University honors those who served

By Mackenzie Byerlee
Features Editor

The university Veteran's Day ceremony on Nov. 11 was a time to honor those who have served in the military.

Coordinator of Veteran, Military and Adult Learning Support Britt Conroy hosted the program that educated attendees on the history of Veteran's Day.

"It's important that we always recognize Veteran's Day," Conroy said. "I thought that I would have a little history with our 250th anniversary."

Conroy shared the reasoning behind the creation of the holiday and how that impacts the university specifically.

As WWI was resolved at 11 a.m. on Nov. 11, it was decided by President Eisenhower in 1954 that Veteran's Day would be celebrated on this day to recognize everyone that has served.

As far as recognition of veterans at the university goes, Conroy ensures that veteran students always feel seen.

Interim President Sandra Bulmer spoke about Conroy and the importance of her role at the university.

"Britt, we are immensely proud to have you," Bulmer said. "The services you provide have been used as models by institutions across the state and for the past year, earned national recognition victoring the esteemed list of military friendly schools."

The event also featured a veteran alumni panel with speakers, U.S. Navy veteran Patrick Duff and U.S. Marine Corps veteran Luis Gallego Cardona. Both having attended the university after their respective times in the military, they shared their experiences with the audience.

One part of their stories that was the same was how much the Veteran's Center and, specifically founder Jack Mordente, impacted their journeys as students.

"Jack was amazing in making Southern feel like home for us," Duff said. "He served for 50 years and made sure that no one was left behind in anything."

Having a place where students feel like they belong was not only important for Duff and Gallego Cardona, but for the thousands of other veterans that have had their lives touched by the center as well.

In recognizing veterans' hard work and dedication, it was necessary to highlight the work that Mordente has done for the university.

Mordente gave the keynote address and spoke on the importance of showcasing those that have served their country.

"What does Veteran's Day mean to veteran's?" Mordente said. "It's about service, sacrifice, identity and the people they served alongside because much of it happens quietly and without recognition."

With a greater understanding of the military and the historical significance of Veteran's Day, attendees were able to celebrate the holiday in the way that it was intended.

"Today we reflect on the sacrifices of our military students and generations of veterans that have served our country," Bulmer said. "To all of our student veterans, past and present, we thank you."



PHOTOS | WILLIAM GAGNÉ

Former Coordinator of the Office of Veterans and Military Affairs Giacomo "Jack" Mordente, alumni speaker U.S. Navy veteran Patrick Duff, Coordinator of Veteran, Military and Adult Learning Support Britt Conroy and alumni speaker U.S. Marine Corps veteran Luis Gallego Cardona standing together on Nov. 11.



Attendees listening to former Coordinator of the Office of Veterans and Military Affairs Giacomo "Jack" Mordente at the veteran's day ceremony.

Students learn about financial independence

By Noah Nunez
General Reporter

The Life in Motion series, hosted by the Center for Academic Success and Accessibility Services, are presentations going into life in and out of campus and how to budget and manage money, with their final presentation on independent living options being held on Thursday, Nov. 12.

The presentation itself was hosted by two CASAS graduate assistants Becca Byron and Ashley Douglass, a part of MAP programming, who wanted to make sure those in attendance knew the real and, in certain ways, ugly truth about independent living.

"Sometimes it takes a while to get some place. You shouldn't let that discourage you, but especially for recent graduates, there are a lot of financial pressures on people for loan repayment, getting out into the world and just trying to find your own way and figure things out," Byron said.

The basis of the presentation was the 50/30/20 rule, which essentially broke down how much of someone's income goes into individual aspects of that persons life, splitting their money into these three groups.

It means that 50% of what someone makes should go to their housing, including utilities, rent and groceries while 30% should go towards their entertainment and living.

The final 20% should be put into an emergency fund that can be used towards loan payments or as an emergency fund.

Often, though, this means saving money in advance and giving someone in a financially looser position a barrier to allow yourself to live for a couple of months just off money you have saved in advance.

"You should have like six months' worth of rent in your savings just as emergency money, and you need to fix it real quick," Douglass said.

Information like this was often overlaid with the reality of looking for a place to live in our modern reality and how living now often necessitates the sacrifice of some comforts.

"I know friends who picked housing options that they didn't like as much because it was cheaper and thus they could save more to pay back their student loans," Byron said. "You should always sort of try to prioritize yourself just because a loan is always gonna be there, but you want to have a life too."

Life seemed to be a constant obstacle for any advice that was given during this talk, as at any moment life can just happen, leaving nothing but bad things in its wake as fixing the damage takes priority.

Unexpected things like broken cars, unstable buildings, hurt limbs, the cost of living suddenly rising, moving costs being higher than expected, landlords unwilling to cover damages to appliances, dream jobs requiring relocation, or one of these happening to someone close to you requiring your help.

For this reason, Douglass emphasized that attednees should always be preparing for any inconveniences or hardships they may face.

"It's always at your own pace, and when you feel the most comfortable. It's important to remind you as long as you're happy with where you're at and you have some sort of peace of mind with your living space, you're good to go," Douglass said.

'Noche de Gala' showcases Latin culture

By Valentina Toro
Managing Editor

The Organization of Latin American Students hosted its annual "Noche de Gala" on Thursday, Nov. 12, in the Adanti Student Center Ballroom, raising funds for Latino students pursuing higher education while celebrating Brazilian culture through traditional food, music and performances.

The event supported the CALAHE Scholarship Fund, which provides educational opportunities for Latino students. OLAS raises money through ticket sales each fall, combining its fundraising efforts with a celebration of Latin American heritage.

"When students purchase a ticket, they are not just attending an event; they are contributing to an opportunity for another student," biology major Melany Villavicencio, a senior and president of OLAS, said. "That is what we really wish students take away from this event."

This year's gala honored Brazil, a decision inspired by a summer trip taken by Villavicencio and business administration major Catalina Espinosa, a senior and executive board member. Their experiences with Brazilian food, landscapes and traditions influenced the organization's plans for the celebration.

"Between trying new foods like coxinhas, pão de queijo and feijoada and taking in the country's massive mountains, exquisite coasts and vibrant scenery, we were inspired to bring as much of what we experienced into the gala as possible," Villavicencio said.

OLAS partnered with Brazilian businesses in Connecticut to provide food for attendees. Ki Delicia Bakery, a Brazilian bakery and meat market in Bridgeport, donated appetizers, while Banana Brazil in West Haven supplied the main courses.



PHOTO | WILLIAM GAGNÉ

The Organization of Latin American Students' members and guests posing for a photo on Thursday, Nov. 12, in the Adanti Student Center Ballroom.

The organization also invited Capoeira Esperança, a Hamden-based group, to perform capoeira.

The performers played live music and taught attendees common phrases and movements associated with the Brazilian cultural practice.

"By supporting local small businesses, we were able to fill this year's Noche de Gala with genuine Brazilian culture," Villavicencio said.

The OLAS dance team also performed a routine featuring Brazilian and Latin music and dance. Dance coordinators art education major Mariah Cotto and psychology major Ariana Lecates, seniors, led preparations for the performance.

Villavicencio said the team taking over the dance floor was one of the highlights of the evening.

Villavicencio said attendees responded positively to the cultural activities, including the performances and open dance floor.

"They ate delicious food, learned about Brazilian culture, watched incredible performances and danced the rest of the night away," Villavicencio said.

During the gala, OLAS executive board members addressed attendees about the organization's role in their college experiences and the importance of continuing its annual fundraising tradition.

Villavicencio said the moment also marked an opportunity to reflect on years of involvement with OLAS, as nearly all current executive board members are expected to graduate in the spring.

Beyond fundraising, the organization aimed to increase Latin American representation and provide opportunities for students, faculty and staff to learn about different cultures.

"Being able to connect with people who share a similar upbringing or cultural background makes a huge difference in feeling at home on campus," Villavicencio said.

Villavicencio credited OLAS with providing a community of students who shared similar cultural experiences and said events like "Noche de Gala" extend that sense of belonging to the broader university community.

"For Latin American students and staff, it is a proud moment to see our heritage celebrated on a big stage," Villavicencio said. "At the same time, it opens the door for the rest of the campus community to experience, appreciate and learn about a culture that means so much to their peers and colleagues."