4-2-1999

Inside USF : 1999 : 04 : 02 - 1999 : 04 : 15

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T he issue affects every faculty, staff, student, and visitor. It is one of convenience as well as safety.

Traffic

Just how busy are campus roads, and what effect does this have on the safety of the entire university community?

High-traffic areas exist primarily at the popular entry points to the university and are clearly worse during high-traffic hours such as the beginning and end of every university business day.

"Everyone has his or her own favorite ways to get on and off campus," said Barbara Donerly, division head for planning and programming for Facilities Planning, explained the university is entering a phase of immense development which includes new buildings, new parking structures and, hopefully, less traffic.

With the addition of Holly I and II residential complexes will add room for 700 more campus residents. Donerly said this will decrease the number of vehicles on the campus roads.

"Having more resident students should take more cars off the roads during peak hours," Donerly said. "By building a more residential campus, we're really trying to entice students to stay (rather than drive) on campus."

Another effort to decrease the number of vehicles on campus is a pilot program which creates a shuttle route throughout the "apartment rows" directly surrounding campus, servicing complexes such as those on 42nd Street.

"We're looking at providing a circulator bus to the area apartment complexes which would hopefully decrease the stacking effect at intersections such as Pine and Fletcher avenues," Donerly said. "This would also serve the university directly because other students could get on the shuttle and take it to a different location on campus."

Part of this move toward a more residential campus is the enhancement of the entire campus living areas, including Holly Drive, a popular campus cut-through.

As the university enlarges, drivers can expect more temporary headaches requiring patience and plenty of planned alternate routes.

During construction of the new Holly I and II residence hall complexes, Holly Drive will be narrowed, requiring drivers to be more cautious, said Donerly. However, the road will widen and include a bike lane once construction of the new halls is complete. Holly will also have a hint of suburban bia, with trees lining the road.

"Studies have shown that tree-lined streets cause drivers to slow down," Donerly said. "So, not only will this increase the look of the area, but increase the safety as well." Crosswalks in this area will also increase the safety of resident students who frequently cross Holly Drive. Drivers will have to adjust to several other changes with campus roads.

Currently, Laurel Drive has been blocked off to prepare for construction of the new Communication Sciences and Disorders building.

Donerly said, contrary to original assumptions, this closure is helping reduce many traffic concerns.

"This is one of our big attempts to lessen pedestrian-vehicle incidents," she said. "And Mierzewski agreed, saying the closing of Laurel has not created the turmoil many had expected.

Closing the cut-through access between parking lots surrounding the Education Building and the Faculty Office building is a different measure taken by Facilities Planning to further increase the safety of pedestrians.

Parking is another issue directly related to traffic and safety which will be affected by the new campus construction, but Donerly admits parking issues are unpredictable.

"The impact to parking on this campus is fluid as water," Donerly said. "During construction, if we move parking lots, then some faculty and staff will find the new location more convenient and others will park elsewhere because they find it less convenient. It is so difficult to predict."

The new surface parking lot under construction currently behind the credit union is set to open in May, with traffic lights at the entrances set to go up in August.

"We expected this to be a major traffic nightmare," he said. "But I must admit I've been pleasantly surprised at the way Facilities Planning opened alternate routes and how faculty and staff who use this road have adjusted. It makes the area a safer place."

Graduate studies focused on during campaign

The Faculty and Staff Annual Campaign has introduced a new area of giving, allowing university community members to donate exclusively to graduate studies.

The Graduate Fellowship Fund was established through a partnership with President Betty Castor, the President's office and the Graduate Studies Department.

Shields said the idea grew out of a desire to further graduate students' educational opportunities and increase enrollment.

"The fund has only existed since the third week of March, several donations have already been collected. Many people have already given to that fund because the word got out around the graduate school," said Shields. "What better way to highlight an area close to their hearts?"

Dale Johnson, dean of graduate studies, said fellowship establishment is crucial to the competition for top-quality graduate students.

"We are trying to attract the most outstanding students and this is one way to raise funds and increase our visibility," Johnson said. "This is especially important with our Research 1 status."

Johnson said his goal for the disbursement of the fellowships is to allow the different graduate departments the flexibility to offer graduate school appointments competitive packages as soon as USF receives their applications.

"I want to see the fellowships in the hands of the people who need them and let them compete for the students' attention right away," he said. "If we were to make them available before the end of the fellowship, that would deter them."

Donations can be made to The Graduate Fellowship Fund at the gift identification number 391000. The campaign, as of March 24, generated $309,000 toward its $300,000 goal. Collections are expected to continue through the first week of April.
A full year has passed. In that time, employees submitted more than 55 proposals for change affecting the program. Minimiservice Services handles safety, efficiency and spending.

The end result: improvements and an assessment program that Sheila Holbrook said is clearly working.

"I asked employees to submit suggestions which would improve the efficiency and effectiveness of our department," said Holbrook, team leader for the Administrative Services work group. "So far, the proposals submitted from individuals and groups brought about significant changes, such as cuts in spending.

In the middle of this Quality Improvement program (CQI) was initially created more than three years ago to improve customer service on campus. Since that time, work groups have been looking at areas which need enhancement and assessing the suggestions from employees.

"We have advisory work groups which look at the suggestions and develop the training sessions and programs from those suggestions," Holbrook said.

"Right now, we're trying to increase employee participation so we can better serve our customers."

The most important aspect of CQI program, Holbrook said, is the relationship between suggestion and implementation.

"Our employees know we are contacting them," she said. "This process has strengthened our division's increased staff morale. They see their suggestions become a reality.

A review of the program is plan which will look at how the CQI program has impacted department to public interest. It includes a survey for employees.

"We want the university to this process does not only apply to our administrative services, Holbrook said. "Any customers or other departments which interact with us are more welcome to submit suggestions."

For more information on the process or how to submit contact Holbrook at ext. 43212.