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GEORGIA**


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Division of Student Affairs  
*Office of the Vice President for Student Affairs*

August 1, 2025

**MEMORANDUM**

**TO:** Jere W. Morehead, President  
Michelle G. Cook, Vice President for Student Affairs  
Ryan A. Nesbit, Vice President for Finance and Administration

**FROM:** Eric Atkinson, Dean of Students 

**SUBJECT:** Final Report - Working Group on Future of Legion Pool/Legion Field

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I am writing to provide you with the final report of the Working Group on the Future of Legion Pool/Legion Field. The working group met from February 10, 2025 to July 8, 2025 to evaluate what is in the best interests of University of Georgia students. To fulfill its charge, the group analyzed Legion Pool and Field Usage Reports, Legion Pool financial documents, a Counsilman-Hunsaker Swimming Pool Audit, a Legion Field Planning Study, and UGA Historic Resource Study. The group also toured the complex, executed a benchmarking analysis, and solicited input from student leaders and other campus units impacted in the area. Finally, to inform its evaluation, the group worked with the Tate Student Center, Office of University Architects, Office of Real Estate, and Office of Legal Affairs. Based on the analysis of student usage data, financial performance and impact on Student Activity Fee reserves, substantial capital investment needs, student leader feedback, and redevelopment concepts, we present a recommendation for the future use of the Legion Pool and Field site. The following pages present a summary of our recommendations, followed by the group's broader assessments regarding the review and evaluation.

## **Summary of Recommendations**

Based on the findings from the reports and student feedback, it is recommended that the Legion Pool and Field site be redeveloped to better serve and support UGA's growing student population. The following actions are proposed in the best interests of the University and its students:

- We recommend closing and no longer using Legion Pool, its associated "Service Building" (i.e. the bathhouse), and Concert Stand. A Historic Resource Study that was commissioned determined Legion Pool, its pool house, and Legion Field qualify as a National Register of Historic Places-eligible complex. The Concert Stand is not historic nor considered a contributing element.
- We recommend expanding Legion Field to create a community green space for housing residents, students, and student organization use, and to construct an amphitheater using the natural topography.
- We recommend the development of additional student parking to address this critical need in the heart of campus adjacent to residence halls, Bolton Hall, the West Campus Dining, Learning, and Well-being Center, and the Tate Student Center.
- We recommend Student Affairs and the Office of University Architects continue to meet periodically to assess the student impact of community green space and implement phased renovations to test the usage of the redeveloped space before making further investments (i.e. new concert stand/performance stage, etc.).

The proposed redevelopment of the Legion Pool and Field site aims to create a more welcoming and functional space for student use and their educational, co-curricular, and extra-curricular needs. By addressing the financial challenges imposed on the Student Activity Fee reserves, student leader preferences, potential for enhanced usage of the area during the academic year, and decreased operational costs, the recommended actions will contribute to the long-term sustainability and success of the site for UGA students. At the end of this report on page 6, please see the redevelopment concept exhibit from the Legion Field Planning Study that is endorsed by the Working Group.

## **Summary of Findings**

### **Usage by Students and Other Members of the UGA Community**

Legion Pool has experienced a decline in visits and revenue over the past five years. Total visits decreased from 15,201 in 2019 to 10,376 in 2024. Just over 12% of total visits to the pool in FY24 were by UGA students. By comparison in the same year, 31% of visits were UGA employees and 19% were non-UGA community members and guests. The remaining 38% were children under 15 years old and campers. The six-year average shows UGA student use at only 10% of total visits to the pool. Over the past six fiscal years (2019-2024), less than 2.5% (2.42) of the total student population has visited Legion Pool, which is only open during summer months and is closed during the academic year. As of July 31, 2025, only 26 student season passes were purchased for the summer and 821 daily passes were purchased by students (11.4 average per day).

Legion Field intermittently hosts a variety of events, including those organized by student organizations and university departments, but the facility remains unused most days. There were 27 reserved events in FY24, with the six-year average being 26 events per year. The facility remains unused in its current form approximately 92% of the year.

### **Financial Information**

#### *Revenue, Expenses, and Resource Needs*

Legion Pool has consistently operated at a net loss, with total net revenue losses amounting to \$438,644.52 from FY2019 to FY2024. This loss was fully absorbed by the Student Activity Fee reserve balance. Normal operations and reopening expenses, such as extensive prep work, painting, and repairs to equipment and infrastructure, are annually significant, reaching as high as \$94,796.31 in FY2022. Revenue from sales and service fees (i.e. season passes, concessions, etc.) has fluctuated during this same time period and has not come close to offsetting annual losses. In FY2025, Legion Pool realized a net revenue loss of \$89,910.38, which was again absorbed by the Student Activity Fee reserve balance. With continued projected reductions in the Student Activity Fee reserve balance in future fiscal years beyond FY2025, the Division of Student Affairs is challenged with continued funding constraints related to the ongoing operation of Legion Pool. To better support student success and well-being, these student fees could be utilized in several ways: by redistribution to student organizations through all-campus allocation process, by supporting basic needs initiatives for students, or by funding upgrades and additions to the Tate Student Center and other student facilities managed by the Division of Student Affairs.

### **Current Value and Capital Investment Needs**

The University of Georgia's Office of University Architects for Facility Planning commissioned Counsilman-Hunsaker to assess the current conditions of Legion Pool and estimate capital investment needs. The Swimming Pool Audit notes that the pool is facing physical obsolescence and states, "Of foremost concern is the structural condition of the pool and facility". It is reported that the pool leaks about 3" inches per day (or approximately 24,000 gallons) and that areas of the facility would no longer be acceptable by

most current industry standards, including items required by the State of Georgia and the Clarke County Health Department. The audit identifies numerous pool, deck, and mechanical items in need of repair, replacement, and renovation and includes recommended actions in the report be considered and implemented. The itemized cost estimate of repair, replacement, and renovation items require a substantial capital investment. Additionally, Councilman-Hunsaker estimates the cost for replacing the existing facility in its entirety at \$11,400,000.

### **Peer and Aspirational Institution Benchmarking**

12 out of 35 peer, aspirant, and SEC universities have at least one outdoor pool accessible to the general public via memberships. Four additional SEC schools have outdoor pools, but access is limited to guests sponsored by university affiliates - effectively not open to the broader community.

All evaluated pools are managed under Campus Recreation or equivalent units, prioritizing service to students and the university community. Most public memberships include access to a full range of recreational facilities (e.g., gyms, courts, wellness centers), not just the pool. Fewer than half of the 12 public-access pools offer pool-only memberships. Students are the primary users, followed by faculty and staff. Public attendance data is limited, but student-centric usage is consistent across institutions. By comparison, Legion Pool stands out due to its organizational placement within Campus Reservations and the Tate Student Center, and its broader, more community-oriented clientele.

### **Legal Responsibilities or Obligations**

Based on the best available evidence and after a reasonably thorough investigation, the Office of Real Estate, in consultation with the Office of Legal Affairs, believes that BOR/UGA owns the property in fee simple without restriction and that BOR/UGA has no legal obligation to continue to operate Legion Pool. This response is based on the following activities and findings:

- The Office of Real Estate hired an outside firm to conduct a title search, and the firm “did not find any requirement to maintain the pool in perpetuity or any reference to a public trust.” This firm also determined that “the Board of Regents owns the property in fee simple without restriction.”
- The Office of Real Estate reviewed Council of the City of Athens meeting minutes that included a 1952 city attorney opinion that the property (a) was “dedicated to public purposes”; (b) could only be conveyed “upon the approval of a Judge of the Superior Court”; and (c) that the American Legion would be required to use sale proceeds to “secure other facilities equal in convenience, utility and value equal to those proposed to be disposed of.” The City Council approved the ownership transfer in 1954 (subject to the 10-year operating agreement), and this approval did not reference any judicial approval of the ownership transfer nor did it reference the

American Legion securing other facilities equal in convenience, utility and value. This approval also did not reference any obligation on the part of UGA to operate Legion Pool beyond the time period contemplated in the operating agreement.

- The Office of Legal Affairs worked with the Athens-Clarke County Clerk of Court to review legal records from the early to mid-1950s and found no records of any judicial approval of the ownership transfer to UGA/BOR, no records of any lawsuits or other judicial proceedings related to the ownership transfer, and no determination of any public trust related to Legion Pool. Specifically, the Clerk of Court's Office searched records from 1950-1958 using the terms "American Legion," "Allen Fleming Jr. American Legion," and "B.F. Grant" and found no filings.
- The Office of Real Estate reviewed local newspapers from the early to mid-1950s and found multiple stories that established the internal American Legion membership dissent regarding the ownership transfer, which prolonged the disposition process (it was initially proposed in 1952) and appears to have created misinformation and misunderstandings regarding the transfer. Although these newspaper articles reference a "trust" and "trust hearing" related to Legion Pool, no legal documentation suggesting the existence of such a trust has been found despite reasonably diligent efforts.

The University of Georgia's Office of University Architects for Facility Planning also contracted with Brockington and Associates, Inc. to conduct a Historic Resource Study (HRS) of the Legion Pool complex. The study recommends that Legion Pool, its pool house, and Legion Field qualify as a National Register of Historic Places-eligible complex. The Concert Stand 'building' is not historic and the HRS states that it is not considered a contributing element.

#### **UGA Students**

Over the past six years, fewer than 2.5% of all UGA students accessed Legion Pool. While touring the Legion complex, student leaders expressed tremendous enthusiasm at the idea of refreshing and enlarging Legion Field as a community green space for the Creswell, Black-Diallo-Miller, and Hill residential communities. Green spaces such as Myers Quad and Reed Quad foster a sense of community during the academic year for residential students and are used frequently for student-led programming as well as for day-to-day outdoor study and recreation. The need for additional student parking in the heart of campus was also emphasized as a student priority. Student leaders expressed a preference for green space and additional parking over paying for maintaining or replacing the pool, which is only open during the summer months and remains closed during the academic year. The Working Group noted that students who stay in Athens during the summer often have access to and preference for more modern pool facilities in local apartment complexes.

# Redevelopment Concept Exhibit

