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Running for Students' Success

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Running for Students' Success



Running 12 miles through the lava fields of Mexico City during graduate school was just a hobby for the now Dean of the [College of Arts and Science](#) at [Governors State University](#), [Andrae Marak](#). Those short sprints soon transformed into ultras, races longer than marathons. Now, Marak is using his extreme hobby to help students at GSU.

Marak will be running the Shawnee Hills 100K (62 miles) on August 22 to raise money for the Student Emergency Fund which assists students in paying tuition during times of crisis.

Having long advocated for the fund, which was created by Dean of Students [Corey Williams](#) and the [GSU Foundation](#), Marak views this safety net as essential for student success at GSU.

“We have students who are a course or two short of graduation who have hit hard times and run out of financial aid. They have to pay out of pocket, and they cannot apply for loans. It leaves them in the worst position where they’re in debt and they don’t even have their degrees yet to be able to work in their field,” Marak said.

The pandemic has created further complications for students and though the federal government provided GSU with funds for students, the resources are running out and access to funds for certain students—such as international and DACA students—is restricted. For Marak, helping these populations is a responsibility of the community.



“It’s important to help keep students at GSU, whether they’re local or from abroad. Our alumni enrich the region and many international students will stay and become permanent members in the fabric of our community, while DACA recipients have already been a part of the community.”

The 100K race will take place in Shawnee National Forest which unfolds between the Mississippi and Ohio rivers in southern Illinois. Much of the course is on single track, hilly trails. In addition to the rocks, roots, and trees on the path, the race also features a limestone cliff that Marak must climb twice in the 62 miles. Marak, who averages 50 miles a week, has run the Shawnee Hills 100K in the past and estimates it will take him 19 hours (about 15 minutes per mile) to complete.

“You spend a lot of time with yourself and nature during it. I love these, they’re awesome,” he said.

While the 100K race will aid students in need, Marak also notes that the race serves as a reminder of the importance of mental health resources for students, faculty, and staff on campus. With an expanded [Counseling and Wellness Center](#) and free mental health services for students, GSU has stepped up efforts to support the campus community as the pandemic persists. In addition to seeking center services, students and colleagues should take time for themselves, whether running a 100K or simply taking a walk, during this stressful time, Marak said.

[Donate here to support Marak and the Student Emergency Fund.](#)