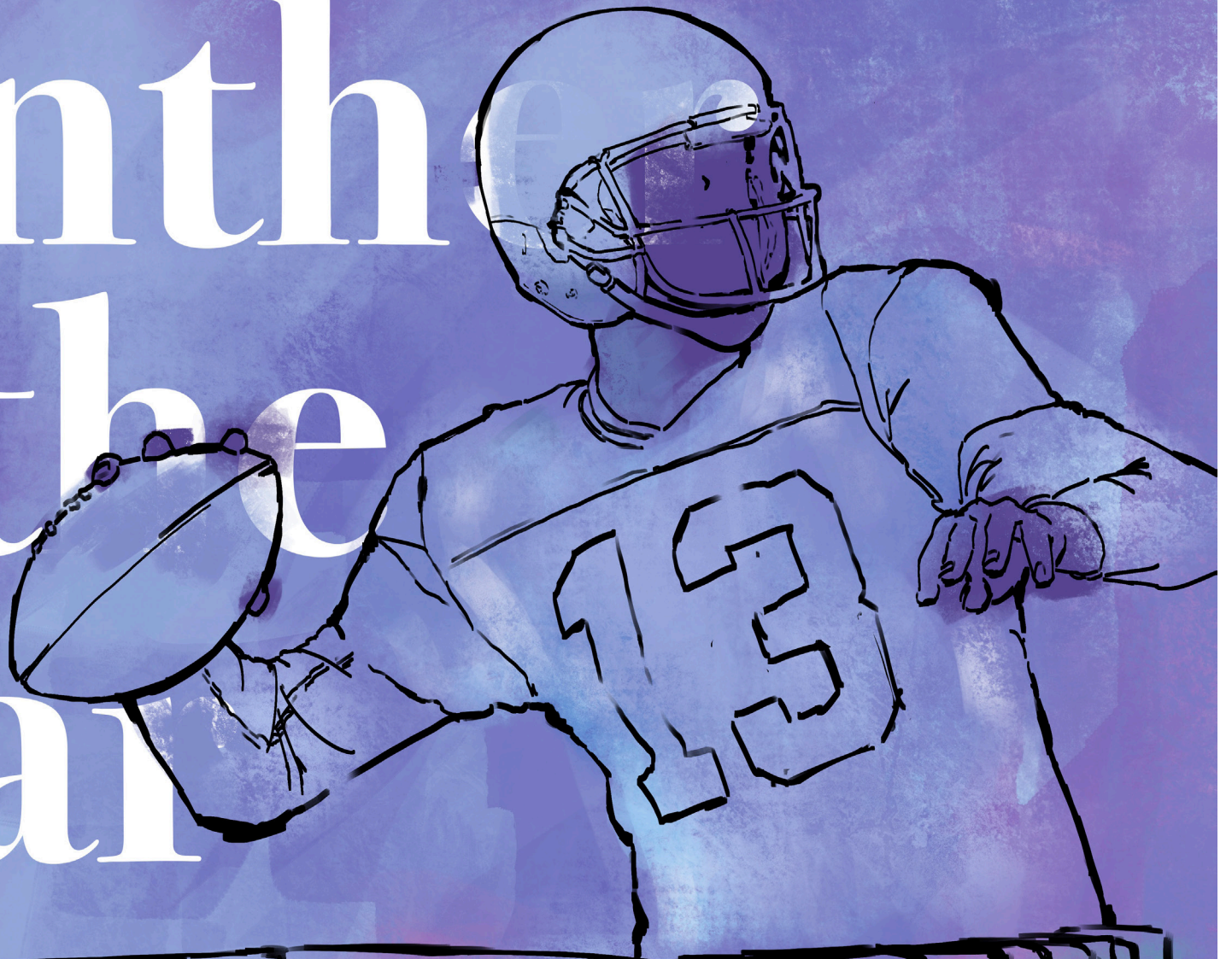


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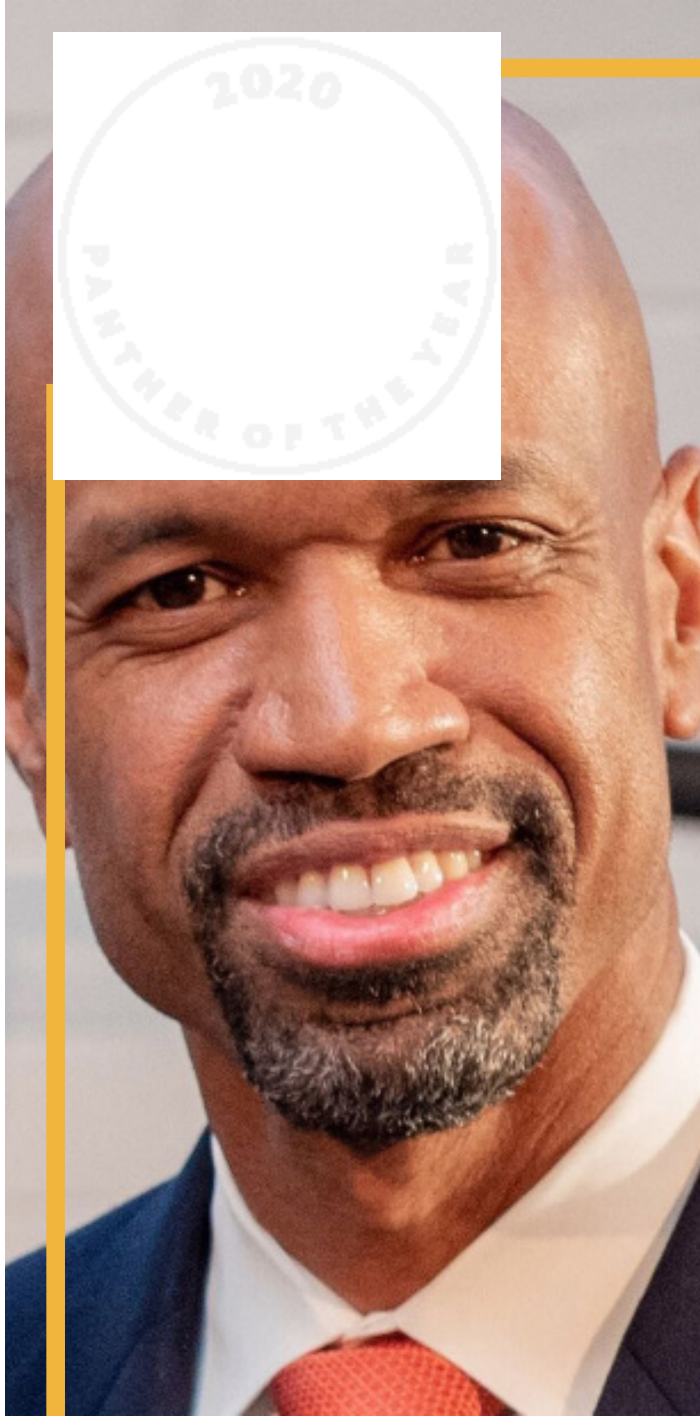
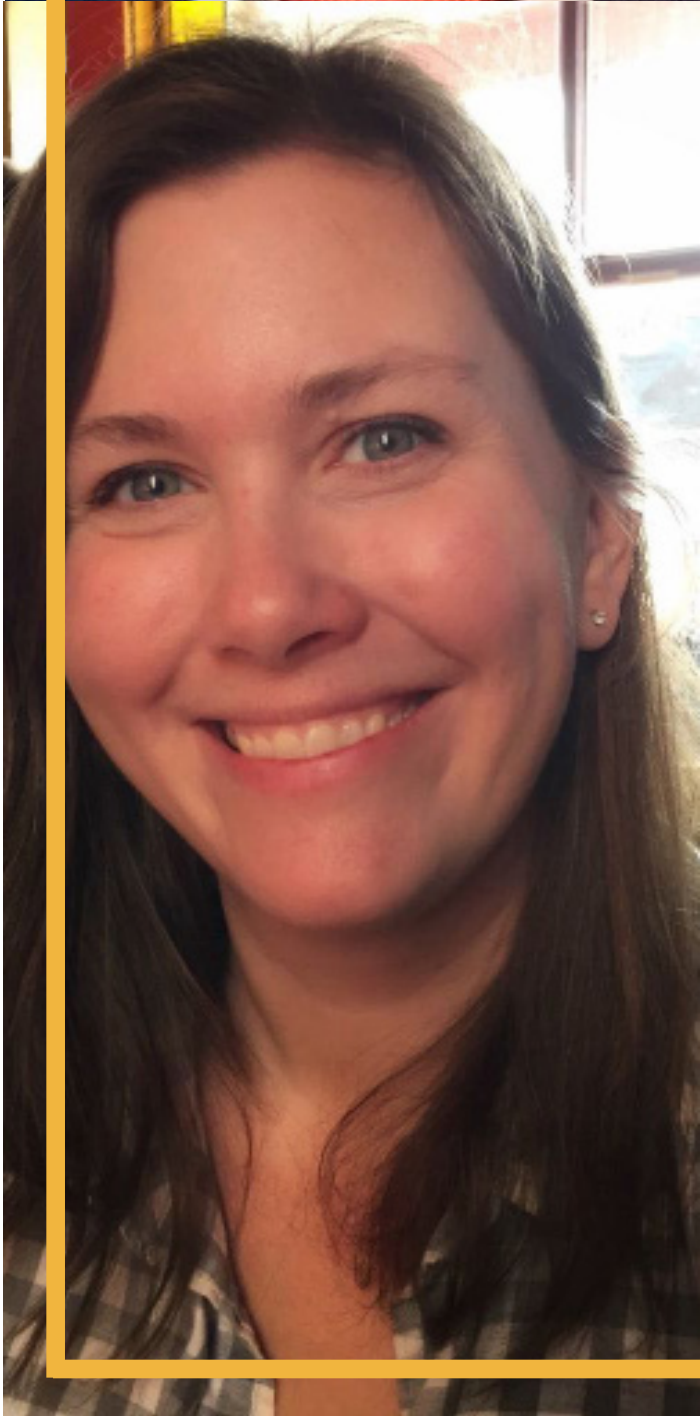
# Panthers of the Year



FROM PREPARING GEORGIA STATE TO FACE THE CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC TO MAKING NATIONAL HISTORY DURING THE PRIMARY ELECTION TO INSPIRING ATHLETES ON AND OFF THE FIELD, THE SIGNAL HONORS THE TOP PANTHERS OF THE YEAR THROUGH THESE THREE ANNUAL AWARDS FOR THEIR COMMITMENT AND BETTERMENT OF THE GEORGIA STATE COMMUNITY.



ILLUSTRATION BY MONTENEZ LOWERY | THE SIGNAL



Faculty of the year

# Georgia State's COVID-19 task force

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**MARY A. BRASSFIELD**  
Associate News Editor

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Throughout February, Georgia State University President Mark Becker created the Public Health Preparedness Task Force for him and his administration to be advised about the COVID-19 epidemic.

The head of the task force interim Dean Leslie Wolf said that Becker wanted continuous updates on the virus, specifically the ways it could affect students.

"The university's response to the COVID-19 pandemic has been guided by the university's commitment to the health and well-being of its students, faculty and staff as its highest priority," Wolf said.

Becker decided to include important members from different departments of Georgia State in the task force.

COVID-19 virus was unexpected and evolved rapidly yet Georgia State took immediate action by creating this taskforce.

The Public Health Preparedness task force is serving an important role with how Georgia State responds to world pandemics that affect the university.

## **LESLIE WOLF, CHAIR, INTERIM DEAN OF THE COLLEGE OF LAW**

Leslie Wolf chairs the committee and serves as the liaison to the president and provost in terms of leading the university's response to the pandemic.

"I have a background in law, public health and ethics and have previously written on issues relating to public health emergencies and served on the CDC's Ethics Subcommittee to the Advisory Committee to the Director, which similarly addressed public health emergencies in some of its work," Wolf said.

## **MICHAEL SANSEVIRO, ASSOCIATE VICE PRESIDENT FOR STUDENT ENGAGEMENT AND DEAN OF STUDENTS**

Michael Sanseviro's role in the task force is to "focus on how we best serve student needs outside the classroom."

His work with the task force primarily began with reviewing emergency procedures and protocols to make sure there were solid plans in place for any variety of scenarios that may occur.

"Most of my focus was working with my colleagues across the division of Student Success to ensure we had continuity of operation plans for all of our key services, such as counseling, health services, housing, emergency response and student assistance for financial hardships and emergency assistance, including support for students experiencing housing and food insecurities," Sanseviro said.

He quickly partnered with these organizations to ensure students didn't lose access to these places.

Sanseviro also helped in making services that students usually would have to come in person to use, like counseling, available remotely.

## **WOLFGANG SCHLÖR, ASSOCIATE PROVOST FOR INTERNATIONAL INITIATIVES**

Wolfgang Schlör's role in the Task Force is to focus on the impact of the crisis on students, faculty and staff abroad, or planning to go abroad.

"We initiated and supported the return of [Georgia State] students to the U.S., initially from South Korea and Japan, and later from all other overseas destinations," Schlör said. "We also coordinated the cancellation of upcoming [Georgia State] study abroad programs during Spring Break, and later for Maymester and summer," he said.

These actions were taken by the task force all in accordance with the University System of Georgia's guidelines.

## **MADISON BURNETT, ASSOCIATE GENERAL COUNSEL**

Madison Burnett's role for the task force was

to monitor any questions and legal issues made towards the task force.

"The task force advised the president and the provost in planning for the many complicated issues of this situation," Burnett said. "Each person on the task force contributed based on their area of expertise."

## **DON HALE, VICE PRESIDENT FOR PUBLIC RELATIONS AND MARKETING COMMUNICATIONS**

Don Hale's role in the task force is to manage the situation from a public relations perspective and advise on communication strategy.

"Public Relations and Marketing Communications manages communications for the university, and communications have never been more important than during this coronavirus pandemic," Hale said.

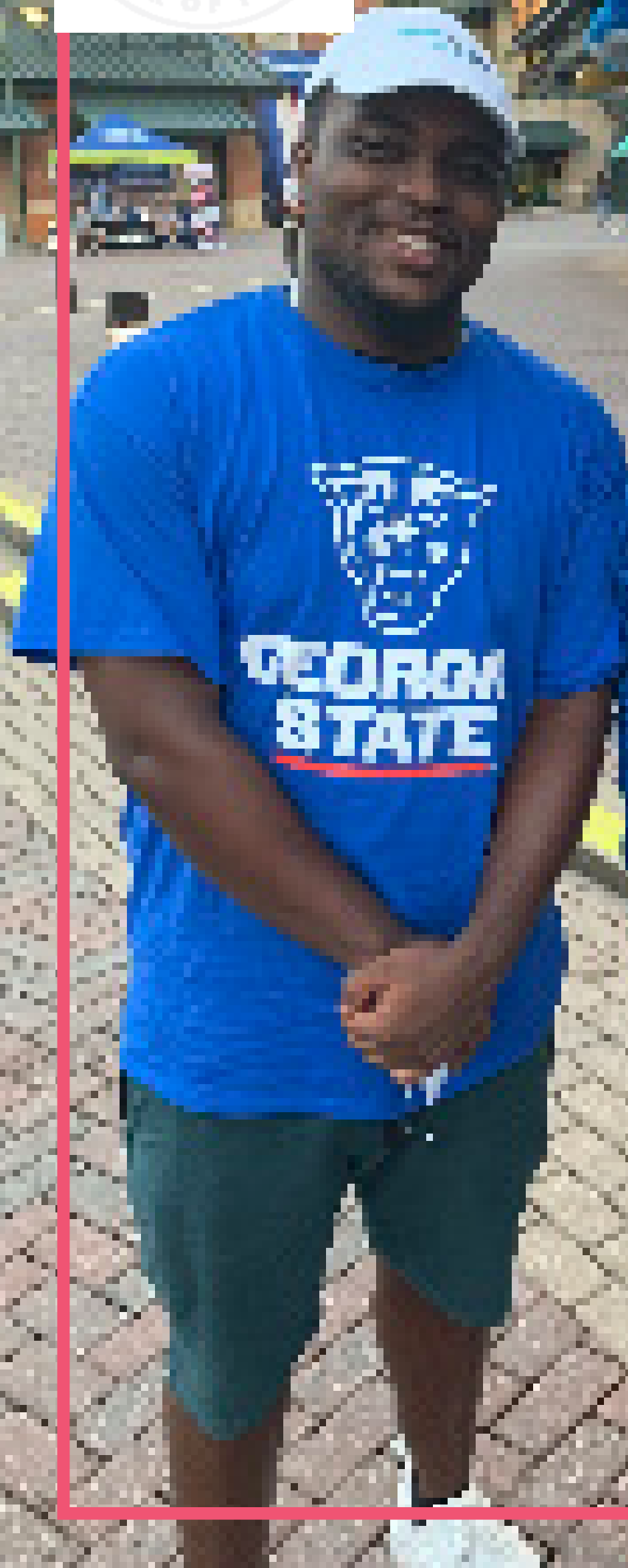
Georgia State knows that this is a rapidly evolving situation and is closely monitoring and staying alert for new information and recommendations from the CDC, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and the U.S. Department of State.

Wolf felt that the entire task force has collectively played a huge part in covering the COVID-19 pandemic on campus.

"The university response to the COVID-19 pandemic has required a coordinated effort from everyone across campus," Wolf said. "While the task force has had a role to play, it is only one part of the collective effort that has been taking place at the university."

The Public Health Preparedness Task Force is referring all students to its website for frequently asked questions about COVID-19 and preventive measures for students, staff and faculty well-being.

*The remaining two members of the task force include Georgia State University Police Department Chief of Police Joe Spillane and Rodney Lyn, interim dean of the School of Public Health. The Signal reached out to the members asking for their roles in the task force, but they did not respond to a request for comment.*



**Student of the Year**

# Evan Malbrough

**BROOKLYN VALERA**  
News Editor

On March 9, Georgia State hosted the first student-run polling location on a college campus in American history because one Georgia State Panther decided to take the right to vote into his own hands — but this wasn't his first feat.

Evan Malbrough, a Georgia State student, started his political journey with the Young Democrats at Georgia State, a chapter of the Young Democrats of Georgia. He joined during the fall of 2016, his first semester at Georgia State. In the spring of 2017, he became voter registration and organizing chair as well as secretary of the Young Democrats.

Upon finishing his first academic year at Georgia State, Malbrough assumed the position as president of the Young Democrats in May.

He took advantage of his time in the Young Democrats to organize political and historical events.

"[We hosted] gubernatorial and senate candidates like Stacey Evans. We hosted her meeting at [Georgia State]," Malbrough said. "We [also] collaborated on an event with Ida B. Wells' great-granddaughter."

The events Malbrough organized weren't just restricted to public figures; he also helped organize events for students.

During the week that Malbrough became president of the Young Democrats, he also co-founded the Georgia State chapter of Vote Everywhere. Malbrough is currently an ambassador of the organization.

"In 2019, the Georgia State Vote Everywhere team was awarded the Patton Award for Outstanding Student Organization," according to an article in *The Signal*. "They have been at Georgia State for three years and frequently host voting drives, an effort to register eligible voters."

Malbrough believes the event that led to the team receiving the Patton Award was the National Voter Registration Day events.

"We partnered with four organizations and we operated four registration drives at the same time on National Voter Registration Day," he said.

Malbrough also credits their reception of the award to the Vote Everywhere partnership with the political science department at Georgia State.

"We go into American government classes, and we discuss voting and Andrew Goodman and his advocacy story," he said.

Vote Everywhere hosted the first annual Great Debate between the Georgia State College Republicans and Young Democrats in 2018 with Malbrough as the main organizer. The third annual debate couldn't occur this year due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Vote Everywhere is a program within the Andrew Goodman Foundation, a non-profit parent organization. Malbrough is also a part of the Andrew Goodman Foundation's op-ed writing program.

While he was writing an op-ed about poll work, he came up with the idea to create the student-run polling location.

The Fulton County Office of Elections offered an idea that would allow Malbrough's polling location while also increasing voter turnout. Their idea was to have a polling location that would migrate to different college campuses in order to get students more involved in voting.

"The students who live in Fulton County, who are on campus, it's a one-stop-shop for them to be able to vote so it can increase turnout of students who likely would not have either known or would not have had the opportunity to cast a ballot," Malbrough said.

He knew they wouldn't be able to operate a polling location for the general election so a part of the negotiation with Fulton County included an outreach location as a tester.

"Two days of early voting in order to do it. It worked out really well because it's hard to rent out an entire room at [Georgia State] for three days straight," Malbrough said. "It'll probably be impossible to do that for a month, and I think the turnout would've plateaued very quickly if it was a full location."

The polling location was a collaborative effort between the Student Government Association, Vote Everywhere

and Fulton County.

On January 23, during the first SGA university-wide meeting of the spring semester, Malbrough announced that Georgia State would host the polling location. This was Malbrough's last major announcement before leaving SGA. He joined in May 2019 as the communications director, but his work toward jumpstarting the polling location didn't end there.

On March 8, Malbrough and the Vote Everywhere team spent that entire Sunday setting up for the following days.

The polling location was open to students March 9 and 10 from 8:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. in the State Ballroom on the first floor of Student Center East.

The location was scheduled to pack up and rotate among Georgia schools, including Agnes Scott, Atlanta Metropolitan Tech and the Atlanta University Center schools — Spelman, Morehouse, Morehouse School of Medicine and Clark Atlanta.

The Georgia Tech location ran simultaneously with Georgia's State polling location. However, Georgia Tech's was run by Fulton County employees rather than students.

Early voting in Georgia ended the second week of March and was postponed until April 27 to May 15 due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

According to Malbrough, the rotation of the polling location should continue after things go back to normal.

"We are actively working to expand it so that, in the general election, we might have Georgia State become an early voting and ... Election Day polling site," he said.

This would allow Georgia State to open the student-run polling location two days in October before the general election as well as on November 3, Election Day.

Malbrough will be assisting the expansion of the student-run polling location next year as an alumni. He is unable to provide specific details until everything has been finalized but he can say that "voting is going to get more entertaining next election."

Malbrough has used his four years at Georgia State to make a change in civic engagement, but his journey won't stop after graduation.



# Athlete of the Year



# Dan Ellington

**JULIAN HARDEN**  
Staff Reporter

If there is ever to be a Mount Rushmore for Georgia State athletics, Dan Ellington's face will be one of the four commemorated on it. When Georgia State offered the Itawamba Community College the position of quarterback in 2018, he took the challenge head-on.

Guided by his faith in God, Ellington exemplifies the meaning of Georgia State far beyond football. He has become the face of not just football, but of Georgia State as a whole.

Ellington embodies the idea of the "Panther family" both on and off the gridiron. He put Georgia State football on the map. Ellington is one of the highest-profile athletes to come out of the school and wears his blue and white with pride.

"I'm a Panther for life," Ellington said. "The school has given me so much, and I'm glad I was able to contribute to the program."

He is also The Signal's 2019-20 Panther of the Year in sports.

Ellington will never forget when head coach Shawn Elliott offered him a scholarship to play football for the Panthers.

"When Coach Elliott offered me, I had to look up Georgia State," Ellington said.

When Ellington arrived, the football team had never seen a player as dynamic and promising as him. Before 2019, Georgia State football was niche, at best, but Ellington led the program to national recognition.

Ellington's legacy will also go further than whatever the stat sheet will communicate. Yes, the Panthers were only 7-6 this season. But in each game, the Panthers played with more passion for the school and the city than the last. Nobody possessed the passion more than Ellington, who never took his eye off the prize.

"I wanted to get my school to its first [Sun Belt]

Conference championship," he said.

Following their stunning 38-30 victory over the Tennessee Volunteers in Knoxville, the Panthers received nationally televised games on ESPN. The Panthers peaked when ESPN televised their game against the Appalachian State Mountaineers.

Many would assume the game is Ellington's favorite career highlight. But they would be wrong.

"For me, it was going on that four-game winning streak after we lost two straight," Ellington said. "It showed how our team was a brotherhood."

The Panthers won crucial conference games at home against the Army Black Knights and Troy Trojans.

For Ellington, that winning streak truly displayed the strides the program took and the adversity it overcame. The four wins propelled the program to heights never seen before. For the first time, the conference championship was not just a silly dream, but a reachable goal.

"During the streak, I felt we were going to win ten games," Ellington said.

He was able to get the students excited about the program – a huge feat considering how weak the crowds were at the games for the young team.

After the win against the Volunteers, Georgia State Stadium was packed for the home opener against Furman. Had the Panthers not defeated Tennessee, there wouldn't be any sellout games at home during the 2019 season.

Throughout the season, Ellington not only impacted the team on the field but off it as well. He often engaged with his fans and students, encouraging others to support the team and represent the school for the newcomers.

"The fans' support was great, and it was amazing to have more students come out and support the team," Ellington said.

Above all, Ellington's loyalty to Georgia State sets him apart from anyone else. After tearing his ACL against Louisiana-Monroe, many Panther fans started believing Ellington's season and the Panthers' were done. Even Ellington knew that ACL tears require surgery and often

end athlete's seasons.

"I knew I tore [my ACL] when I went down," Ellington said. "I had never felt a pop like that, so I knew what it was."

He was determined to play through the injury and still reach his goal of getting the Panthers to the conference championship. After the game, Ellington expressed his desire to continue to play on for the rest of the season, including any postseason games.

"I asked the training staff if I could still play because I know other players have played on torn ACLs," Ellington said. "I still wanted to get the school its first conference champion. That was the goal when I came here."

We often talk about a player's mental state during tough times, but Ellington's determination never wavered. His faith and his teammates rallied him to fight through the pain and continue to add to an already unduplicated Panther football career. Ellington's resilience is an inspiration both for athletes and for anyone who is going through a difficult time in their lives.

"My offensive line, when tasked to keep me clean, said, 'We got you,' and that was huge for showing how we come as a team," Ellington said.

While it may seem reckless to play on a torn ACL, Ellington wanted to go out on his own terms; he would play the remaining five games. While Ellington definitely lost his playmaking ability, he put himself on the Mount Rushmore of Panther athletes.

After the season, Ellington announced his retirement from football. While the season may not have ended the way he wanted, he achieved a lot for Georgia State.

But if you think No. 13 is done with the school after this year, you would be mistaken: Ellington intends to continue helping Georgia State grow in any way he can.

He cannot wait for the home-and-home series with the Georgia Tech Yellow Jackets in 2024 and in 2026.

"I'll definitely be there. I was so mad we couldn't play them; they didn't want this smoke," Ellington said.

From a three-star recruit out of high school to ICC at Atlanta, Ellington has come a long way.

# OPINIONS

## Your spring break wasn't worth it

### The stupidity of spring break during COVID-19

RAQUEL CROSTON  
Staff Columnist

On Friday, March 13, I was in Miami hours away from boarding a seven-night cruise. I was beyond ecstatic that it wasn't canceled and considered myself lucky. If you recall, Georgia State issued a statement on March 12 that in-person classes would be suspended beginning March 16.

I flew home that same night. My cruise ship departed from its port without me. I had no spring break. It was the best decision I made, and one that thousands of others should have as well.

No one wants to lose their spring break, especially in college when it's considered the most promising week of parties for the year. Unfortunately, a pandemic could not shake the enticement of a Four Loko on the beach with a group of strangers. Party pages didn't slow down either.

Instagram user @gstateparties posted on March 20: "Last turn up b4 lockdown! DM for address!" Along with the caption is an advertisement that asks if the viewer can keep a secret. If the rejection of limiting get-togethers had truly been kept a secret, it might just have been alright.

But they didn't.

Quirky pictures in useless face masks and silly captions from Florida flooded users' feeds while COVID-19 only got worse. Spring-breakers not only went on vacation but took special care to photograph and share it all as a big middle finger to the gravity of the situation.

The desperation to squeeze in one last good week in chaos or amazing flights to Miami wasn't worth it. Students returned to school to pack their dorms and, for many, head to the hospitals. A lesson learned? Maybe. A necessary one? No.

Teenagers and young adults can feel immortal in the face of something as serious as a pandemic. They've slaved over hours of minimum wage jobs

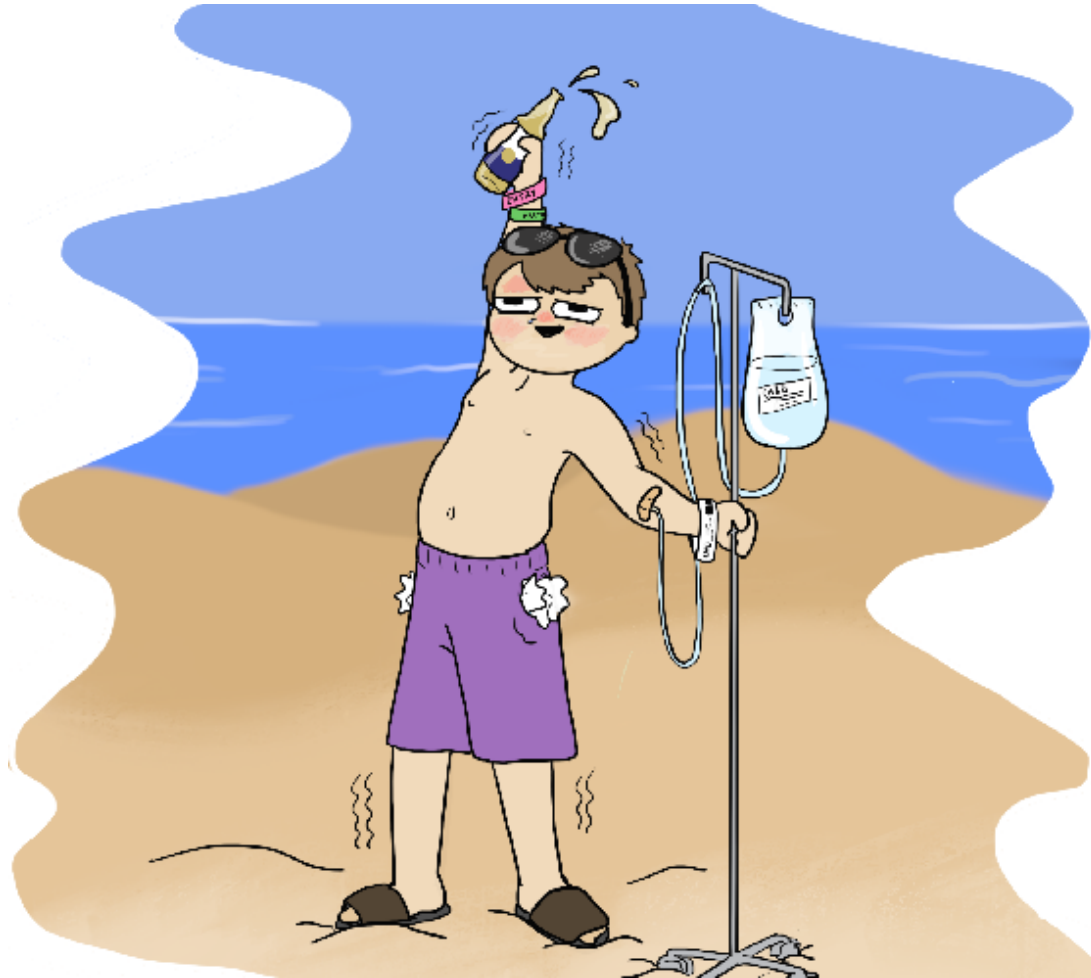


ILLUSTRATION BY AMANDA DIXON-SHROPSHIRE

and balanced it with schooling.

Their planet is dying and their politicians don't care. Basically, the world is dying, so who cares? We're young, having fun and definitely dumb. Catching the virus would be a passing flu for most healthy young adults anyway.

But, you do care, right? Students cared, fought, signed petitions to get Georgia State to close. In an appeal to safety, students demanded closure

but neglected to keep that energy when it came to their break.

The selfishness of falsely caring about your own health to turn around and jeopardize others by traveling after federal recommendations not to is perhaps the deepest irony of this generation. We live for the experience, even if it endangers us, but fall in the face of caution when it pertains to someone else.



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## Why GSU is better than an HBCU

### Georgia State's diversity better represents the real world

JASMINE BARROW  
Staff Columnist

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