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[Home](#) > [Press Releases](#) > Georgia Southern to Greet Thousands of Students with Unique Moving-In Experience

Georgia Southern to Greet Thousands of Students with Unique Moving-In Experience

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Georgia Southern University President Brooks Keel and his wife, First Lady Dr. Tammie Schalue, as well as Provost Jean Bartels will welcome students and their families checking in that morning at the University's Recreation Activity Center (RAC). "Students are checked in via computer and receive room keys, the map to their dorm and other informational paperwork while their parents attend the Parents' Fair, located in the gym at the RAC," said Vickie Hawkins, Director of University Housing.

Students have been given pre-arranged check-in times according to their birth date, in order to facilitate a speedy registration. "It's an organized circus that day," said Hawkins, "but we have a centralized process at the RAC to make it welcoming, yet very efficient. It really shows the small feel of Georgia Southern," she said.

After leaving the RAC, volunteers unpack students' cars at the residence halls, put boxes on carts and then push them to awaiting elevators operated by special attendants who ensure that the carts are transported to the correct floor. "We have volunteers who do nothing but push elevator buttons all day, and it only takes about 10 minutes to get a student moved in to their room," said Hawkins. Students and their families then walk upstairs to meet their carts of belongings delivered by elevator.

In fact, Hawkins said one popular move-in site is Eagle Village, where professors in past years have helped future students settle, and also where First-year Interest Groups (FIGs) primarily reside. FIGs represent small clusters of students sharing a major or interdisciplinary interest living together in University housing, which allows them to develop relationships with their new classmates. "We have math professors unloading boxes and getting to know their students in the Eagle Village FIGs before the first day of classes, and the students think it is really great," said Hawkins.

While traffic assistants and University police are dealing with the slow crawl of traffic patterns that day, executive board members of the Residence Hall Association — along with other volunteers — will combat the soaring summer temperatures by distributing more than 10,000 bottles of water and frozen popsicles as they travel by golf carts through campus.

According to Hawkins, Operation Move-In receives high praise from both students and families, with several undergraduates commenting that the staff made them feel comfortable with the smooth move from home to college. "Last year, a parent from Atlanta told one of our volunteers that the assistance of faculty and staff on opening day confirmed for her that her daughter had made the right decision to attend Georgia Southern," she said.