New OwlConnect opens doors to involvement

By Kadisha Pierre-Louis
News Editor

Finding the right club, organization or campus event can be difficult for students who are unsure of where to start. This semester, the university is hoping its new OwlConnect system will make it easier for students to discover opportunities and become more involved on campus.

Daphney Alston, associate director of Student Involvement and Leadership Development, said the new system is designed to improve the experience for both students and organization leaders.

"It'll make things easier for student organizations leaders to manage their clubs as well, to do more forms online as opposed to paper. So, it just makes things a lot more efficient," Alston said.

The updated platform is designed to give students a simpler way to find organizations and events while also making it easier for student organization leaders to manage their clubs.

"The new system also allows student organization leaders to complete more forms online rather than relying on paper forms," Alston said.

The changes are intended to make managing student organizations more efficient. Alston expects the new system to become a new part of the campus experience

For students, one of the main features of the updated system is the ability to create a profile and receive recommendations for organizations and events.



PHOTOS | SCSU WEBSITE

Daphney Alston, associate director or Student Involvement and Leadership Department.



A screenshot photo of the opening page of the updated OwlConnect Monday, Sept. 21.

University departments will also have OwlConnect pages, allowing students to see different activities and events happening across campus in one place.

"When you log on and create your profile, it'll recommend different events and organizations for you to participate in," Alston said.

Getting involved outside of the classroom can provide students with skills that benefit them beyond college. Alston said involvement can help students become more employable while developing their leadership skills and becoming more aware of their leadership identities.

"You want to make sure you're doing something outside of the classroom because that makes you more employable, a global citizenship, and just being more aware of your leadership identity and skills," Alston said

Students find campus involvement through unexpected and informal ways, while platforms like OwlConnect provide an easy way for students to search through various clubs to find their community on campus.

Early childhood education major Isabelle Velazquez, a freshman, said she initially attended the organizations meeting due to seeing a social media post promoted on Instagram.

"I saw it on Instagram, and I thought it was just a free food event. Had no idea it was a body meeting, so I'm sitting here like a sore thumb," Velazquez said.

Although the introduction was unexpected, Velazquez enjoyed the meeting and members and stayed involved, showing how campus promotions can encourage students to discover organizations.

Students can join clubs in ways such as OwlConnect or just through being on campus and being open to different events being promoted on campus.

"It definitely has helped because getting to know people makes you more comfortable in everything. And definitely made me feel more connected with the school," early childhood education major Julie Cole, a freshman, said

For early childhood education major Gernasia Ward, a freshman, campus involvement has given her the opportunity to meet new people from different backgrounds she might not have encountered if she did not get involved on campus.

"Just meeting new people, seeing where they come from, what their story is interesting and important for everything in life," Ward said.

The university also plans to use OwlConnect to better understand student involvement on campus.

The updated OwlConnect provides more data analytics, allowing the university to track information such as how often students log in, which organizations they join and which events they attend.

"We gather information about who's logging on OwlConnect, how often people are logging on, what groups folks are part of, who's involved, who's not involved and what types of events people are going to," Alston said

However, the transition to a new platform has not been completely without challenges.

Students and organization leaders still must learn how to navigate the new system, which Alston described as part of the "growing pains."

While OwlConnect can help students discover organizations and events, Alston said students still must make the effort to become involved.

"There's a group for everybody. There's something happening all the time. And really the hardest step is just stepping outside your comfort zone and just being open to what's happening in front of you," Alston said

Students who step outside their comfort zones may find an organization or community where they belong.

Lantern flies invade campus

By Julian Markese
Contributor

As students and staff walk around campus, they may spot grey and red ash carcasses laying crushed on the stairs, sidewalks and windowsills.

The spotted red lantern fly is back.

"I know that they are bad for the environment," English major Keira Kaminsky, a junior, said.

Spotted lantern flies are not native to Connecticut, but they now inhabit all eight counties and at least 153 towns, according to Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Center Director Jason White.

Each Connecticut county has at least 18 tree species that are known hosts of the bug, according to data from the Integrative Ecology Lab at Temple University.

The Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection has clear cut instructions for citizens: kill the lantern flies.

They do not harm humans directly, but by cutting off resources to trees, they threaten to disrupt the current ecosystem.

The spotted lantern fly can feed over 70 different plant species, according to a fact sheet published by the Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Center.

Kaminsky, who said she is typically hesitant to impose herself on her natural environment, said she views lantern flies differently than other critters.

"They are actively harming the environment and making life harder than it already is," Kaminsky said. "I think that justifies killing them."

She is not alone.

Environmental systems and sustainability major Marina Salicki, a junior, who describes herself as an "animal lover, shares the same perspective.



PHOTO | JULIAN MARKESE

A photo of a Latern fly spotted outside on campus on Sept. 15.



PHOTO | EMMA GONZALEZ

Latern flies squished on the sidewalk in front of Connecticut Hall on Sept. 15.

"I capture them alive and put them in jars," Salicki said. "I line them up in my bedroom."

U.S. Sen. Richard Blumenthal is seeking to introduce legislation that would appropriate federal funds towards Connecticut's fight against the lantern fly.

According to Connecticut Post, Blumenthal's proposed legislation would allocate between $20 million and $50 million toward the effort.

But boots, jars and even federal funding may not be enough.

According to an informational flyer from the Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station, we might never eradicate the lantern fly from the country.

Philosophy professor Chelsea Harry, who teaches a class on the ethics of sustainability, said that there are ethical questions for students to consider.

"Why does this particular lantern fly, minding its own business, just trying to survive like any other living being, deserve to die?" Harry said.

Harry said despite the invasive nature of these insects, it is important to weigh the ethical concerns.

"Obviously, this is an important concern but is the solution to eradicate the existence of an established population of living beings?" Harry said. "Perhaps, there is another way."

That other way, suggested by Harry, might come in the form of relocation — a proposal that she acknowledges raises questions of its own.

But at the center of the issue is anthropocentrism: they often carried belief that humans are the most important beings on the planet.

Harry said that when society seeks to fix one problem, the solution is often misguided and thus both possible outcomes "are problematic."

Here lies the dilemma for the student who sees the still breathing lantern fly just beneath their feet.

NABA helps launch student careers

By Emma Gonzalez
Contributor

Many students gathered in Room 302 of the School of Business, to attend the National Association of Black Accountants on Sept. 15 for an internship application bootcamp.

According to the NABA organization website, NABA is a nonprofit membership organization which aims to advance business leaders in accounting, finance, business and entrepreneurship. They have 50 chapters across the United States – the university having one of them.

"I've been looking for higher opportunities," business marketing major Chakour Biao, a senior, said. "I'm using the opportunities that are available to me here while still trying to secure ones that are outside of Southern."

Students were able to receive help from NABA executive board members to polish and form resumes, as well as search for internships that are catered towards everyone.

The event was split into two different sections – the students who needed to finish up and polish resumes and the students who had resumes and were ready to apply to scholarships.

Biao said that he was one of students who had a resume.

"I can search and find things by myself, but who knows if there will be a personal opportunity that someone may have just from seeing what I'm doing," Biao said.

The NABA executive board members were able to find 55 internships for students that varied in majors, such as business and marketing.

"I'm a first year and I just wanted to get a head-start on the internship and job application process," business administration major Ilyas Ali, a freshman, said.



PHOTO | EMMA GONZALEZ

Students at the NABA meeting Sept. 15.

Many of the students in attendance needed to finish up and polish their resumes.

NABA executive board members helped each student by giving them tips on how to better their resumes, as well as answer any questions.

"One of the first things you need to do is have a resume and build it, so I wanted to start that," Ali said.

When students were ready to browse internships, all the information was organized in a spreadsheet. They were able to access applications, deadlines, locations, various roles and the major or department it catered towards.

"We wanted to bring awareness that there are internships," finance major Jessy Ebengo, a senior and NABA president, said.

Ebengo knew that students struggle with finding internships, in fact he had overheard many other students saying how difficult it is to get recruited.

"I wanted to figure out what it is the firms are looking for that students do not have; to which some recruiters mentioned that student resumes were not lined up with what they were looking for," Ebengo said.

Throughout the event, Ebengo went around the room, offering to look at students' resumes as well as making sure the students had all the internship information.

"In order for the members to have access to the internships, they need to have their resumes ready and well prepared," Ebengo said, "so we added resume checkups to elevate the students professionally."

During the event, Ebengo allowed students to familiarize themselves with each other.

"One of the reasons behind this is to build a community of people who can help each other," Ebengo said.

Biao had a similar idea about the event, noting that networking is one step towards success.

"I think that especially with business out of all things, opportunities come with speaking and knowing people," Biao said.