Interim President Bulmer shares student resources

By Kadisha Pierre-Louis
News Editor



PHOTOS | SCSU WEBSITE
Interim President Sandra Bulmer.

Q: What resources are available to students who are struggling?
A: "The Dean of Students Office is really a one-stop shop for a student who are in crisis at different levels, whether it is financial or whether there's some other really difficult situation outside the classroom that they've encountered.

The Dean of Students can direct them to mental health counseling, the food pantry, the financial aid office and other resources and really be the case manager to make sure that students get their challenge addressed."

Q: How does the university respond when students are facing financial difficulties?
A: "Our Financial Aid Office works with students during the application process to put together packages that include federal financial aid, state funding, merit awards and other forms of assistance.

We also have people who work directly with students who are at risk of dropping out because of financial challenges.

They explore every possibility for ways to close that gap.

Sometimes that includes counseling about student loan programs, looking at jobs on campus or even looking at whether going to community college for a few semesters would allow them to complete some general education classes at a lower cost.

We have a real individual approach to handling those situations as they come up."

Q: What other forms of emergency support are available to students?
A: "Our Dean of Students division has the food pantry here on campus.

They also have emergency funding for textbooks and some emergency housing options if students find themselves without housing.

There are many students who run into pretty difficult personal situations and might need some temporary assistance.

We have donors who have given us money during our Day of Caring, so we have a small amount of money that can be used for unanticipated emergencies that students experience."

Q: Why might students not know about these resources?
A: "It's a fine line. If we widely advertise that, it will bring an enormous number of people forward, and we don't have the resources to sort through those requests to see which are more important.

We would run out of money quickly. That's why it has been more of when we see, learn or hear about a student, or a student comes forward with a substantial challenge we mobilize ourselves and look at that as one of the options for how we help them."

Q: What do you want students to know about the resources available to them?
A: "Every person here really does want students to be successful I think people forget that sometimes.

Students should be looking at each person as a resource and looking at all the offices, services and events as resources that someone has already invested in and that are waiting to be utilized by students as part of the tuition and fees they've already paid.

We've tried to put everything a student would need in place here, but so many students never use those resources.

It's a shame because one of those resources might have made all the difference."

Provost Irwin highlights student success initiatives



Interim Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs Julia Irwin.

By Kadisha Pierre-Louis
News Editor

Q: What are some of the biggest challenges facing freshmen and transfer students?
A: "Being a first-time, full-time freshman and being a transfer student both involves new processes, a new campus, new faculty and finding your way around.

There's an additional challenge if you're a freshman because you just haven't been a college student yet. It's a change in roles. It's a change in identity.

We have a lot of students who are the first in their family to go to college, so perhaps they don't know what to expect or feel intimidated."

Q: What does the university do to help students who are struggling to adjust to college?
A: "That first-year experience, including the INQ inquiry classes, is explicitly designed to help them get advised, get their bearings and learn from experts on campus, including faculty and staff.

We have CASAS [located in Buley Library Room 303], which has tutoring and assistance with accommodations, that's a way to help.

We also use Navigate, which is one of the programs we use to indicate that maybe a student is not doing well and then they will get extra support."

Q: What are some of the biggest priorities for Academic Affairs when it comes to supporting students this semester?
A: "One thing that we're absolutely making sure that we do, and its based on a federal regulation, is that our materials online are accessible.

I think it's really important that our goals are not just academic.

Our accredited body has some new guidelines that include things like belonging, being seen and comfort.

So, I think major goals are to keep academic excellence but also identify community and personhood."

Q: Are there any new initiatives or changes that you believe will have the biggest impact on students this academic year?
A: "There are some initiatives. One is that the vice president for DEI and myself have coordinated to create Inclusive Teaching Fellows.

Those are faculty who are going through some training to make sure there's inclusivity on campus and in the classroom.

Another thing we're doing is a pilot program with the math department because students sometime struggle with Math 100P.

We're having smaller classes and more direct teaching to see if we can move the needle on that one."

Q: How does the university determine whether its efforts to support students are successful?
A: "We always have a set of metrics that I think probably every university uses, which is persistence and retention.

'Are they finishing out the semester? Are they registering for the following semester?'

We regularly track who is in classes, how they're doing and how they're progressing.

That's been a long-term approach at the university."

Q: What is one thing you want incoming freshmen and transfer students to know about the university's commitment to supporting them?
A: "I want them to know what the resources are. So, when you have a bad day, or when things are getting you down, this degree is something to be proud of.

I think Southern is trying to create the best institution we can. Being proud and being excited is helpful."

Freshmen embrace their first week at the university

By Kadisha Pierre-Louis
News Editor

For many freshmen, the first weeks of college come with a mix of excitement, nerves and a lot of new experiences. From navigating classes to meeting new people, students are learning what it means to call campus home.

Nursing major Rochelle Reed said her first week at the university was a positive experience, as she has spent time finding out what campus has to offer.

"I've been exploring campus a lot, learning new stuff," Reed said.

Reed said that during the first week of classes, she attended the Involvement Fair, where she discovered clubs that caught her interest.

As the semester continues, Reed hopes to become more involved, meet new people and make new friends.

"I look forward to being more involved on campus, joining clubs, trying to meet new people, making new friends and having a great college experience," Reed said.

Accounting major Bianca Siquar said that she believes that finding a new connection at the university is a part of her college experience.

"As a commuter, I feel connected to the campus. I want to definitely join clubs and help out more around the campus," Siquar said.

As the semester moves forward, students have the opportunity to continue their academic journey, create new friendships and create experiences of their own.

Healthcare studies major Pelumi Omosowone said her peers and the campus environment have been welcoming.

"I met a lot of people within the first week and I got to know my professors," Omosowone said.

Omosowone revealed that after making connections, she did not know why she was nervous to start the semester.

"I would tell myself in May not to be nervous because everything will be OK," Omosowone said.

Whether it was first-day jitters or anxieties about finding classes, many freshmen share a similar experience.

Along with adjusting to campus, other freshmen are while making major changes in their academic career.

Data science major Lismary Salcedo said that her first week was full of changes.

"I changed my major from nursing to data science, so that was an adjustment," Salcedo said.

To help with the transition, Salcedo said that her INQ 101 class also gave her an opportunity to learn more about campus and various departments.

"I feel like the first week helped my adjust to college," Salceod said. "My class did tours around campus and showed me multiple resources I could use."

Apart from academics, Salcedo said she enjoyed attending various campus events.

Salcedo said that her favorite was OwlChella, hosted by the Residence Hall Association, where she enjoyed making custom T-shirts and taking pictures with her new friends.

After completing her first official week of classes, Salcedo shares a positive sentiment regarding her decision to attend this university.

"I truly felt at home and can see myself flourishing here at Southern," Salcedo said.



PHOTOS | BRIANNA WALLEN
Data science major Lismary Salcedo studying in Chase Hall common area.



Healthcare studies major Pelumi Omosowone in Jennings Hall.