’s leadership, positive energy and commitment to Georgia College & State University’s scholar-athlete model make her an outstanding fit for our campus and community,” said University President Cathy Cox. “We are confident she will build on the strong foundation of our softball program and create an environment that helps students thrive both on the field and in the classroom.”

Graziani comes to Milledgeville after spending the past nine years at former Peach Belt Conference-foe University of North Carolina at Pembroke located in Pembroke, North Carolina. She served as an assistant coach for the Braves from 2018-22 before serving as the head coach for the past four seasons.

The New Castle, Pennsylvania, native led UNC Pembroke to 99 wins as a head coach. She guided the Braves to back-to-back winning seasons with 60 victories over the past two seasons. The 33 wins in 2026 for the Braves, who finished in second place in the East Division of Conference Carolinas with a 20-8 mark, was the second most in a season the program’s fastpitch era. Graziani led UNC Pembroke to its highest winning percentage (.592) in conference play in school history.

“It is truly an honor to become a part of Bobcat Nation,” said Graziani. “I would like to thank President Cathy Cox, Director of Athletics Wendell Staton and the entire hiring committee for their support and confidence throughout this process. The program’s commitment to excellence, both academically and athletically, is what makes this opportunity so special. I am excited to get to work, build on the program’s strong tradition, and contribute to the continued success of GCSU softball.”

Over her time at UNC Pembroke, she had nine all-conference players, two players named to the conference all-defensive team, 22 players who were named to the academic all-conference team and nine who ere named to the CSC Academic All-District Team. She also mentored Alona Hanna who was named the Conference Carolinas Freshman of the Year in 2024 and Chloe Locklear who was named to the National Fastpitch Coaches Association and Division 2 Conference Commissioners Association All-Southeast Region teams in 2026.

During her time as an assistant with the Braves, UNCP won 113 games and saw 11 players named to the all-conference team and two earning All-America honors.

“We are thrilled that Stephanie Graziani will be leading our softball program,” said GCSU Director of Athletics Wendell Staton. “She has done an exceptional job methodically building a championship-caliber program at UNC Pembroke. She built that program the right way by recruiting talented student-athletes who excel academically, athletically and within the community.

“Stephanie is a seasoned coach with extensive experience in the Peach Belt Conference,” added Staton. “Having competed, recruited and scheduled throughout the NCAA Division II Southeast region for the past nine years, she understands what it takes to build and sustain a nationally competitive program. She brings the experience, vision, and energy to position our program for national relevance year after year. Her work ethic is second to none, and she possesses an outstanding softball mind with an exciting offensive philosophy built around speed and pressure.

“More importantly, she connects exceptionally well with student-athletes and inspires trust,” said Staton. “Stephanie is highly respected across campus as a collaborative leader who always puts the university first. She has also made a tremendous impact through community engagement, and I look forward to seeing her build those same meaningful connections here in Milledgeville. We are excited about the future of GCSU softball and believe Stephanie is the right person to lead our program as we pursue championships from day one.”

Graziani came to Pembroke after a four-year stint as the assistant coach at Mayville State University in Mayville, North Dakota. During her tenure at MSU, the Comets’ win total increased each season, culminating in a pair of wins in the North Star Athletic Association Conference Tournament in 2017.

Graziani’s playing career began at Iowa Central Community College where she earned National Junior College Athletic Association Second Team All-Region honors her freshman season and NJCAA First Team All-Region and NFCA First Team All-American accolades following her sophomore campaign. She led the Tritons to their first-ever appearance at the NJCAA National Championship in 2009 after winning a regional title.

Following two years at Iowa Central, she completed her final two seasons of collegiate softball at NCAA Division II Florida Southern College. While a member of the Mocs, Graziani established herself as the Sunshine State Conference’s best leadoff hitter and led the team to its first ever super regional appearance in her senior season. She ended her playing career with 132 stolen bases to go along with 181 wins and just 57 losses.

After her successful collegiate career, Graziani played for the USAA softball team in the summer of 2012. The team traveled to Prague, Czech Republic and Vienna, Austria, to compete against the world’s best talent. She also has coaching experience at the Florida Southern College Summer Camp, as well as Neshannock High School in Lawrence County, Pennsylvania.

Graziani earned her associate degree from Iowa Central in 2010 before graduating in 2012 with a bachelor’s degree in human movement and performance from Florida Southern. She continued her educational journey to Concordia University Chicago, where she obtained a masters of applied exercise science degree in 2015. Graziani is currently pursuing a doctorate degree in health and human performance from Concordia-Chicago.

Graziani officially begins at GCSU Aug. 1.