
The Georgia College Press Association presents

The 2026 Georgia Press Institute

*The Southeast's premiere training
event for collegiate print journalists*



Richard B. Russell Special Collections Libraries

University of Georgia in Athens

Friday, March 6, 2026

Georgia Press Institute

The Southeast's premier training event for collegiate print journalists

At the Richard B. Russell Special Collections Libraries at the University of Georgia in Athens

Friday, March 6, 2026

9:30-9:50 a.m.

Registration

2nd floor, Russell Atrium

9:50-10 a.m.

Welcome and announcements

Room 285

10-11 a.m.

Young Journalists Panel

Room 285

The panelists will discuss navigating a path from college to professional journalism, early career experiences, the challenges they face and the road ahead.



• **Gabriel Burns** is a Valdosta State University alum and general assignment reporter and features writer for The Atlanta Journal-Constitution. After four years on the Braves beat, he's expanded his horizons and covers all sports. Since joining the AJC in 2017, Gabe Burns has covered four

Braves postseason runs, including their remarkable World Series championship in 2021. He also covered the Bulldogs' breakthrough months later. You'll find him writing about MLB, NFL, NBA, college football and other Atlanta-centric sports happenings.



• **Averi Caldwell** is the managing editor at The Griffin Daily News, a tri-weekly paper in south metro Atlanta. She graduated from the University of Georgia with a bachelor's degree in journalism in 2023 and a master's degree in journalism in 2025.



• **Jesse Fraga**, breaking news reporter and de-facto deputy editor for The Macon Telegraph, is an award-winning journalist and photographer who covers public safety, courts and politics as the primary print and digital news source for rural and marginalized communities in Middle Georgia.

Jesse primarily investigates law enforcement, city officials and others in power, with attention to trends, data and public records. Jesse intentionally explores socioeconomic, health and cultural challenges facing LGBTQ+, Black and Hispanic individuals in daily breaking and enterprise stories.



• **Rose Scoggins** is editor/publisher of The Hartwell Sun. She joined the newspaper in 2025 after serving as editor/publisher of The Elberton Star, where she led the newspaper to winning Georgia Press Association's Freedom of Information award in 2023.



• **Kate Verity** has been the news editor of The Covington News since January 2025. She is a graduate of Georgia College and State University, where she served as editor-in-chief of The Colonnade. She also interned with The Georgia Recorder and received the Georgia Press Educational Foundation Sutlive Scholarship.

11 a.m.-12 p.m.

Are You Ready for the 2026 Midterm Elections?

flytedesk

Room 285

Niya Coleman

• **Senior Director of Supply, flytedesk**



Niya’s journey in student media began while completing her MBA at North Carolina A&T State University, where she served as business manager of the NC A&T Register. In that role, she led a digital-first overhaul of the organization while overseeing its business, operations and marketing

functions.

Today, Niya oversees the strategy and execution behind the team that serves student media partners. She is deeply committed to helping student media leaders build stronger, more sustainable businesses, unlock new revenue opportunities, and confidently navigate the business side of media — ensuring campus publications are not only supported, but positioned for long-term success.

As a publication in a state with a significant election in 2026, are you prepared for all potential money-making opportunities? In this session, we’ll discuss how to find out who’s running for office in your area; how to sell advertising space to local candidates; how to set political advertising

policies; and what you can do to open yourself up to bigger national or regional ad buys.

12-1 p.m.

Lunch

Food in Lobby, Tables in Room 285

1 p.m.

Covering Communities, Building Trust

A candid conversation about what’s working, what isn’t, and reporting across divides.

Room 285

Dr. Jennifer Duck

• **Clinical Associate Professor, Grady College of Journalism and Mass Communication, UGA**



Dr. Jennifer Duck is a two-time national Emmy-winning journalist and educator with more than 20 years of experience covering local, national and international stories across major news beats. She has produced and reported for Anderson Cooper, Katie Couric and Oprah Winfrey, and served

as a multimedia journalist for ABC News on the Obama and McCain presidential campaigns, where she was responsible for filming, writing, editing, producing and reporting live across ABC’s digital and broadcast platforms. She was also the ABC News White House reporter and producer during President George W. Bush’s final term. She served as the sole TV pool reporter on Air Force One for several historic visits, including meetings with Russian President Vladimir Putin in Sochi and Ukrainian President Viktor Yushchenko in Kyiv, experiences that later informed her academic research. She also reported and anchored at an NBC affiliate in California’s Central Valley, covering rural populations and highlighting underserved communities. Her work and research focus on community-centered journalism, online disinformation and rebuilding trust. Her student

collaborations have been recognized by the Associated Press and NPR and have earned several international film festival awards. Her community-focused documentaries are featured on PBS and The Documentary Channel.

2 p.m.

**News Deserts and Elections:
Why Journalism Matters**
Room 285

Dr. Cindy Montgomery

• **Assistant Professor of Media and Communication, Middle Georgia State University**



Dr. Cindy Montgomery began her career as a journalist at newspapers in Georgia and Wisconsin before moving into higher education. A south Georgia native, she saw several rural communities become news deserts. Concerned about this plight, she based her doctoral dissertation on news deserts and their effect on rural communities. One concerning issue she discovered was how the lack of media coverage impacted local elections.

At Middle Georgia State University, Dr. Montgomery serves as adviser for the Statement, MGA's student newspaper, and teaches courses in media, communication, public relations and social media. She was previously an adjunct instructor at Valdosta State University and Thomas University. Dr. Montgomery is also a past editor-in-chief of VSU's Spectator.

3 p.m.

GCPA Awards Presentation
Room 271

Thank you for attending and
congratulations to the winners!

2026 GCPA Press Institute Registration Form

March 6, 2026, Russell Special Collections Library, University of Georgia, Athens, Ga.

\$80 registration fee per person includes sessions and lunch.

Publication name: _____

Group leader: _____ Cell phone: _____

Total no. of attendees: _____ x \$80 = \$ _____ registration total

Names and contact info of attendees (please list phone number of group leader):

Name: _____ Number + email: _____

Name: _____ Number + email: _____

Name: _____ Number + email: _____

Name: _____ Number + email: _____

Name: _____ Number + email: _____

Name: _____ Number + email: _____

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Name: _____ Number + email: _____

Name: _____ Number + email: _____

Name: _____ Number + email: _____

Lunch: Lunch will be provided from Chick-fil-A. If vegetarian meals are requested, please note how many: _____

Please email registration forms to sireland@gapress.org. Make checks payable to Georgia Press Educational Foundation and mail to GPEF, P.O. Box 4003, Marietta, Ga. 30061 or call 770-454-6776 to pay with a credit card.

Important Notes

Parking: The Russell Special Collections Library is located at 300 South Hull Street in Athens. Pay parking for off-campus visitors is available in the Hull Street Deck on South Hull Street on Fridays, and the charge is \$10 per vehicle. Enter at the south entrance near Baxter Street. Extra visitor parking is available on Fridays at the Tate Center Parking Deck for an hourly fee. The deck is one block south of the intersection of Baxter Street and South Lumpkin Street.