ALLISON WEBB’s son was a 19-year-old at Georgia State when he was murdered. To keep his memory alive, she started a scholarship for students who’ve dealt with adversity and tragedy.

LIFE AFTER LEE

CRITICAL CARE NURSE
LAURA MITCHELL (M.S. ’14) CARED FOR THE FIRST AMERICAN EBOLA PATIENTS

ATHLETIC DIRECTOR
CHARLIE COBB IS DRAWING A NEW ROADMAP FOR GEORGIA STATE SPORTS
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>March 7th</strong></td>
<td><strong>GSU CARES: DAY OF VOLUNTEER SERVICE</strong>&lt;br&gt;9 A.M. - 12 P.M.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>March 19th</strong></td>
<td><strong>THIRD THURSDAY</strong>&lt;br&gt;<strong>COLLEGE FOOTBALL HALL OF FAME</strong>&lt;br&gt;6 - 8 P.M.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>April 15th</strong></td>
<td><strong>SENIOR BRUNCH AND LEARN PROGRAM BRAVES GAME</strong>&lt;br&gt;11 A.M.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>April 21st</strong></td>
<td><strong>NEW GRAD AND YOUNG ALUMNI ETIQUETTE DINNER</strong>&lt;br&gt;6 - 8 P.M.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>May 21st</strong></td>
<td><strong>NYC REGIONAL EVENT</strong>&lt;br&gt;5:30 - 8 P.M.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For more event information and to join the Alumni Association, visit PANTHERALUMNI.COM
CONTENTS

11 Ms. Ruby
After 35 years caring for infants at the Suttles Center, Ruby Hopkins is retiring.

14 The Accidental Ironwoman
Gina Maddox (B.A. '99) took on the Kona before ever competing in a triathlon.

15 The Gospel of Greentruck
Josh Yates' (MBA '06) farm-to-table pub is a Savannah destination.

16 THE LEE PROJECT:
HELPING AND HEALING
Social work student Allison Webb is honoring her son through her own studies and by establishing a scholarship for Georgia State students who've faced adversity and tragedy.

22 CORNERSTONE
OF CREATIVITY
Georgia State will revitalize a historic downtown corner by developing a media production center to further Atlanta’s emergence as a global media capital.

28 GAME ON!
New Athletic Director Charlie Cobb takes the reins of Georgia State sports as the university hopes to transform Turner Field into a campus extension with athletic facilities.

“We have to get out of the mindset that we are just Georgia State.”
—Charlie Cobb

COVER AND THIS PAGE PHOTOGRAPHS BY ANDREW THOMAS LEE
FROM THE PRESIDENT

THE NEW GEORGIA STATE

CONSOLIDATION WITH GEORGIA PERIMETER WILL EXPAND THE UNIVERSITY’S FOOTPRINT AND ENHANCE STUDENT SUCCESS

We are at a historic juncture at the start of Georgia State’s second century.

Georgia State’s consolidation with Georgia Perimeter College (GPC), announced Jan. 6 by the University System of Georgia Board of Regents, is a milestone in our development. Throughout our more than 100-year history Georgia State has changed and grown to meet the higher education needs of Georgia and Georgians. Now, we have the unique opportunity to create one university with multiple campuses for the 21st century.

The Board of Regents’ decision will make Georgia State the largest university in Georgia and one of the largest in the nation, with a student population exceeding 54,000. Most important, this consolidation will enable us to greatly improve opportunities for students and expand Georgia State’s reach and impact across the metro Atlanta area and beyond.

Georgia State has emerged as one of the nation’s premier urban research universities and is now widely recognized as a leader in higher education for pioneering innovative approaches to helping students stay on track and earn their degrees.

Our acclaimed work in establishing a national model for student success has been paralleled by huge strides forward in research. Georgia State scholars are having unprecedented success in attracting research funding to address some of the most pressing issues of our day. It is no accident that for the past two years Georgia State has been identified by U.S. News and World Report as one of the top 10 “Up and Coming” national universities.

Georgia State’s commitment to being a premier urban research university in the heart of Atlanta is unchanged with this consolidation. We will continue in the months and years ahead to make significant investments in our research enterprise and continue to offer high-quality bachelor’s, master’s and doctoral programs that are the hallmark of a top-tier national research institution.

The new campuses and programs arising from the consolidation will complement our highly regarded academic programs and research enterprise by building on a productive and strong relationship between GPC and Georgia State. For decades, this relationship has provided thousands of students with an outstanding education and a path to a Georgia State degree.

About 1,300 Georgia Perimeter students annually transfer to Georgia State, accounting for about 20 percent of Georgia State’s undergraduate enrollment at any given time. Those students have performed at the same academic level as students who began their four-year program at Georgia State. The new Georgia State will build on that record to create more and better opportunities for students.

The new Georgia State will be a multi-campus university that combines the best of a modern research university with a network of campuses that provide access and a pathway from an associate’s degree to a bachelor’s degree. On our downtown campus we will remain a top-tier research university with highly selective admissions. Other campuses will have access missions by offering certificate and associate’s degree programs that bridge to further education or jobs that do not require a bachelor’s degree. Similar models have been in place for years at institutions such as the Pennsylvania State University and the University of South Carolina. Elements of our model also bear some similarity to Emory University and its Oxford College campus.

The first goal of the university’s strategic plan, adopted in 2010, is to become a national model for undergraduate education by demonstrating that students from all backgrounds can achieve academic and career success at high rates. We have become that national model, and the national attention we have received from news media and others confirms that. This consolidation puts us in a position to serve more students more effectively and efficiently and help them achieve academic success. I expect to see a major increase in the number of students who will earn their undergraduate degrees at Georgia State.

An implementation committee, composed of faculty, staff and students from Georgia State and Georgia Perimeter, is working on the consolidation. Numerous committees and working groups will support the work of the implementation committee. The consolidation is expected to be complete in January 2016, and we are committed to keeping our community informed as the process moves forward. I hope you will follow planning and implementation by regularly checking the website created for this purpose, consolidation.gsu.edu.

Sincerely,

Mark P. Becker
President
ENERGY RENEWAL
As a new employee at Georgia State with humble roots in rural southern Georgia, I work alongside a great team in International Student and Scholar Services, part of the Office of International Initiatives. I completed the professional certificate program in translation here at Georgia State back in 1997, so working on campus brings me full circle after years of other global experiences. These days, I am regularly impressed by all the dynamism and innovation I see happening at all levels. This magazine is just one example. Georgia State has reminded me why I’m an educator, why I’m an internationalist, why I love Atlanta and why I think Georgia State rocks. Brett Reichert, Assistant Director, International Student and Scholar Services

BETTER LATE...
Sorry to be so late with this but I’m a slow reader! First, your magazine is outstanding! Very avant-garde and very appealing. Secondly, the article by Sonya Collins in the fall issue on Georgia State’s Center for Obesity Reversal was excellent! A complex subject explained in laymen’s terms — much appreciated! It’s one of those keeper articles I’ll hold on to for 10 to 20 years to see if Dr. Bartness and his team will be able to crack the code for obesity and help improve the lives of so many! I thank you for a superior magazine! Barbara “Babs” Johnston (B.A. ’69, M.Ed. ’71, Sp.Ed. ’74, Ph.D. ’87)

CONNECTION WITH TECHNOLOGY
I would like to thank you for your commitment to running articles that focus on the evolving nature of education, and how technology, if employed correctly and without total reliance, can be of substantial benefit to learners around the world. I am specifically recalling the cover article from last quarter’s pressing that focused on early-childhood literacy via tablet-learning. As a teacher, I appreciate the fact that Georgia State is dedicating a portion of its research and development towards non-traditional learning (and its benefits). Please continue to run articles such as these and thank you. Michael Griffith (B.A. ’04, M.A.T. ’15)

I love the article on literacy for children in remote villages. As a program director at a community literacy council, I think it speaks directly to what we are trying to achieve. Thanks for all you do!” Claudia Wood (M.S. ’93)

Spring 2015, Vol 6, Number 1
Publisher Don Hale Executive Editor Andrea Jones Editor William Imman Contributors Ashton Brasher (B.A. ’15), Dave Cohen (B.A. ’94), Ray Glier, Angela Go, Tony Rehagen Creative Director José Reyes for Metaleaf Creative MetaleafCreative.com Associate Creative Director Eric Capossella Designers Tiffany Forrester, Harold Velarde Contributing Illustrators Adam Crufth, Andy Friedman, Inermen, Daniel Krall, Matt Stevens Contributing Photographers Adam Konrich, Andrew Thomas Lee, Christopher T. Martin, Ben Rollins Send address changes to: Georgia State University Gifts and Records P.O. Box 3963 Atlanta Ga. 30302-3963 Fax: 404-413-3441 e-mail: update@GSU.edu Send letters to the editor and story ideas to: William Imman, editor, Georgia State University Magazine P.O. Box 3983 Atlanta Ga. 30302-3983 Georgia State University Magazine is published four times annually by Georgia State University. The magazine is dedicated to communicating and promoting the high level of academic achievement, research, faculty scholarship and teaching, and service at Georgia State University; as well as the outstanding accomplishments of its alumni and the intellectual, cultural, social and athletic endeavors of Georgia State University’s vibrant and diverse student body. © 2014 Georgia State University
ONE GEORGIA STATE, MULTIPLE CAMPUSES
What the consolidation with Georgia Perimeter means

The Board of Regents approved a January proposal from Chancellor Hank Huckaby (B.A. ’65, MBA ’68) to consolidate Georgia State and Georgia Perimeter College, the top associate degree-granting institution in Georgia.

The move will create the largest university in the state and one of the largest in the nation. Georgia State President Mark Becker will serve as the president of the new institution, which will be called Georgia State University. Last year, more than 1,500 Georgia Perimeter graduates transferred to Georgia State to work toward a baccalaureate degree.

The implementation of Georgia State’s successful system of improving student retention and graduation at the two-year, five-campus institution will have a significant impact on improving graduation rates. Overall, the number of students who earn their undergraduate degrees at the new Georgia State University is expected to increase significantly.

“Combining [Georgia State’s] attributes with Georgia Perimeter College’s leadership in providing access to students across the metro area presents a major opportunity to improve student success,” Huckaby said.

With campuses throughout the metro-Atlanta region, the consolidated university will have the flexibility to more readily deliver quality academic programs and provide greater opportunities for students.

Students downtown will continue to be admitted at a highly selective basis and Georgia State will be ranked by the standards of a top-tier national research university. The university will continue to invest in its rapidly growing research enterprise.

PANTHERS 2016: In fall 2016, students enrolling at the access campuses will enter as Georgia State students. Georgia State will then become one of the largest universities in the country. This fall, the combined enrollment for Georgia State and Georgia Perimeter was 53,927 students.

ACCESS IN ALPHARETTA: Georgia State’s Alpharetta Center is a state-of-the-art learning facility built to serve students in North Fulton and surrounding suburban areas. The Alpharetta Center is right next to Georgia Perimeter’s Alpharetta campus, making it a natural transition for students looking to earn their bachelor’s degree.

PAPER WEIGHT: Georgia State has a growing reputation as one of the country’s premier urban research universities, and by joining with Georgia Perimeter, it gains an even larger national profile, said President Mark Becker. “The value of a Georgia State degree is only going to go up,” he said. “Our reach is bigger, and we’re only going to get better at what we do.”

Visit consolidation.gsu.edu for more information.
THE FRONT LINE

Critical care nurse Laura Mitchell (M.S. '14) attended to the first American Ebola patients at Emory University Hospital.

BY ANGELA GO  PHOTOS BY ADAM KOMICH
As the Ebola outbreak and the debate over patient treatment dominated the world's headlines last fall, Laura Mitchell was caring for the first two American Ebola patients to be treated in the United States.

Mitchell is a member of the highly trained specialized healthcare team who cared for Dr. Kent Brantly and Nancy Writebol. Both were successfully treated at Emory University Hospital.

She spent weeks in a special isolation unit with the patients, who arrived from Africa with Ebola in August amid a media firestorm. She is a member of Emory’s Serious Communicable Disease Unit, which consists of 21 nurses and five infectious disease doctors.

Each member of the team volunteered for the assignment.

“In the terms of treating Ebola patients, American doctors and nurses are setting the global footprint of humanity,” she said. “Like it or not, the history of America is based on aiding the vulnerable in other countries. We have the resources, why not challenge ourselves and put them to use? That’s how progress is made.”

Direct patient care is intense and challenging for the nurses in the special isolation unit. They had to work in full protective gear, including a powered respirator. Mitchell and another nurse in direct patient care had only one patient per shift, either Brantly or Writebol. The nurses performed all care duties for the patients, such as drawing blood samples, providing fluids and nutrients, monitoring vital signs and handling patient hygiene.

Mitchell knew the odds were long for her patients, who had experienced the loss of many of their own patients in Africa. But she was inspired by their faith and physical recovery. Prior to arriving at Emory, both patients received the experimental drug ZMapp, which was thought to play a part in their recuperation. Writebol was brought into the unit on a stretcher. Days later, Mitchell helped her walk to the bathroom.

“They are really two amazing people who did not show any fear. Their unconditional gratefulness and testimony has made me a stronger person,” Mitchell said.

Mitchell hopes her account of caring for the Ebola patients will help future nurses face similar challenges when caring for infectious patients. While this situation was rare, she believes activation of the isolation unit may become commonplace.

“Since this was the first publicized activation, everything I have practiced and learned from the years of previous training was put to the test,” Mitchell said. “It is important for nurses on the front lines to have a voice in protecting themselves, their patients and society at large from the spread of infectious diseases.”
NEW DIGS
Georgia State will build new downtown dorm

An April groundbreaking is planned for a new student residence hall at the corner of Piedmont and John Wesley Dobbs avenues. The 11-story building, expected to open in 2017, will house 1,100 students and include a 24-hour dining facility. The new residence hall will become the sixth that university operates. Georgia State now has a residential student population of about 4,100.

ENTREPRENEURIAL INSPIRATION
Herman J. Russell, legendary business leader and Robinson College benefactor

When Herman J. Russell died last Nov. 15 at age 83, it was just a few weeks after the 15th anniversary of his historic gift to expand the entrepreneurship program at Georgia State.

The university put the gift to work by establishing the Herman J. Russell Sr. International Center for Entrepreneurship in the J. Mack Robinson College of Business to encourage, inspire and educate entrepreneurs to achieve the same levels of success achieved by its benefactor.

Russell was one of America’s most successful African-American entrepreneurs, an Atlanta civic leader and an unsung hero of the civil rights movement.

He was the founder of H.J. Russell & Co., a construction and real estate firm he founded in 1953 and grew into one of the largest minority-owned companies in the United States. After Russell retired in 2003, his son, Michael (MBA ’90), became chief executive officer. His son Jerome (B.B.A. ’85) is president of Russell New Urban Development, a division of the company.

The Russell Center has introduced graduate and undergraduate entrepreneurship studies, held an annual business plan competition with a $10,000 prize and established a field study program through which students are placed with entrepreneurs.

“For 15 years, the Russell Center and its programs have made it possible for Georgia State students, alumni and members of the Atlanta entrepreneurial community to connect, learn, teach and promote careers in entrepreneurship,” said Robinson College Dean Richard D. Phillips. “Herman Russell did as much to foster the next generation of entrepreneurs as he did to reshape the Atlanta skyline. What an enduring legacy he leaves.”

MILITARY AID
Veterans on campus will be helped by new legal clinic

Georgia State’s Reserve Officers’ Training Corps (ROT), representatives of the State Bar of Georgia’s Military and Veterans Law Section, and the College of Law will start a new legal clinic this month for more than 800 veterans enrolled at the university.

Professor of Law Roy Sobelson, associate dean for academic affairs, will provide faculty leadership and oversight for the facility, the Georgia State Law Volunteer Clinic for Veterans.

“The new clinic for university veterans will allow law students to translate what they have learned in classes to real application in a setting where they are carefully supervised by experienced lawyers,” Sobelson said. “In addition, this is a vehicle by which we can inculcate in our students a spirit of public service, which is demonstrated by the dozens of volunteer lawyers who will work with this project.”

Law students will assist in conducting initial interviews and counseling with the veterans in the new clinic. Students also will work with experienced volunteer lawyers who will serve as mentors while helping to address and resolve legal issues.

Students will help with a wide range of legal matters from disability and pension claims to the more typical civil or criminal matters anyone can face. Students will also get experience in such areas as drafting a will or handling a divorce or property dispute.

MEETING DEMAND
Lewis School to offer new master’s degree in occupational therapy

Georgia State will become the first public college or university in Atlanta and third in Georgia to offer an occupational therapy degree.

Beginning next fall, the Byrdine F. Lewis School of Nursing and Health Professions will accept applications for the two-year, full-time program. Students are expected to enroll beginning fall 2016.

Occupational therapists aid people of all ages and walks of life to improve their daily lives or regain lost skills. They work with young and old, from children with developmental disabilities to seniors recovering from strokes or other cognitive impairments. Occupational therapy is ranked ninth among the best health care jobs and 14th among all occupations, according to U.S. News and World Report magazine.

“Offering a master’s degree in occupational therapy helps us to meet the demand of the healthcare industry and provide our students with another occupational avenue as we strive to become the health care school of choice in the Southeast,” said Margaret C. Wilmoth, former dean of the Byrdine F. Lewis School of Nursing and Health Professions.

DISCOVERY
Curing Rotavirus
Georgia State researchers can prevent, cure deadly infection using new method

Rotavirus infections cause more than 500,000 deaths annually worldwide in children younger than five years of age, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. A research team at Georgia State has discovered an innovative way to prevent and cure those infections, which can cause severe diarrhea and dehydration and require hospitalization.

The researchers have discovered that by activating the innate...
immune system with a bacterial protein called flagellin, the rotavirus infections can be prevented and cured. Flagellin stopped rotavirus by rapidly inducing an immune response that would normally be activated by select bacteria rather than a virus.

The method is “a completely novel way to combat a viral infection by use of a bacterial-derived activator of the immune system,” said Dr. Andrew Gewirtz of the Institute for Biomedical Sciences at Georgia State. “It’s analogous to equipping an NFL defense with baseball bats. Blatant violation of all the rules yet, at least in this case, very effective.”

The team’s findings were published in the Nov. 14 issue of Science. Gewirtz believes the discovery has further-reaching applications.

“What we’ve done is to broadly activate the innate immune system in a manner that will likely impede a wide range of viruses,” Gewirtz said.

THE REAL PALEO DIET
There was more than one way to feed a caveman

The Paleolithic diet, or caveman diet, is a weight-loss craze in which people emulate the diet of early humans, but a new Georgia State study suggests the popular diet isn’t representative of how Paleolithic people ate.

“There’s very little evidence that any early hominids had very specialized diets or there were specific food categories that seemed particularly important,” said Ken Sayers, a postdoctoral researcher at the Language Research Center of Georgia State.

Food just isn’t the same today as it was in the Stone Age, Sayers noted.

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For Ruby Hopkins, nearly every day since 1979 has been spent amid the coos and cries of brand-new, tiny human beings.

Hopkins, who retired in December, cared for infants as a lead teacher at the Lanette L. Suttles Child Development Center, Georgia State's child care center operated by the College of Education.

Caring for infants is “tiring but it’s so fulfilling,” she said. “It comes down to organization, just knowing what works and what doesn’t. I’ve had some time to figure that out.”

When Hopkins started three and a half decades ago, “Suttles” was merely an idea.

“Back then, we were at the Central Presbyterian Church across from the Capitol,” she said. “We had mostly students’ kids, but the campus was different then. You didn’t have as young of a student population.”

Over the years, Hopkins figures she comforted just as many nervous parents as crying babies.

“I always really enjoyed connecting with the parents,” Hopkins said with a smile. “I always assure them that they can come visit anytime. I would even give them my cell phone number. You grow to love the kids, and with that you also grow to love the parents.”

She knows she’ll miss her hectic, happy days at Suttles, but leaves knowing she had a big part in the lives of countless families.

“As I watch the kids move on to pre-kindergarten, through grade school and through college and marriages and the whole circle of life, I always think about how my team and I were there at the very start,” she said. “We helped mold and shape these people. I feel I’ve really left my mark.”
“Everyone would agree that ancestral diets didn’t include Twinkies, but I’m sure our ancestors would have eaten them if they grew on trees,” Sayers said.

**THE HEALTH OF THE BELTLINE**

*Exploring the quality of life along Atlanta’s major urban redevelopment project*

The School of Public Health and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) will work together to examine the impact of the Atlanta BeltLine on its surrounding communities.

Funded by the CDC and Georgia State, the two-year pilot study will investigate the effect the BeltLine has on the quality of life for people who live in the neighborhoods along its current and future path. The 22-mile, former rail corridor encircles downtown Atlanta and includes multi-use paths, parks and connections to public transit.

Holley Wilkin, associate professor in the Department of Communication and School of Public Health, is the co-principal investigator.

“It’s really exciting to me that the BeltLine is creating space for people to be able to walk to places like coffee shops or grocery stores,” Wilkin said.

Co-investigator Christina Fuller, assistant professor in Environmental Health at the School of Public Health, will evaluate the BeltLine’s effect on air quality.

“The major problem we have here in Atlanta is air pollution from traffic,” Fuller said. “We want to find out where people along the BeltLine are getting their exercise. Is it near a high traffic area where the potential for exposure is higher or is it through a park?”

The collaboration to study the BeltLine will involve more than 20 investigators at Georgia State and the CDC with expertise in public health and other disciplines.

**HIGH HONOR**

*Junior Christy Nitzanah Griffin selected as a Mellon Fellow in Curatorial Training*

Christy Nitzanah Griffin is one of 10 undergraduate students in the country selected for the Andrew W. Mellon Undergraduate Curatorial Fellowship Program. The fellowships provide specialized training in the curatorial field at one of five major American art museums.

Griffin, an art history major in the Ernest G. Welch School of Art and Design, started the fellowship at Atlanta’s High Museum this past fall.

“It’s been pretty awesome so far,” Griffin said. “As an aspiring curator, I hope to enhance my comprehension of how to create transformative exhibitions that educate, inspire and alter our attitudes of how we view the arts, our community and the world.”

Griffin works alongside the High’s curatorial team to create exhibitions, learn about acquisitions and fundraising, and perform scholarly research on art objects within the High’s collection.

“I hope to deepen my understanding of the intricacies of how a museum, as a whole, thrives,” she said.
DEGREES OF SUCCESS
Student-athlete graduation rates at all-time high

Georgia State led the Sun Belt Conference schools in Graduation Success Rate for the second consecutive year when the NCAA announced its annual statistics in October. The most recent cohort — which accounts for four entering freshman classes from 2003-04 to 2006-07 — returned an 86 percent graduation rate for Georgia State, above the national average of 82.

The 86-percent mark was the highest in Panther history as four teams recorded perfect marks of 100 percent: volleyball, women’s tennis, women’s golf and men’s tennis. Ten of the 12 countable Panther squads posted scores higher than their peers’ national average. Men’s basketball was five points above the national average.

STRONG WORK
Panthers earn Sun Belt Conference and national accolades

Several Georgia State student-athletes have been honored for their play on the fields and courts, within the Sun Belt Conference and nationally. Following their seasons, nine Panthers were selected to an All-Sun Belt team for their respective sport, including: Rashid Alarape (men’s soccer, first team); Deidra Bohannon (volleyball, first team); Aaron Jones (men’s soccer, second team); Chris Locandro (men’s soccer, second team); Stephen McGill (men’s soccer, first team); Jenna More (women’s soccer, second team); Whitney Ravan (women’s soccer, second team); Hannah Steffanof (cross country, first team), individual confer-

ATHLETICS

FIRE IN THE SKY
LED BY GEORGIA STATE, ASTRONOMERS CAPTURE FIRST IMAGES OF THE EARLY FIREBALL STAGE OF A NOVA

Astronomers at Georgia State’s Center for High Angular Resolution Astronomy (CHARA) at Mt. Wilson, Calif., near Los Angeles have produced the first images of a nova as it exploded and measured the expansion of the fireball into space.

Georgia State astronomer and research scientist Gail Schaefer led the observations.

“It’s not every day that you get to see a star going nova,” Schafer said. “When a nova happens, it happens really quickly.”

Schafer and her team were tipped off in 2013 when an amateur astronomer discovered a new star, named Nova Delphinus 2013. Within 15 hours of discovery, Schafer and the Mt. Wilson astronomers pointed the CHARA array of six, one-meter telescopes to image the fireball and measure it.

“We obtained size measurements of the nova on a total of 27 nights over the course of two months,” Schafer said.

Novae occur when a small, white dwarf star rips matter from a nearby red giant. Once the white dwarf has absorbed so much matter it can no longer support itself, it explodes as a nova.

The observations produced the first images of a nova during that explosion and revealed how the structure of the ejected material evolves as the gas expands and cools.

The results of the observations were published in the November 2014 issue of Nature.

Measuring the expansion of the nova allowed the researchers to determine that Nova Delphinus 2013 is 14,800 light years from the sun, Schafer said. This means that, while the explosion was witnessed here on Earth last August, it actually took place nearly 15,000 years ago.

59 inches tall, or 4 ft. 11 in., the height of women’s basketball star Alisha Andrews.

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ILLUSTRATION BY MATT STEVENS
THE ACCIDENTAL IRONWOMAN

Gina Maddox (B.A. '99) took on the Kona before ever competing in a triathlon

BY ASHTON BRASHER (B.A. '15)  PHOTO BY ANDREW THOMAS LEE

The Kona Ironman Triathlon attracts tens of thousands of hopeful participants every year. The grueling event is so popular a lottery system is required. Out of this lottery, only 100 are chosen. Gina Maddox was one of those selected for the 2014 race.

There was just one thing — she wasn’t a triathlete yet.

“I am a stay-at-home mom of three young children — certainly not the picture of an athlete,” she said. “But every year I would watch the Ironman World Championship and I would be so amazed and inspired. I knew I had to try it myself one day.”

And try it she did. On April 15, she found out she was selected for the Kona — the sport’s most iconic event — without ever competing in a triathlon.

Most people don’t start at square one before a race like this, but Maddox balanced all the challenges she faced like an expert.

“The biggest challenges were my lack of experience and synching my training schedules with the demands of being a mom. I had roughly 26 weeks to prepare for the 2.4-mile swim, 112-mile bike ride and 26.2-mile run. I was on the ‘fake it until I make it’ plan,” she said.

When Maddox crossed the finish line, there was no faking it.

“I most vividly remember making the final turn for the final quarter mile. People are yelling and screaming, music is blaring, but at hour 15:24, above it all, I could hear the announcer’s voice as he says ‘Gina Maddox, you are an Ironman!’ It was one of the coolest moments of my life.”
ence champion); and Eliza Zachary (volleyball, second team).

On the football field, tight end Joel Ruiz was added to the Mackey Award List (best tight end in the nation) for his stellar play while quarterback Nick Arbuckle ranked among the top 25 in the nation in passing yards (13th, 3,283), passing yards per game (16th, 273.6) and passing touchdowns (23).

THE GOSPEL OF GREENTRUCK

Josh Yates’ (MBA ’06) farm-to-table pub is a Savannah destination

Josh Yates’s green 1965 Chevy Stepside truck is as all-American as the culinary classic that has made him the talk of the food scene in Savannah, Ga.

“We’re just doing hamburgers,” he joked.

But, man, those burgers are good. Glowing reviews in USA Today, the New York Times and the Oxford American testify to it.

Yates is chef and owner of the wildly popular Greentruck Neighborhood Pub where his mantra is, serve great American food, make everything from scratch (even the ketchup) and use the best, locally sourced ingredients.

His choice to tap into the farm-to-table zeitgeist wasn’t just because it’s in fashion. His father was a small businessman who instilled in him the value of supporting local businesses like the “hole-in-the-wall” burger joints where the elder Yates would take his son.

“I think that’s what he valued even more than hamburgers,” Yates said, laughing. “It’s about the character and the people and the relationships that you get with that sort of thing.”

“I think we’ve definitely introduced a lot of people to the farm-to-table concept here in Savannah, especially at our price point.”

In a city known for its world-famous hospitality and cuisine, Greentruck has been named the city’s “Best Overall Restaurant” three years running by Connect Savannah. Savannah Magazine has called Greentruck’s grass-fed beef burgers the best in town the past two years.

“I think we’ve definitely introduced a lot of people to the farm-to-table concept here in Savannah, especially at our price point,” Yates said.

He hatched his business plan when he was a student in the Robinson College and drew inspiration from his old pickup truck, now the restaurant’s symbol.

“One of the hardest things is figuring out what you are going to call yourself,” he said. “I had the truck, and we wanted to bring green into the name because we were doing a lot of things with local farmers, so we painted the truck green.”

Yates said he’s knocking around the idea of expanding his business, but doesn’t want to spread himself too thin.

“We’ve been talking about opening another similar concept here in Savannah,” he said. “I think it might just be a matter of how much more work I want to take on.”

—Dave Cohen (B.A. ’94)

Visit magazine.gsu.edu for news from your classmates and fellow Georgia State alumni.
After her son was murdered, social work student Allison Webb partnered with Georgia State to start a scholarship for students who have dealt with adversity and tragedy. By Tony Rehagen
Photography by Andrew Thomas Lee
Allison Webb parked on the side of Charles Allen Drive as she had done dozens of times before.

BUT TODAY it took her five minutes to talk herself out of the car. The familiarity of this Midtown neighborhood was bittersweet. Lee had lived in a ground-floor apartment just down the road. Together they had shopped at Trader Joe’s and eaten at Woody’s CheeseSteaks, snapshot memories of her son that could one moment comfort her and the next send her spiraling into despair.

Crossing the street to the campus of Henry W. Grady High School was especially surreal. It was 11 a.m. on a Thursday in mid-December, and the classrooms were bright and bustling. As Webb passed each window, she could imagine Lee sitting at his desk, cutting up with friends, flirting with the girls. Flashing that perfect smile. She approached the old brick entrance, climbed the stairs, and stopped before the heavy gray doors. She pressed the intercom button and told the voice in the box her name and that she was there to see the counselors. As she waited to be buzzed in, Webb remembered the countless times she had stood in that very spot holding the lunch or the book that Lee had forgotten. More than once, she had paced there, empty-handed, worried, wondering what he had done to get sent to the office this time.

This time, Webb was here to help other kids in trouble. She had an appointment to speak with the faculty about the Lee Project, a non-profit initiative that partnered with the Georgia State College of Arts and Sciences to provide scholarships to high school students who’ve dealt with tragedy or extraordinary adversity.

The program began as a way for Webb to memorialize her son’s life. It became a reason for her to go on with her own.

IT’S HARD FOR WEBB to remember her life before Lee.

She was 22, a student at Guilford Technical Community College in North Carolina, when she got pregnant. She and Lee’s father split when Lee was 11 weeks old. Webb got a job at a dry cleaner. She left college, but promised herself she would go back once Lee graduated high school.

They moved to Atlanta in 1996, when Lee was four years old, into a Virginia-Highland house across the street from Webb’s mother and stepfather. The grandparents had a hand in raising Lee, and as a mixed-race child, he helped the whole family evolve in terms of their racial attitudes. Lee was a laid-back kid with a bright smile and an open, trusting nature. Webb remembers how hurt and confused six-year-old Lee was the first time a kid called him the N-word.

“When he walked into a room, he was different,” says Webb. “But somehow he made that difference work for him.”

Once he made a friend, it was usually a friend for life.

He was a typical boy. Mischievous. Into video games and soccer and techno music. When he hit puberty, he started lifting weights, sculpting six-pack abs and biceps he would jokingly flex for show. He was a rock for his single mother, always lightening the mood, making her laugh when the stress started to pull at her seams. C’mon, mom, he’d always say, I got you.

Lee had better than a 3.5 grade-point average and upon graduation received a HOPE scholarship he took to Georgia State in fall 2010. But he struggled in college. Webb says Lee suddenly seemed more distant and closed off, the smile not quite as easy. He had enrolled in business school, but while all his friends were driving down specific career paths, Lee still didn’t know what he wanted to do with his life. Drifting, he decided to take a semester off to regroup. He began hanging out with old friends in whom, Webb says, Lee misplaced his trust. The group got
into smoking marijuana and distributing it among themselves — which drew the attention of a less desirable crowd.

Meanwhile, Webb kept her promise. After Lee graduated from Grady, she enrolled part-time at the Art Institute of Atlanta, squeezing in a few general education courses around her day job at a mortgage company. When Lee hit choppy waters at Georgia State, Webb applied for a transfer to the Robinson School of Business so she could be closer to him.

But on Nov. 12, 2012, Webb was miles away from her son, idling in her car at a red light on her way home from work when her phone rang.

You need to get to the hospital. Lee's been shot.

When Webb realized the call from Lee's friend wasn't a joke, she panicked. By the time she navigated rush-hour traffic — taking one wrong exit — to get to the hospital, Lee was already in surgery. Lee had been visiting an old friend at the Ford Factory Lofts on Ponce De Leon Avenue around 5 p.m. that day. He walked down the entryway, punched in his friend's apartment number and was waiting to be buzzed in when a strange man came up from behind and tried to take a package Lee was carrying. (Though Lee's family says neither they nor police know the contents of the package, they believe Lee was targeted because of it.) Lee resisted. The stranger hit Lee on the head with the butt of a gun, but Lee fought back. As he struggled to escape his attacker the assailant fired a shot into Lee's shoulder that entered his torso and damaged several critical arteries.

After five hours of surgery, the doctor emerged.

I'm sorry, he said, Lee didn't make it.

Webb lost all control. She fell to the floor, screaming, He's gone! He's gone!

She composed herself and went to see her son. She stared at the freckle on the lobe of his left ear, touched his flat feet. Lying on his back in the hospital bed, the young man looked like he was merely asleep.

For the first few days after the funeral, Webb just floated, trying to focus on small tasks, trying to pass the hours. A few weeks later, she received a letter approving her college transfer, welcoming her to the business college at Georgia State.

“Webb tried to go back to work, back to her routine, but things weren’t clicking back into place. Business school seemed pointless. Suddenly she was the one who was directionless. She changed her major to social work, cut back hours at the mortgage company and added hours of coursework.

“I didn’t want to waste my time doing something frivolous,” she says. “I wanted to do something that matters.”

Within weeks of Lee’s death, that desire to have an impact combined with determination to keep her son’s memory alive. The result was The Lee Project.

When Webb first consulted an attorney about setting up the non-profit, the lawyer warned her many bereaved parents start the process of starting a foundation in memory of their lost child. Few followed through. Webb refused to give in to her grief. With the support of her sister, Ashley Webb, and friend Jina Wilson, she started soliciting donations from local businesses and private citizens. They set out mason jars labeled “Save the Change to Make a Change” on checkout counters all over town. The mission was to promote equality and diversity. That initiative found focus when Webb and her family approached Grady High School and Georgia State to establish the endowment for the scholarship.

Last spring, 33 students applied for the first Lee Project Endowed Scholarship. Favor was given to Lee’s fellow Grady alumnus. Applications were judged primarily by an essay explaining how that student had faced and overcome adversity or tragedy enroute to college. And in August, the project gave out its first two $1,000 awards. The scholarships not only sustain Lee’s legacy, they help give the students a second chance Lee never got — a chance to get their lives back on course. The Lee Project has since raised enough money to double the scholarship — next year there will be two $2,000 awards.

One of the recipients, Rex Peterson, was a grade below Lee at Grady. While Peterson says he and Lee travelled in differ-
ent social circles and didn’t know each other well, Peterson can certainly relate to Lee. He, too, was different. People had always derided him as effeminate. At age 14, Peterson came out to his close friends, only to have them stop talking to him altogether. Kids insulted him, called him “faggot.” Alone, searching for his identity and a direction for his life, he often found himself in front of his computer. He started playing with code and found that through programming he could control and create and build. He discovered his passion.

Peterson is now a sophomore at Georgia State, putting his scholarship toward a degree in computer science. He says the award means more to him than just financial aid. “To me,” he says, “the Lee Project represents hope.”

LEE STILL LIVES with his mother.

Upon entering Webb’s Perimeter apartment, one is embraced by the young man’s presence. There are the obvious things: The wall of blown-up senior pictures and prom photos just off the kitchen. The dresser set up behind the kitchen table covered with smaller framed snapshots, flowers, mementos and candles she always keeps lit when she’s home. In the center of the table is a small wooden box, built by her father, that contains Lee’s ashes. Most nights, she’ll do her homework at that table, near her son. Then there are the more subtle tokens: On the couch in front of the TV, a quilt she made from Lee’s old t-shirts, in the back room Lee’s old toy box repurposed as a chest for the scrapbooks his grandmother made for every year of his life, Lee’s dog, Stewie, who hops onto the couch when Webb is crying and licks away the tears.

For a parent who has lost a child, memory is a tricky thing. It can be like a drug. It can be a quick salve in moments of weakness. Or it can trigger the weakness. But putting away or throwing out the artifacts, ignoring those memories, moving on completely, would be almost unthinkable. A mother never stops being a mother.

That’s not to say Webb isn’t pushing forward with her own life. Two years after the murder, she says she’s in a much better place. There have been major breakthroughs along the way. First, there was the issue of Lee’s killer, who was apprehended almost a month after the shooting. Webb found it in herself to forgive the young man, who, it turns out, had gone to Grady the same as Lee. She says she learned he had had a rough upbringing before he ran afoul of the law. Besides, the grief of losing Lee was more than enough without the added burden of hatred for a complete stranger. Another step forward was the redirection of Webb’s career, getting serious about her education. Next August, she will be going to school at Georgia State full time, working toward her degree in social work.

The major breakthrough for Webb has been the Lee Project. There are still dark times. Webb says she still takes it “one day at a time, one panic attack at time.” When she falls apart at home, she runs for a freezer bag containing one of Lee’s shirts that still faintly smells of his cologne. When she starts to falter in public, she closes her eyes and hears Lee say, “C’mon, mom. I got you.”

“I could do nothing and no one would blame me,” she says. “The Lee Project gives me something to live for, something to get me to the next day.”

Tony Rehagen is a senior editor at Atlanta magazine. His work has also appeared in Men’s Health and has been anthologized in the book “Next Wave: America’s New Generation of Great Literary Journalists.”
COMING SOON...
the new Creative Media Industries Institute at Georgia State will further Atlanta’s emergence as a global media capital by preparing the next generation of media makers.

By William Inman

Illustrations by Daniel Krall
ALL GOES according to plan, Kynton Stephens’ dream job is waiting for him when he graduates Georgia State next spring. He’ll head to a start-up company that designs video games, and he’s pretty sure he’ll get along with the boss. Stephens is CEO of the start-up.

Stephens, a junior film major, is founder of Spray N’ Pray Studios — named after the popular video gaming term to blindly shoot at a target in hopes of hitting it. Spray N’ Pray just released its first game, “RAVEN: Immolation.”

Set 700 years into the future when aliens have overrun planet Earth, the game centers on Col. Artemis Ross, who must lead a coalition of humans and peaceful extraterrestrials to fight off an invasion of vile “Harvesters” on a far-flung colony on the planet of Avalon.

“All of these people are looking up to you to save them and get them off of this planet alive,” Stephens says, assuming the role of his hero. “It pushes strategic first-person gameplay.”

In March, Stephens and his partners, fellow film major Drake Greer, recent finance grad Austin Mandus (B.B.A. ’14) and computer information systems major Mohammad Awad, will pitch their game and business plan to a panel of successful entrepreneurs and investors from Google, Samsung, Dell and other companies at the South By Southwest Interactive Conference in Austin, Texas. Spray N’ Pray was selected as a finalist in a national collegiate tournament designed to give student start-ups the attention of potential investors and supporters.

For David Cheshier, former chair of the Department of Communications and director of Georgia State’s new Creative Media Industries Institute, Stephens’ project is just the kind he hopes to continue to foster. The new institute, set to open next fall, aims to build upon Georgia State’s core strengths in media production, research, design, the arts and music management to ready students for the challenging and crowded media marketplace.

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and art sector in Atlanta won’t be coming from the corporate suite of huge companies,” he says. “It’ll result from a group of grads from various backgrounds and academic disciplines who get together and create startups.”

The video game industry in Georgia is a $2 billion business and one of the fastest growing media enterprises in the country, according to the Georgia Game Developers Association. Combined with the haul from the thriving film, TV, music and arts industries, entertainment production in Georgia is a $10 billion industry.

The state’s Department of Economic Development estimates the 158 feature films and television productions filmed in Georgia last year generated an economic impact of $5.1 billion.

A caveat to this success, says Cheshier, is that much of the state’s generated economic impact remains in “below-the-line” operations, such as gear-rental companies, food service work and electricians. To keep all that business here, he says, Georgia needs to have an industry-ready workforce to perform those “above-the-line” jobs, such as writers, cinematographers, producers and directors.

That is incumbent upon higher education, he says.

“The question is, are there ways we can help to make all this activity in Georgia permanent?” he says. “And how can we make sure all the advanced work won’t end up going back to Los Angeles or, in the game development sector, San Francisco?”

According to Georgia Governor Nathan Deal’s High Demand Career Initiative report, it’s expected that Georgia’s film industry will double in size over the next two years, creating additional jobs and a greater economic impact. It also reported a small pool of trained and experienced film production employees in Georgia.

Cheshier estimates as many as 4,000 students at Georgia State are working toward creative careers in the media industry.

“A challenge for us is to move quickly to get these programs in place and train students more fully so they can decide to stay here and make their careers here,” Cheshier says.

Degree programs will add interdisciplinary opportunities to supplement degree sequences, such as creating dual-degree programs, interdisciplinary Master of Fine Arts and doctoral programs.

Courses will reach across departmental lines, Cheshier says, and the core faculty will create courses that integrate instruction across disciplinary lines and reflect the needs and demands of creative media industries.

Research labs will connect programs to developments in virtual and applied reality technologies, media data analytics, games and interactive media, and audience research.

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“We have an important role to play in this,” he says. “We have booming enrollment in our film program, for example, and frankly, we’re underserving the true interest of our students. Our film students come to the program because they want to learn how to produce media, but we can only handle about 150 at a time in a very sequenced, production set of course work.”

Two years ago, Cheshier began talks with the university administration and...
industry partners to create an interdisciplinary institute focused on creative industries to train students for careers that transcend specific degree programs, and to create partnerships with the region's burgeoning arts and entertainment production centers.

“The reality is universities around the world are trying to figure out how to own this space,” Cheshier says. “We have a limited time horizon to take advantage of the booming energy and attention focused on these industries here in Georgia because if we don’t solidify it and make it more permanent, then other states will.”

“Entertainment is the biggest American export,” says Chris Escobar (B.A. ’08, M.A. ’13), executive director of the Atlanta Film Festival. “The creation of this institute is a real opportunity to do great things and see that hometown talent can cultivate this industry here in Atlanta.”

1892, two famous Chicago architects named Daniel Burnham and John Wellborn Root built Atlanta’s first skyscraper, the Equitable Building, at the corner of Edgewood and Park Place. (The Equitable Building at 100 Peachtree St. was built in 1968.) Eighty years later, the Beaux Arts building was demolished to make way for the Trust Company of Georgia Building and its plaza.

Georgia State purchased the 28-story bank tower in 2011, renamed it 25 Park Place and made it the linchpin in the university’s ambitious Woodruff Park District plan — an academic corridor Georgia State has created on Park Place across from Woodruff Park. The university now owns the 55 Park Place building, which will soon be home to the Robinson College of Business and the Andrew Young School of Policy Studies. Georgia State’s College of Law will relocate to a newly constructed building at Park Place and John Wesley Dobbs Avenue in the spring.

At the spot where Atlanta’s first skyscraper once stood now sits a square, three-story bank lobby adjacent to the 25 Park Place tower. As Cheshier’s plan to develop the Creative Media Industries Institute came together, he’d peer down from his ninth floor office and imagine the institute as a hub in the heart of campus at one of the city’s most historic corners.

“It’s ready made to be a production studio — tall ceilings on the first floor, great suites of offices on the second floor.” Cheshier says of the building. “It can be a crown jewel.”

Georgia State President Mark Becker remembers Cheshier’s pitch.

“It was one of those moments. We realized the streetcar would wrap around the corner, and we could visualize student-produced work being projected onto the large windows on the first floor. It would be a lens into all the creativity that’s happening there,” Becker says. “We have a unique opportunity and the building fits into that. It’s an iconic location. The city is going to see it.”

That’s when the president went into fundraising mode. The university is poised to lead, he said. Not only would the institute become a wellspring of talent for an industry vital to the city and state economy, the facility and streetscape improvements to the surrounding area would continue Georgia State’s efforts to reshape downtown.

In November, the Robert W. Woodruff Foundation made a $22.8 million gift to Georgia State — the largest in university history — for the project. In addition, the Georgia Research Alliance also made a financial commitment to help equip the new institute.

“This is happening at a time when real estate on the southern end and the western side of Woodruff Park are undergoing new renovations and new uses,” says A.J. Robinson, the president of Central Atlanta Progress. “Throw in the opening of the Atlanta Streetcar and it’s easy to say that the development around the park is at an all-time high.”

Becker says it was Georgia State’s DNA that made it all so attractive — its entrepreneurial spirit and wide academic offerings, its continued adaptive reuse of downtown buildings and the university’s inherent diversity, something sorely lacking in the mass communication and new media workforce.

“It fits perfectly with the Georgia State character,” Becker says. “We have the students and the opportunity to be in the forefront as media revolutionize.”

For the Spray N’ Pray video game development team, the news the university is creating an institution where a core mission is to bring together students, faculty and industry to create and collaborate on projects such as the one they just completed is met with a touch of jealousy.

“We could’ve made such a better game,” says Mandus.

“We have a limited time horizon to take advantage of the booming energy and attention focused on these industries here in Georgia.”
It’s a brave new world for Georgia State sports and new Athletic Director Charlie Cobb is drawing the roadmap.
It's a brave new world for Georgia State sports and new Athletic Director CHARLIE COBB is drawing the roadmap.
CHARLIE COBB is a man of vision. Well, of course he is a man of vision. Anybody who is 6-foot-6 is supposed to have vision better than most. He can stand in a back corner of a gymnasium and look over the crowd to see the game on the floor. He can look left from that corner of the gym, scan the seats and pick out the university president, who is sitting down. “There’s Mark,” Charlie says. When a ball was kicked over a tall fence as a kid, Charlie was probably the kid who could peer over and say, “There it is, but watch out for the dog.”

That’s a quick glimpse of Cobb’s helpful personality, but we’re talking vision as in visionary. We’re talking about seeing opportunity, not distress. We’re talking about seeing possibilities five years down the road. That’s the kind of vision we’re talking about.

Here’s a slice of Cobb’s vision. Reynolds Coliseum was an iconic Atlantic Coast Conference basketball arena. North Carolina State played there. All-American David Thompson bounded off that wood floor. Jim Valvano coached a national championship team there. When the Wolfpack moved to a new arena, Charlie Cobb, 31 years old, took that Reynolds floor, had it cut up, put pictures of Valvano, Thompson and other luminaries around the slab of wood, put it under a glass case and sold every piece of that floor as souvenirs. Les Robinson, who was North Carolina State’s basketball coach and athletic director, said Cobb made a lot of money for the school off that creaky wood.

So we’ll see if Charlie Cobb’s vision stands out above the rest of us, like it did with that stroke of classic marketing at N.C. State. He better stand out, not just stand tall. Georgia State is depending on the vision of its new athletic director being 20/20.

Cobb, 46, is in charge of what he calls “the sleeping giant” that is Panther athletics. The Atlanta Braves are going to vacate the southern edge of downtown and Georgia State could own that corner of the downtown sports scene. If the deal happens a layer above his pay grade with the mayor and university president, Cobb sees trolleys rattling out of the mix of tall buildings in the urban campus, down Capitol Avenue, carrying kids to a cozy football stadium made out of a gargantuan baseball stadium.
Cobb sees a refurbished basketball arena for a formidable basketball program being built by coach Ron Hunter. He sees students galore and the energy they could bring. Cobb has heard there is no real aura around Georgia State athletics. He means to change that. Cobb says Georgia State sports can be lionized locally, but not at the expense of the school’s core mission. “We have to get out of this mindset that we are just Georgia State,” Cobb says. “I went to Airport High School in West Columbia, South Carolina, and many who went to Airport High School had this self-limiting belief that, hey, ‘I only went to Airport High School. What can I do from here?’ “Well, I went to North Carolina State, and played football and did good things. I went to Appalachian State and never thought ‘We’re just Appalachian.’ People might say about Georgia State, ‘We can’t accomplish great things because our history tells us so.’ I have never been one to look at it that way.”

Charlie goes on to tell you his core belief. “I know how not how to do it, tell me how we can do it versus how I can do it.” Then Charlie turns around a frame of a picture sitting on his desk. It’s him and his family on the field of the Big House, the stadium at the University of Michigan. They have 1,000-watt smiles. It is Sept. 1, 2007. Cobb was the athletic director at Appalachian State and the Mountaineers, a Division I-AA team with fewer scholarships and fewer resources than mighty Michigan, had just beaten the No. 5 Wolverines, 34-32.

That Charlie Cobb core belief, Panther fans, about how to do something is not empty rhetoric. Charlie Cobb has a picture to prove it.

**HERE IS THE THING** about Charlie Cobb and his vision for Georgia State. He started out as the new athletic director by hitting the pavement of the urban campus and sampling the culture around him. Several months after he arrived from Appalachian State, he tagged along with four Georgia State student-athletes to their classes, one day each. He wanted to see what they saw, but he also wanted to take the measure of the student population at Georgia State. Those are his customers, after all, and Cobb is all about relationship-building.

“Student engagement is a huge piece for the growth of the athletic program,” Cobb says. “We have to find creative ways for the student-athlete and the athletic program to connect with their fellow students. It’s a campus that has to understand that fall Saturdays are important to the overall life of campus, and that means fraternities, sororities, clubs, organizations.”

Gaby Moss, a junior on the women’s basketball team, had Cobb in her back pocket for a day. Among other classes, he tailed her to a Negotiations class. Charlie was not the kid in the back of the room watching the clock. He was up front that day and made himself at home. Cobb even had some wisdom to share because of his 28 years in college athletics and administration. “He’s down to earth,” Moss says. “I see him a lot. He comes into practices. He makes jokes and interacts with people. He has an open-door policy. He told us, ‘I don’t want to intimidate people.’ I got the sense he was an administrator who is actually here for us.”

Here is another sampling of Cobb’s empathy for students: He ensured that every food item at the concession stand for Georgia State basketball remains just a buck. One-buck Chuck stands in line like everybody else for popcorn, a snack for later and a drink.

“When you are talking to Charlie he is not just talking X’s and O’s and what we can do for this coach and that coach, he’s talking about what he can do for the community, how we can get the student-athletes involved with the community, what he can do for the students,” says Mark Becker, the university president. “From the day Charlie came on he immediately connected with everyone.”

In this day and age of multimillion-dollar athletic departments and mega-deals, many Division I athletic directors have become invisible bean counters, businessmen, the suits who shake the hands of donors and brush by students on the street. A new guy to Georgia State, eager for more money, might have taken that popcorn in the concession stand and made it $2 instead of $1.

“He was a student-athlete himself,” says Gary Stokan, the chief executive officer of the Chick-fil-A Peach Bowl and Kickoff Classic games, who worked with Cobb at the Atlanta Sports Council. “He is not going to big-time anybody.

“Just think about the position he played in college, offensive line. They are the most humble guys on a football team, a position of teamwork and chemistry. Offensive linemen build consensus to get things done. That’s Charlie.”
GEORGIA STATE’S new director of athletics is the son of a librarian and a calculus teacher. He is the grandson of a baker, who was a self-made man. In the summer, when his father wasn’t teaching, the Cobbs painted houses for extra money. His brother is an attorney. Another brother is a lobbyist. Cobb took this high-achiever background into a November meeting with his staff, one of those any-idea-is-a-good-idea meetings. Turner Field might happen and it would make it easier to draw fans, but that dream is four or five years away and he wants a game plan for now, not later. He knows the football gameday experience has to improve and the 2,500 season-ticket base has to grow to 10,000. That November meeting with his staff was the opening drive.

There are more echoes than cheers inside the Georgia Dome when the Panthers play football. It’s almost desolate. Football is supposed to be the flagship program of an athletic department and it has done some good things for Georgia State, like get on national television. Without football, Cobb said, there wouldn’t have been a marching band prancing down Central Park West in the Macy’s Thanksgiving Day Parade.

But Cobb called Georgia State football in the Dome a “sterile environment.” He knows it has to change quickly. Winning would help, but Cobb said the school has tried to take a 10-year process of playing Division I football and compress it into three years, and the rush has not worked out. The Panthers have one win the last two seasons.

While head coach Trent Miles tries to stockpile mid-major Division I talent, Cobb will work on the “scene.” He will try and build a strong partnership with MARTA to get his fans to the game. He will work with the Georgia Dome to try and turn around the atmosphere. “Charlie has a very, very creative mind,” Becker says. “You see him as a big, tough guy, well, he’s not just that. He’s a planner and a thinker and a doer.”

Cobb raised about $65 million for facilities at Appalachian State. He will have to raise a whole lot more to transform Turner Field into the centerpiece of Georgia State athletics. It is 250,000 square feet of space, and Cobb just goes “wow” when he thinks about the possibilities.

“He knows what buttons to push, he knows how to raise money, how to develop relationships that can help student-athletes and the school and the city of Atlanta,” says Robinson, the former N.C. State coach and athletic director. “He knows what the score is in Atlanta and how to capitalize. Charlie sees the big picture.”

So, we’re back to talking about seeing and vision. Cobb was courteous enough to tell a visitor to get in front of him at a basketball game so the visitor could see the game. He was helpful enough to pick out Becker in the crowd when asked to do so. He not only saw that ball on the other side of the fence as a kid, he probably went and got it, too. Courteous, helpful, industrious, all in one package.

The Panthers got an athletic director who said he was too headstrong when he took the Appalachian State job and concentrated on “tasks first.” He learned a lesson. Becker said one of the significant reasons Cobb was hired at such a critical moment in Georgia State athletics was his experience as an athletic director.

“I did some good things, but I made some mistakes,” Cobb says. “There is a culture that exists in the organization that you are joining and I really think you have to blend with the personalities. Don’t just rush in. That’s why I had to quickly understand Georgia State and what it meant to be in an urban environment, what it meant to be at a school with 30,000 students, a school with a football program that is four years old.”

Turner Field is a massive undertaking and Cobb is not going to do it by himself. He has laid a foundation of relationships since he was hired last August and wants this transformative undertaking to be inclusive, not exclusive.

“We have a great city to recruit to, a great university to recruit to, we’re fully funded as a program, our operating budget is there,” Cobb said. “It’s the facility piece that is the missing link.”

He thought for a moment and said, “I don’t want to be the reason we can’t be successful.”

Then he just smiles, because he is sharing a vision.
MOLTEN METAL SPECTACULAR ➤ Fire, and lots of it. Each December, the Ernest G. Welch School of Art and Design hosts its own version of a yuletide light show, the thousands-of-degrees-hot Holiday Iron Pour. Last season’s pour, the 43rd annual, was the last to take place at the university’s sculpture studio and foundry at the corner of Edgewood and Piedmont avenues. Visit magazine.gsu.edu to learn more about one of Georgia State’s oldest traditions and the sculpture studio’s new location.
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Paul Lombardo has an international reputation as a lawyer, bioethicist and historian to whom governments and institutions around the world turn for expertise. Thanks to a professorship endowed by noted attorney Bobby Lee Cook, he has brought his vast health law experience to the Georgia State University College of Law — helping to make the college’s Center for Law, Health and Society a global resource for insight into how medicine and the law interact.

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