

USFSP News

USFSP Embraces On-Campus Learning Communities

The Living Learning Communities at USF St. Petersburg picked up traction this Fall. USFSP has a total of 650 residents with nearly 50 of those students having elected to live in these residential learning environments at the University Student Center.

Living Learning Communities, also called LLCs, are residential communities with a special emphasis on an academic major or area of interest. Since its inception in Fall 2014, the on-campus community has expanded from a 12-student biology-focused LLC called “BioLife” to include two others: Living Green and Leadership.

“These on-campus living communities allow students to live, engage and study with others who share the same interests,” said Gardiner Tucker, interim regional associate vice chancellor of Student Affairs.

Dr. Norine Noonan, professor of Biology and faculty advisor of BioLife, said research supports the idea that residential learning communities enhance both year-to-year retention as well as graduation rates.

“A residential environment built around a specific major promotes study groups and shared academic experiences,” she said. “Students in well-functioning LLCs report feeling more connected to their institution and more ‘invested’ in their own education.”

Noonan, who was instrumental in helping the Living Learning Communities get started at USFSP, said her group has expanded to include 19 freshmen.

“BioLife began as—and still is— a partnership between the Department of Biological Sciences and the Office of Housing and Residential Life,” she added. “There is now a group of folks who meet regularly to talk about the current LLCs and to plan for the future.”

Part of the goal of the Leadership LLC is to bridge the gap between the classroom experience and the community and community leaders. On Oct. 23, Peter Rudy Wallace spoke at the weekly leadership course that is now being offered each Friday during the Fall and Spring terms. The weekly course, geared for freshmen FTIC students residing within the Leadership learning community, is designed to help students discover their own leadership potential.

“The basis of our program is an emphasis on ethical leadership,” said David O’Neill, program assistant in the Bishop Center for Ethical Leadership who coordinates the program with adjunct faculty member Steve Ritch. “Leadership needs to be both effective and ethical – to have one without the other is not good leadership.”

Wallace, who spoke to a class of 22 students, said he was impressed by the collegiality of the group.

“You can tell that these young people—even though they’re only eight weeks into college—know each other already,” he said. “They have a good dynamic underway, and I believe that their familiarity and friendships will help them treat learning as a collaborative experience.”



Peter Rudy Wallace, former Florida Speaker of the House, spoke to the Leadership class in the Peter Rudy Wallace Florida Center for Teachers building. Wallace, for whom the building is named, spoke about the importance of ethical leadership.



Students working together in the Leadership Living Learning Community (LLC) in the University Student Center, from left: Makayla Mitchell, chemical engineering major; Jordan Johnson, accounting major; Joshua Dixon, political science major; and Laura Sinor, psychology major and resident assistant.

