Gold Star Marching Band

Information Packet for the 2026-2027 Season

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This packet is intended to answer the most common questions about the 2026 season before you arrive on campus. Some of you may be working with your advisors to get MUSC 111-01 on your schedule, and some of you may be in need of more information prior to committing to joining the band. I hope this information can help your decision, and get some vital information out to you and your families. I am going to explain all things in hopes that I can answer any potential questions ahead of time. The goal is to provide enough information that you and your family can prepare with confidence.

Connor Challey, Director of Athletic Bands and Professor of Tuba and Euphonium at North Dakota State University

Why join the GSMB?

The Gold Star Marching Band is composed of students representing nearly 60 different majors from across campus, meaning you'll almost certainly find classmates and peers from your own field of study. More importantly, you'll become part of a close-knit community where many students find their closest friends and lifelong connections. There has never been a more exciting time to join the GSMB. As NDSU enters a new era in the FBS and the Mountain West Conference, the band will be at the center of one of the most significant moments in university history. You'll help create the atmosphere at a new level of college athletics, perform for larger audiences, and represent NDSU as the university continues to grow on the national stage.

As a member of the GSMB, you are the live soundtrack to Bison Athletics, a visible symbol of Bison Pride, and an enthusiastic ambassador for the university and the Fargo-Moorhead community. Whether performing at football games, campus events, parades, or community appearances, you'll help create memorable experiences while representing NDSU with excellence.

Marching band is certainly a significant commitment, but it is also one of the most rewarding experiences available at NDSU. It provides an opportunity to build lasting friendships, work toward shared goals with an incredible team of students, and bring the excitement of music and performance to audiences throughout Fargo and the surrounding region.

The Gold Star Marching Band has a rich tradition as North Dakota's premier marching ensemble, carrying a name that was bestowed upon the organization by presidential distinction over 100 years ago. If you haven't already, we encourage you to explore our history on the Gold Star Bands website. This is your opportunity not only to learn about

that legacy—but to help shape its next chapter as the GSMB embarks on its exciting future in the FBS.

The GSMB is open to students throughout the Tri-College community, welcoming members from NDSU, Concordia College, Minnesota State University Moorhead, and North Dakota State College of Science.

Registration

To participate in the Gold Star Marching Band, you must register for **MUSC 111, Section 01 (Class #31326)**. The course meets **Monday, Wednesday, and Friday from 4:05–5:45 PM** at pre-announced locations around campus. Rehearsals take place in the Challey School of Music, on various practice fields, and at other locations depending on weather and rehearsal needs.

In addition to registering for the course, **all members must complete the GSMB Commitment Form by July 25.** This form provides us with the information we need to prepare for Band Camp, assign drill positions, distribute music and materials, and communicate important preseason information. **Members who complete the Commitment Form by July 25 will receive their drill coordinates ("dots") for Pregame and the first halftime production before arriving at Band Camp. Students who submit the Commitment Form after July 25 are still welcome to join the Gold Star Marching Band; however, they will not be included in the Pregame drill or the first halftime production due to the time required to prepare drill assignments.**

The Commitment Form can be completed here:
GSMB Commitment Form

Until you are officially enrolled in **MUSC 111**, the Commitment Form is our primary method of communication. Once your course registration appears in Campus Connection, you will automatically begin receiving class communications and are considered officially rostered for the season.

If you experience a scheduling conflict or have difficulty registering for the course, please contact **Connor Challey** as soon as possible. Most registration and scheduling issues can be resolved before the semester begins.

Schedule

The Gold Star Marching Band rehearses every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday from 4:05–5:45 PM, and these rehearsals are mandatory. Many sections also schedule occasional sectionals outside of class to continue developing music and marching fundamentals. Our complete season schedule can be found here: https://goldstarbands.org/gsmb-schedule. We strongly encourage you to add these dates to your personal calendar as soon as possible so you can plan your semester accordingly.

Home football game days are an all-day commitment. A typical game day includes a section breakfast, morning rehearsal at the Fargodome, the Marchover and tailgating festivities, pregame, the football game itself, halftime performance, and postgame responsibilities. By the end of the day, members have typically been together for 10–12 hours, making game days one of the most rewarding experiences of the season.
In addition to home football games and regular rehearsals, the Gold Star Marching Band performs at several special events throughout the season. For the 2026 season, mandatory performances outside of Band Camp and home football games include the

Minnesota State Fair Parade on Sunday, September 6, and the **Youth in Music Exhibition Performance at U.S. Bank Stadium on Saturday, October 10**. Please review the complete season schedule for all required events and important dates. (https://goldstarbands.org/gsmb-schedule)

The 2026 Sounds of the Gridiron is confirmed for November 22nd, at 2PM. Doors to the East concourse and silent auction will occur at 1PM. Plan to bring your families and enjoy all the music from the year! The band itself will have a staging rehearsal prior to show start, and TBS will host a morning breakfast benefit fundraiser. Details for that will come out during the year!

As NDSU continues its exciting new era in the FBS, our season may also extend beyond the regular schedule. Should the Bison qualify for the Mountain West Conference Championship Game or receive an invitation to a postseason bowl game, additional performance opportunities may be added. Details regarding these events will be communicated if they become part of our season schedule.

Finally, Band Camp is a mandatory commitment for all members. It is where we build the musical, marching, and personal foundation that allows us to perform at a high level throughout the season. Attendance at Band Camp is essential to the success of both the individual member and the ensemble.

Band Camp 2026

Band Camp is perhaps the most important part of our season and is essential to getting the year started on the right foot. During this time, we will work on all aspects of marching band, including marching fundamentals, music rehearsals, our pregame

show, and our first halftime production. In our region, it is uncommon for high school marching bands to perform halftime shows, and we teach with that in mind. Do not be discouraged from joining because you have little or no previous marching experience. Every year, students arrive with no marching background and leave band camp having successfully learned our entire pregame production.

The Gold Star Marching Band begins Band Camp with staggered arrival dates to allow each section time for check-in, residence hall move-in, and preseason instruction. **Drumline, Front Ensemble, and Color Guard** members should report to the **Challey School of Music** for check-in on **Friday, August 14, from 12:00–3:00 PM**. Members are encouraged to arrive near the beginning of the check-in window to allow adequate time for residence hall move-in (if applicable) before preseason camp activities begin. **Brass and Woodwind** members should report to the **Challey School of Music** for check-in on **Sunday, August 16, from 12:00–3:00 PM**. Members are encouraged to arrive near the beginning of the check-in window to allow adequate time to complete check-in, move into their residence hall (if applicable), spend time with family, and eat dinner before returning for the evening's activities.

During check-in, you will:

- Receive residence hall information from NDSU Housing (if applicable).
- Be fitted for your marching uniform.
- Check out a university instrument, if needed, at no cost.
- Complete any remaining paperwork.
- Receive final instructions before Band Camp.

After completing check-in, members should:

- Move into their assigned residence hall (if applicable).
- Unpack and get settled.
- Spend time with family.

- Eat dinner before returning to the Challey School of Music for the evening's activities.

Returning members, particularly those living off campus, are still required to report to the **Challey School of Music** and complete the check-in process. To allow staff to focus on assisting new members and those moving into university housing first, returning members are encouraged to arrive approximately **one hour after the start of the check-in window**, while still arriving before the check-in period concludes.

Full daily schedules for Band Camp will be available through the **Slack** app.

Band Camp Packing List

- Close-toed Athletic Shoes
- Layered clothing
- Hats
- Backpack
- BIG waterbottle
- Hearing protection
- Sunscreen
- Sunglasses
- External phone charger (we read our music and drill charts through your personal phone)
- Thin phone case (bulky phone cases may not fit in the phone clips)
- Instrument Oils (brass) Cork Grease (woodwinds)
- Reeds (You supply your own reeds)
- Mouthpiece (All school instruments come with one if you don't have one)

Band Camp Meal Plan

The Band Camp Meal Plan is strongly recommended for incoming freshmen and any member without an active Block Plan. Standard NDSU meal plans do not become active until the regular university move-in weekend, so members without the Band Camp Meal Plan will be responsible for providing their own meals during Band Camp. Members who already have an active Block Plan (this generally does not apply to incoming freshmen) should not purchase the Band Camp Meal Plan, as Block Plan meal swipes may be used beginning during Band Camp.

Sousaphone players should not purchase the Band Camp Meal Plan. Separate meal arrangements will be communicated directly to the section.

Drumline, Front Ensemble, and Color Guard members who arrive before the full band check-in should plan to provide their own meals until the Band Camp Meal Plan becomes active. Because the meal plan typically begins with the start of the full Band Camp week (August 22nd start), early-arriving members should expect to cover one or two days of meals on their own.

Band Camp Meal Plan Registration:
https://forms.cloud.microsoft/pages/responsepage.aspx?id=kaA37Ka55UeY0JA9SkGSAwk70P50hQ1Jqd56WW0RjGNURTlUSk05VEFMNEgxRjZWSFJVRE9DTlJESi4u&route=shorturl

Pricing for the available meal plans is listed on the registration page. Meal plan charges will be billed through Campus Connection after registration.

Check-In and On-Campus Housing Information

By enrolling in the course, NDSU Housing will automatically be notified that you are a member of our group, and your dorm will be available to you on your check-in day. **The GSMB is directly charged for your early housing on campus, and you will have no charge to your account**. During your assigned check-in time, when your arrive to the Music Education Building (1511 12th Ave N, Fargo, ND 58105) you will go through a line in which you will fill out some forms for us, receive your housing information from NDSU Housing, get fitted for a uniform, and receive an instrument if you are in need of one. From there, you will go to your dorm and move in, spend some time hopefully getting some dinner with your families, and then come back to Memorial Union at night for some bowling and meeting folks!

Polos, Khaki Pants, marching shoes and payment

Long Black Socks

Members should own multiple pairs of long, solid black socks. Socks must be tall enough that no skin is visible while wearing the marching uniform.

Khaki Pants and/or Shorts

Members are responsible for purchasing their own khaki pants and/or shorts. Maintaining a consistent appearance is an important part of our visual presentation. Unfortunately, clothing marketed as "khaki" varies significantly between manufacturers. Many products labeled as khaki are actually too white, too brown, or too orange when compared to the rest of the ensemble.

Please purchase pants and/or shorts that most closely match the official GSMB khaki color shown below (HEX #D5C58A). Please do not assume that clothing labeled "khaki" is the correct color. Compare it to the example below before purchasing whenever possible.

Official GSMB Khaki

HEX #D5C58A

If you are unsure whether your pants or shorts are an acceptable match, please ask before purchasing or bring them to Band Camp for approval.

All remaining uniform items—including the marching uniform, shako, gauntlets, gloves, and accessories—are provided by the Gold Star Marching Band.

Marching Shoes

Drumline, Brass, and Woodwinds: If you need marching shoes, please complete the marching shoe order form before the conclusion of **Wind Check-In on August 16th**.

Marching Shoe Order Form:

Form will be sent out Via Slack and Campus Connection Roster

Even if you already own a pair of marching shoes, we **strongly recommend** purchasing a new pair through our group order. These shoes are specifically designed for marching band and provide excellent comfort, support, and performance. For most members, a single pair will easily last all four years at NDSU, making them a worthwhile investment.

If you already own a pair of **black marching shoes** (not shiny dress or tuxedo shoes), you are welcome to use them. However, **all previously owned shoes must be verified to ensure they match our uniform appearance.** If you plan to wear your own shoes, please send a photo to **Connor Challey** for approval before Band Camp.

For reference, this is one of the most common marching shoes worn by members of the Gold Star Marching Band:

https://dshowcase.com/viper-pro-marching-shoe/

Color Guard: If you need new shoes, you will need to purchase your own pair. Please order them here: https://www.bandshoppe.com/product/styleplus-kulerswift-guard-shoe/

Join our SLACK channel

We use Slack as the Gold Star Marching Band's primary communication platform. Please join the workspace as soon as possible using your **official School email address** and take a few moments to complete your profile. **Use your full, real name, upload a recognizable photo of yourself**, and include a short bio with information such as your hometown, major, or other details you'd like your fellow members to know.

Slack Invite Link: https://join.slack.com/t/goldstarmarchingband/shared_invite/zt-427gxdztv-kffxfl9rz8QgNi6p23X6JQ

Slack allows us to communicate quickly and efficiently through direct messages, section-specific channels, and full-band announcements. Because it is our primary method of communication, please use the platform professionally and follow our naming and profile conventions. Doing so helps everyone identify one another and keeps communication organized throughout the season.

Please note that this Slack workspace is for current Gold Star Marching Band members only. Individuals who are not participating with the band during the current season will be removed after the final class roster has been verified.

Drumline and Frontline Info/Auditions

Participation in the Drumline does require an audition for battery percussion. These auditions are used solely to determine instrument placement based on each performer's proficiency and are conducted as sections rather than individuals, allowing the staff and student leadership to evaluate how each person best fits within the ensemble. Drumline auditions are competitive, and placement on your first-choice instrument is not guaranteed. We encourage everyone to keep an open mind and be prepared to audition for multiple sections.

Our battery consists of snare drums, tenor drums (quads), tom drums, bass drums, and cymbals. We also have a Front Ensemble consisting of marimbas, vibraphones, xylophone, glockenspiel, and a variety of auxiliary percussion instruments.

There is no audition for the Front Ensemble. If you are interested in playing in the Front Ensemble, there is a place for you. Likewise, if you are not placed on your preferred battery instrument, you are welcome to join the Front Ensemble or another section of the Gold Star Marching Band.

Please reference the following message from Elias Youngblom (elias.youngblom@ndsu.edu), our Drumline Instructor, for additional information about the drumline audition process.

“Hello current and future Gold Star Drumline members! My name is Elias Youngblom and I am the head of all things marching percussion at NDSU. The season is rapidly approaching and I am excited to share the audition music with you all.

Percussion auditions will take place on Saturday, August 15th starting at 9 A.M. The link below will take you to a Google Drive folder with the exercise packets for each of the percussion sections. The battery audition consists of just 8's, Irish Spring, Accent Tap, and Short-Long Rolls for the snare, tom, and tenor auditions. As you will see, there are many more exercises in the packet that would be helpful to get to know, but they will not be required for the audition.
https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/13MVJTe5amvg5H9Y2OLxD2a9HDdVEuqKZ?usp=sharing

As we get closer to audition day, I will have more details for you regarding schedule and other specifics, but for now, here's a few things to help you prepare.

1. Auditions are mandatory for all drumline members, but everyone that auditions will have a spot in the drumline. You may not be placed in your first choice of section, but we strive to give everyone the best possible education and opportunity , regardless of previous experience or ability on day one.

2. Looking at the exercise packets may be intimidating, especially if you are new to marching band. If you have any questions about anything in the packet, I would love to help out. You can email me directly at elias.youngblom@ndsu.edu, or if you are more comfortable contacting your peers, you can reach out to any of the section leaders listed in the packets and we will answer whatever you need.

3. The audition process is fairly relaxed. All of the auditioning is done in sections, there are no one-on-one auditions, and while we recommend it, the audition material does not have to be memorized.

I am beyond excited to get this season going. If you have any questions about drumline or the marching band in general, please reach out.

Happy practicing!”

Pep Band

Being in the GSMB is a quick and easy way to be a part of our pep band opportunities at NDSU, as **we only allow individuals who are currently participating in a campus musical ensemble to be a part.** In the pep band we perform on a volunteer basis for all Volleyball and Basketball Games (Men's and Women's). If you are interested in Pep band opportunities and are a member of the band, you will hear of them all and there is no further action you will need to complete to participate.

Technology and Ultimate Drill Book

The Gold Star Marching Band uses several mobile apps throughout the season for drill, music, and educational materials. All required apps and licenses are provided at no cost to students.

We have had some difficulties getting everyone properly connected to the different apps, so please follow the setup instructions and codes below carefully.

UDB, BEAM, and GEO: ARC Setup

UDB, BEAM, and GEO use the ARC platform. Make sure you download the respective **"App: Powered by Arc"** version of each app.

Use your **official school email address** when creating your ARC Account.

Step 1: Set Up UDBapp

1. Download **UDBapp: Powered by Arc** from your device's app store.
2. Create an ARC Account using your official school email address.
3. Enter the **Subject Code: EF6UN**
4. Select your role as **Member**.
5. Enter the **Member Group Code: 63QAJ**

Important: There are currently two UDB apps available in the app stores. The Gold Star Marching Band uses **UDBapp: Powered by Arc** only. Do not use the older UDB app.

Helpful links:

- iPhone/iPad: UDBapp: Powered by Arc (App Store)
- Android: Search **"UDBapp: Powered by Arc"** in the Google Play Store.
- ARC/UDB Member Setup Guide

UDBapp: Powered by Arc — All Members

UDBapp is the platform we use to learn and perform drill throughout the season. It replaces traditional dot books by providing:

- Interactive drill animations
- Coordinate information
- Rehearsal tools
- Performance information

We'll teach everyone how to use UDB during Band Camp.

UDB Member Group Code: 63QAJ

BEAM — Wind Players Only

BEAM gives wind players access to all marching band music directly on their phones using the provided instrument clips and lyres. This eliminates paper flip folders and allows us to quickly distribute music updates throughout rehearsals and performances.

- Download **BEAM: Powered by Arc** from your device's app store.
- Sign in using your ARC Account.
- Use Member Group Code: **2ADEK**
- Drumline, Frontline, and Color Guard members should **not** create a BEAM account.

BEAM Member Group Code: 2ADEK

GEO — All Members

GEO is another ARC-based app used by the GSMB.

- Download **GEO: Powered by Arc** from your device's app store.
- Sign in using your ARC Account.
- Use Member Group Code: **FTMQM**

GEO Member Group Code: FTMQM

StrideTV — Different Setup Process!

StrideTV does **not** use the same setup process as UDB, BEAM, and GEO. You must create your StrideTV account through a **web browser first**.

1. Using a web browser, click here to create your StrideTV account.
2. Enter your email and name and create a password. Tap **Continue**.
3. Enter **EF6UN** as the coupon code and tap **Apply**.
4. Tap **Complete**. You should not need to enter any credit card information.
5. Once your account is created, download the **StrideTV** app on iOS or Android.

6. Sign in to the app using the account you just created.

StrideTV Code: EF6UN

Important: Create your StrideTV account through the **web browser first**, then download and sign in to the app.

Required Before Band Camp

All members should watch the **"Prepare for Band Camp: Students"** Setlist in StrideTV and work through the exercises **multiple times before Band Camp**.

Parent and Family Information

Stay tuned for more information about **Sounds of the Gridiron**, our annual end-of-regular-season concert held in the **Fargodome** each November. The concert features the music and halftime productions from throughout the season and serves as a celebration of everything the Gold Star Marching Band has accomplished during the year.

The event also includes a **silent auction** benefiting the Gold Star Marching Band and a **pre-concert event** organized by our band service organization, **Tau Beta Sigma**. Additional details, including dates and ticket information, will be shared as they become available, and we encourage all students to invite their families and friends to attend.

We also encourage you to follow the Gold Star Marching Band on social media to stay connected throughout the season. We regularly post photos, videos, announcements, and highlights so family and friends can follow the band's activities from anywhere.

Each of our Facebook groups serves a slightly different purpose, and all are actively updated throughout the year.

- GSMB Friends and Family
- GSMB Fan Page

A typical home football game day is a full-day experience. The band begins the morning with section breakfasts before gathering at the **Fargodome** for a final rehearsal and staging rehearsal. Later in the day, the band reconvenes at the Challey School of Music to warm up and prepare for **Marchover**, where we march across campus, perform a Show Preview, perform for tailgaters, and make our way to the Fargodome for pregame. In recent years, the GSMB has also participated in the **Bison Stampede March** as part of the pregame festivities.

Kickoff times vary throughout the season based on television selections, so game schedules may differ from week to week. Regardless of kickoff time, members should plan on home football games being an all-day commitment. Should the Bison qualify for the **Mountain West Conference Championship Game** or receive a **postseason bowl invitation**, additional performance opportunities may be added to the schedule.

Your Next Steps

Before arriving for Band Camp, please make sure you have completed the following:

- Register for **MUSC 111 – Section 01 (Class #31326)**.
- Complete the **GSMB Commitment Form** by **July 25**. Completing the form by the deadline guarantees your drill coordinates ("dots") for Pregame and the first halftime production.

- If you have a scheduling conflict, contact your academic advisor first. If additional assistance is needed, contact **connor.challey@ndsu.edu** to discuss your options and complete any necessary conflict approval forms.
- Order your marching shoes.
    - **Wind Players:** *(Order form will be sent out on Slack and on Campus email)*
    - **Color Guard**
- Purchase **approved khaki pants and/or shorts** in the official GSMB khaki color and **multiple pairs of long black socks** for performances.
- Review the **Band Camp Packing List** and gather any remaining supplies.
- Join the **Gold Star Marching Band Slack Workspace** using your **NDSU email account**, complete your profile, and enable notifications.
- If you need the **Band Camp Meal Plan**, complete the registration form using your **School email account**.
- Drumline members should begin preparing for auditions using the provided audition materials.
- Watch your **NDSU email** throughout the summer for music, preseason information, and additional instructions, including access to **Stride TV** rehearsal resources.

Questions?

If you have any questions before Band Camp, please don't hesitate to reach out. Staff contact information, student leadership contacts, and additional resources can be found on the **Gold Star Bands website**.

We are excited to welcome you to the **126th season of the Gold Star Marching Band**. Enjoy the rest of your summer, and we'll see you at Band Camp!

Connor Challey

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