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Class of 2030 celebrates move-in day

By Brianna Wallen
Editor-in-Chief

By Valentina Toro
Managing Editor



PHOTO | ERIC RUIZ

Parents and students unloading their luggage into bins on Aug. 22.

For many first-year students, move-in day brought more than boxes and new dorm rooms — it marked the beginning of independence and a new chapter at the university.

Students and families arrived across campus to settle into residence halls for the fall semester.

"I would say move-in Day at Hickerson was definitely a full-on experience with the families and the students as well," Hickerson Hall director Kimoya Bowman, said. "Overall, Move-In Day was exciting. It was enjoyable. It was emotional and it was also very structured."

At Hickerson Hall, about 142 students moved in on Move-In Day, with more arriving throughout the following week. By Saturday, Aug. 29, the hall housed about 150 students.

Volunteers from across campus helped make the transition easier for students and their families.

Student-athletes and facilities staff assisted with carrying belongings, navigating the building and getting students into their rooms.

Psychology major Mariah Hartshorn, a sophomore who volunteered at Chase Hall, said helping first-year students gave her the opportunity to ease some of the uncertainty that comes with arriving on campus.

"It's nice to see everyone come in and help to ease some nerves that the freshmen have," Hartshorn said.

Sociology major Zion Dowie, a sophomore, also volunteered at Chase Hall alongside Suzanne and a dog with Guiding Eyes for the Blind.

Dowie said students interacted with Suzanne throughout the day, giving them a moment to relax during the moving process.

"My favorite part was seeing the community gather," Dowie said. "I like how everyone is working together to move residents in."

For business administration major Laziya-Isa Trowell, a freshman, moving onto campus was a family experience.

Her parents, aunt and two younger sisters joined her as she settled into her residence hall. Once she settled, she began looking ahead to becoming involved in campus life.

"I'm excited to join clubs and be a part of the events on campus," Trowell said.

Preparation for Move-In Day began before families arrived. Resident advisers and residence life assistants spent time during training, decorating floors, creating door decorations and preparing common areas to welcome their new residents.

Hickerson's main lobby was decorated with a Pokémon theme this semester, while individual floors featured their own themes, like Dragon Ball Z and Kim Possible.

The transition also brought emotional moments for families. At Hickerson Hall, families were able to write letters to their students that will be secretly delivered later in the semester.

Bowman said the activity gave families a chance to leave something behind as their students began living away from home.

For some students, the day represented their first time living independently.

Bowman said the experience can bring curiosity, confidence and excitement, but students can also feel overwhelmed as they adjust to new people, responsibilities and surroundings.

Resident advisers were among the first people students met as they entered their new campus homes.

Pschology major Jerome Lowery, a junior and Neff Hall resident advisor, said reassuring families was an important part of the day, especially for parents leaving their students at college for the first time.

For Lowery, Move-In Day was not only about getting students into their rooms but also beginning relationships that will continue throughout the semester.

"I'm excited to build a bond with my residents," Lowery said. "I'm ready to make connections with my residents and help them feel welcomed here at Southern, and I feel like Move-In Day was the first step in doing that."

New Student Convocation marks a new chapter

By Valentina Toro
Managing Editor

For the university's newest students, New Student Convocation marked more than the beginning of classes.

It officially welcomed them into a community they will call home throughout their college experience.

"I hope they take away the fact that they are part of our community, that they're no longer students who are looking at Southern. They are a part of Southern," Sergio Perez, vice president for diversity, equity and inclusion, said.

About 1,100 incoming freshmen gathered for the annual ceremony before taking their symbolic first steps through Founders Gate, a university tradition representing the beginning of their academic journey.

University leaders encouraged students to become involved, seek support and take advantage of the opportunities available to them.

Perez said Founders Gate represents the generations of students who have attended the university and the responsibility new students have to continue building on the work of those who came before them.

For Perez, beginning college can bring uncertainty as students adjust to a different environment, meet new people and take on greater responsibilities.

He encouraged students to seek help when they need it and remember that they have a community around them.

"Relax, take a step back, seek help," Perez said. "You are surrounded by a community that wants to help you and knows you can be successful and enjoy the experience."

Alumna Joy Osahon offered students advice drawn from her own experience at the university.

Osahon told students that getting involved on campus helped shape who she became beyond the classroom and those experiences have stayed with her throughout more than 15 years of her career.

Osahon also reflected on her own experience, by sharing that she struggled academically after entering the university as a pre-nursing major.

She told students that experience changed her understanding of the effort college requires.

"Hard work and discipline have to be etched into your mind," Osahon said.

Osahon encouraged students to attend class, seek tutoring and use the Writing Center when they need additional support.

She also encouraged them to participate in campus programs, even when they are unsure about getting involved.

For journalism major Sanaa Bellamy, a freshman, the ceremony reinforced the sense of community they felt while beginning college.

"They're very welcoming, very accepting, and this is a good community to be around," Bellamy said.

Bellamy said she is looking forward to meeting new people, beginning classes and becoming more involved in the university.

One part of Convocation that particularly stood out was the candle-lighting ceremony, a tradition she had not experienced before.

"The candle-lighting ceremony really stood out to me," Bellamy said. "I've never really seen something like that, but I think it's really cool, especially how it's tradition."

Each flame lit more than a candle; it lit the beginning of a new chapter for the Class of 2030.

University leadership also reminded students that college gives them greater independence, but that independence comes with more choices and responsibilities.

Students were encouraged to explore their interests and use their time at the university to determine what they want from their college experience.

As students begin their first semester, the message of Convocation centered on making the most of the opportunities ahead.

"You chose Southern, now make Southern yours," interim president Sandra Bulmer said.

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PHOTOS | WILLIAM GANGÉ

Interim President Bulmer delivering a speech during the New Student Convocation Ceremony on Monday, Aug. 24, on the Lyman Center stage.



Freshmen walking through the Founders Gate after the New Student Convocation Ceremony on Monday, Aug. 24.