There are as many reasons to visit the new Baker University Center as there are hours in the day. Built into the hillside at the south end of Court Street, the five-story building has quickly become the hub that unites the upper and lower halves of campus while also connecting faculty, staff and students. “This is the heart of our vibrant, spirited community,” President Roderick McDavis said at its grand opening, and this was exactly the case on Thursday, Feb. 22, when four student writers visited throughout the day and found Baker packed with activity.

6:59 am
Whhhrrrr. The only sound in Baker Center is the constant hum of the escalators. Baker Center manager and senior John Tanzer flips a switch in a fourth-floor panel to unlock the outside doors. Stiffing a yawn, he rides the escalator down to the first floor, where he repeats the process. Welcome to a new Baker day.

9:15 am
“Maverick here.” Junior Ryan Place, as he is known off-air, begins his day talking about politics, sports, music—you name it—for “Wake Up Gall,” ACRN’s morning talk show. As the campus radio station, ACRN broadcasts online, round-the-clock from the third floor of Baker Center. Flying solo this morning (he usually co-hosts with “Goose”), Place selects songs to play while he chats with his regular callers.

9:30 am
“Students can always come to our meetings and speak their minds,” says Student Senate President Morgan Allen during her quarterly State of the Senate address in the center’s 1804 Lounge. Baker Center is a home away from home (away from home) for her, as she spends some 18 hours a week in the Senate’s Baker Center office. For added convenience (and to encourage collaboration), the Graduate Student Senate office is nearby on the same floor.

9:50 am
You name it, they’ve got it. From sweet and salty snacks to gifts for all ages, Bobcat Essentials has students covered. Right around the corner from the fourth-floor information desk, the gift shop is an ideal spot for visitors and students to stock up on Bobcat merchandise, says junior Meredith McMahon, who is working the cash registers. While most students stop for between-class treats, others opt for warm hoodies and roomy backpacks emblazoned with the Bobcat name.

10:03 am
Stationed at a table outside Baker’s Court Street entrance, four members of Alpha Phi Omega National Service Fraternity ask passers-by to donate money in exchange for their choice of a cookie, cupcake or brownie. Junior Jen Boka stops by to ask about the campaign. The fraternity, she’s told, is raising money to buy canvas shoes that will be painted and sent to children in Uganda. Boka donates some spare change she finds in the bottom of her book bag. “It’s my philosophy,” she says. “Reach out a hand. You never know who you’ll touch.”

10:56 am
You never know who you’ll touch. “Class-change rush.” “You really get the sense that this is a coffeehouse where people can meet and hang out,” senior Kara Swartz says, admiring the decor, which as a Front Room tradition showcases student art on the walls. For staff and students alike, the Front Room is the perfect place for conversation, thought and literal awakening. Among this morning’s customers is Dean of Students Terry Hogan, who as an undergrad took his first university job in old Baker (as the circa 1954 building is affectionately called these days).

11:03 am
At the Baker Center post office, Mr. Postman is none other than Charlie Tholin.

11:16 am
Senior Caroline Fischer walks out of the Baker ballroom with stacks of possibilities in hand. The summer job fair gave her more than a few options to “do something fun for one last summer,” she says, noting she’ll soon have to find a “real” job. She picked up brochures for warm hoodies and roomy backpacks emblazoned with the Bobcat name.

11:18 am
The front desk at the Baker Center is as busy as the front room. With camp cheers and lots of photos, Megan Bayes, BS/HC ’05, recruits for the Big Brothers Big Sisters’ Camp Oty’Okwa at the summer job fair in the Baker ballroom.

11:38 am
Picking up stamps, envelopes or just sending a letter? Charlie Tholin’s your man. The congenial postal clerk helps and amuses people waiting in line. Today, mail’s going out to Kansas, Japan and New York. “I’ve been mailing a lot of applications this month,” senior Karla Hemmeldam says; she’s aiming for an internship at Glimmerglass Opera, a theater company in Cooperstown, N.Y., known for its summer festival.

One Baker Day

Photography by
Rick Fatica and Kim Walker
Melissa Evans, BSJ ’07, BA ’07
Natalia Lavric, BA ’07
Breanne Smith, BSJ ’08
Laura Yates, BSJ ’08

Story compiled by
Laura Yates, BSJ ’08
Melissa Evans, BSJ ’07, BA ’07
Natalia Lavric, BA ’07
Breanne Smith, BSJ ’08
Rick Fatica and Kim Walker

W h i t t l e  
T h e  o n l y  s o u n d  i n  B a k e r  C e n t e r  i s  t h e  c o n s t a n t  h u m  o f  t h e  e s c a l a t o r s .  B a k e r  C e n t e r  m a n a g e r  a n d  s e n i o r  J o h n  T a n z e r  f l i p s  a  s w i t c h  i n  a  f o u r t h - f l o o r  p a n e l  t o  u n l o c k  t h e  o u t s i d e  d o o r s .  S t i f f i n g  a  y a w n ,  h e  r i d e s  t h e  e s c a l a t o r  d o w n  t o  t h e  f i r s t  f l o o r ,  w h e r e  h e  r e p e a t s  t h e  p r o c e s s .  W e l c o m e  t o  a  n e w  B a k e r  d a y.

T h e  f r o n t  d e s k  a t  t h e  B a k e r  C e n t e r  i s  a s  b u s y  a s  t h e  f r o n t  r o o m .  W i t h  c a m p  c h e e r s  a n d  l o t s  o f  p h o t o s ,  M e g a n  B a y e s ,  B S / H C  ’ 0 5 ,  r e c r u i t s  f o r  t h e  B i g  B r o t h e r s  B i g  S i s t e r s ’  C a m p  O t y ’ O k w a  a t  t h e  s u m m e r  j o b  f a i r  i n  t h e  B a k e r  b a l l r o o m .
and applications from some of the 27 camps and resorts represented at the fair. But that’s not all. “I got a cookie, too,” Fischer said, thankful for the Girl Scouts of Erie Shores’ attendance.

Student leaders and university administrators hustle between offices, nodding to each other in recognition as they pass. Key offices, such as Residence Life, relocated to Baker Center for students’ convenience. “In the old Baker Center, our graduate assistants were located on a different floor,” says administrative associate Ann Addington, from her desk in the spacious Campus Life office. “This new arrangement, with everyone in one office, has really brought us together.”

Associate Professor of Communication Studies Nagesh Rao enjoys a customized noodle bowl from Jade. Every lunch is a busy one at the seven venues made noodle bowl from Jade. Every lunch is a busy one at the seven venues in the West 82 food court (so named for Athens’ longitude of 82 degrees). It’s all served here: soups, salads, sushi — and even the silverware is a food product! Though it may look like plastic, all packaging and utensils are made of corn or potato starch that is 100-percent biodegradable. (It is not, however, edible.)

12:18 am

Tinolinda Gallery has hosted 63 visitors today. But it’s still early in the afternoon. “We average about 100 visitors a day,” freshman and gallery monitor Aliie Doughtery says. Relocated from East Union Street, the space has changed but the passion remains. Today’s exhibit features the work of Undergraduate art majors: bright colors, stark contrasts and a variety of subjects. Make this space the perfect destination for a daily dose of culture (whether in between classes or on a lazy afternoon).

1:16 pm

“It feels good in here,” administrative assistant Marlene Jenkins says of the Women’s Center. An earlier women’s center closed in 1976, and this new space will connect women’s groups on campus, promoting networking, programming and recruitment efforts. “We’ve even had men visit,” Jenkins says, smiling. The staff strives to serve the entire Athens community with resources about women’s issues and a library of donated materials. “It’s a nice area,” says junior Lauren Vollberg, who has stopped by to study. “It’s such a relaxed, peaceful environment.”

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2:40 pm

Baker is a thriving center of operations for student organizations; 39 have office space here, and 320 can share a mail center and a multitude of other resources. Today, the student group Unify meets in room 356, where three members prepare material for a Safe Space presentation. The program works to make the dorms “safe” spaces for diversity of thought and identity.

2:47 pm

Junior Linnell Hamilton prepares to close the Multicultural Art Gallery for the day. “The current exhibit, “We Are All One in Dolls,” features the doll collection of Tanya Thompson, a local artist. “The glass wall behind the dolls looks into the hallway for the Multicultural Center, which provides awareness, support and programming for the various cultures represented at the university.

2:56 pm

It’s just any old news day. Bent over their keyboards or rushing to an interview, 20 students bustle through The Post’s newsroom hurrying to finish articles before deadline. Senior Brianna Vought, who has worked for the student-run paper for a year and a half, enters the office to finish a piece on the Oscars. “It’s such a great atmosphere,” she says — and such a difference from their former cramped (though cozy) basement location. The Post is part of a student media wing that also houses the Athena Yearbook and Athens Video Works.

3:09 pm

Aaron Mitchell, a junior majoring in civil engineering, stops by walk-in hours at Career Services. He had his résumé critiqued earlier by one of the center’s counselors and is back with an edited version. “She helped me a lot,” Mitchell says. He used a Word template to create his first résumé, but his new one is more original. “Employers hate those templates because they see them all the time,” he says, quoting the advice he received today.

4:33 pm

“At the whole world’s your home, hear? Here,” Everett Hoagland finishes a poem on the Front Room stage. The college house is packed with professors and students listening to the emphatic and insightful reading by the professor emeritus from the University of Massachusetts, Dartmouth. Freshman Heather Donohoe is here, as is the rest of her English class. “You get more listening to him than reading the poems,” she says, noting the inflection and rhythm of Hoagland’s voice.

Laura Benholm, a Post staff writer, spends 15 to 20 hours a week in the newsroom.

4:08 pm

A student needing help with a degree audit report approaches Jenny Klein in the Student Help Center on the fourth floor. At the help center — created specifically for new Baker — Jenny and her co-workers spend the day tutoring, helping students choose what classes to take and referring students to other offices on campus for more in-depth academic support.

For those tuning in, that was “Selfless, Cold and Composed” by Ben Folds. ACRN will play about 100 songs with live DJs before the day is through. Not doing much but hanging around (literally, by a wire from the door), a rather cheerful plastic skeleton sporting a flowered bikini and the station’s lobster mascot watch DJ Brian Ostrander, a senior, at work.

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Josh Cosper and J. Jivens (right) shoot a lounge is a lively spot. Ball table and outdoor seating, too, the literature class. “I like a little back and work on papers for their American Root and junior Nicco Mannarino surf first-floor lounge, sophomore Stefanie year student, hits the 14-ball into a cor his friend, Nicole Lanphier, also a first- coffee on the edge of the pool table as Freshman Kevin Pikovnik perches his 5:06 pm Coffeehouse Concert. Guitarist Joshua Jesty plays in the background while Brian Mallon and Jess Tyroler share a snack in the Front Room during the night's 5:27 pm Three alumni share some of their favorite Baker memories It’s completely simple, really — a white travel mug, black block lettering that says “The Front Room,” with a maroon handle and cap. I wanted one for six years — it was the ultimate representation of my journey through college — and I finally got one just before graduating. Every year, every quarter, I used the Front Room as a refuge, a study space and social area. On its stage, I gave speeches, sang karaoke, danced, laughed, wrote in my journal and people-watched. I sat at the tables reading, talk- ing with friends, meeting professors. One afternoon, I heard a woman ask, “Where’s the Front Room?” And I wondered, “Did I ever not know where it was?” I don’t remember that time. It was my instant hangout, even before I drank coffee. I still use the mug three years later. People ask me what the Front Room is and I smile, hoping they have a place that holds as many memories. — Stacy Oliver, BSJ ’02, MED ’04

10:40 pm
Senior Lauren Sorrows sits in a half-circle on the floor with three friends in the lobby of the 240-seat Baker Theater. They’re collaborating to answer trivia questions about the Pirates of the Caribbean trilogy. Lake the others eating gold-coin candy and wearing pirate eye patches, the four are waiting to see this week’s Midnight Movie, “Dead Man’s Chest,” the second in the trilogy Sorrows says they like to see midnight movies at Baker because “they’re free!” (And who could argue with that?)

11:46 pm
Post senior sports editor Katie Carrera is leaving Baker. As tonight’s late-night shows her how to glue the papers to each other and to the two squares of tack board she covered in scrapbook paper. Both are first-timers to Marti & Stewie, a weekly crafting event named after the queen of crafting herself, Martha Stewart.

Three alumni share some of their favorite Baker memories

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and People of (Nicaragua, Angola, El Salvador, take your pick) and other items that perhaps should not be mentioned in a publication that children might see. There were crumpled papers and greasy pizza boxes on the desks, teetering piles of empty cans everywhere, the odd item of clothing and the odd sleeping editor on the floor. It was a pit and a fire trap and probably unhealthy in 40 different ways, and I absolutely loved it.

— Dale Kiger, BSJ ’76

In the spring of my senior year, the top two floors of Baker Center housed an honors women’s dorm and therein lived the love of my life, Ginny Waite. The old Greek tradition required young men to serenade their special someone, and my time rolled around on Mother’s Weekend 1965. So there on the front steps, in front of my parents and backed by my Phi Tau brothers, I croaked out my best rendition of “I Love You Truly.” My singing was truly unmemorable, but it stood the test of time as we recently celebrated our 40th anniversary.

— Rick Koon, BSJ ’65