‘Pep Rally’ sparks blue and white pride

By Noah Nunez
General Reporter

Hundreds of students gathered together in the Wintergreen Parking Lot at Moore Field House on Thursday, Oct. 8 for the university’s “Pep Rally” to cheer on and celebrate the football team before their homecoming game.

The event itself saw many students celebrate the accomplishments of the university’s team, including Nicholas Fournier, a graduate, excited for the football team’s game.

“This is like the first year where we just have like heavy hitters all around, like this is the best start to a football season that I have seen. Homecoming, my freshman year, we lost like 50 nothing,” Fournier said.

The event saw multiple sports teams going on stage to thank students and faculty for their support in showing up to the event and being there for the players.

With the Homecoming game being a few days away from when the event took place, the football team as a whole took the time to go up on stage and deliver a message collectively thanking everyone.

“I just want to thank you guys for all the support this season. You guys should come out on Jess Dow on Saturday; we’ll throw on a show for you. We appreciate all the support; it doesn’t go unnoticed,” the team said.

Along with the celebration that went on, there were multiple vendors and activities to take part in, such as a strap-in trampoline and a snow cone stand meant for students to enjoy as the night went on.

Students such as political science major Zaeda Reid, a sophomore, found the event to be fun and a nice way to relax as they went into midterms.

“It just gives us something fun to do. Like, it’s October, so we’re dealing with like schoolwork upcoming midterms; I guess it relieves some type of stress by being surrounded by the people that give the community,” Reid said.

The event went on into the night with dance battles and giveaways happening on stage while students gathered up front to wait in anticipation or join in on the dancing.

Events like this are what students like nursing major Kamia Vaughn, a sophomore, look forward to.

“It’s a good start to our weekend,” Vaughn said. “I won’t have to travel off campus.”

Even with the size of the university, getting students and faculty close together like this shows how we are more than just a group of students huddled together.

“I mean, we’re like a small campus, but we aren’t at the same time, so it’s nice to have just athletes and nonathletes being able to come together, mingle, hang out and have fun with each other,” Fournier said.

The event eventually wound down with the music coming to an end and the dancing dissolving away, but the message being sent with events like these is support and community.

Saying and doing are two very different things. Students can talk about supporting sports teams all they want, but being there is another thing; at events like these, they can show the Owls their support and still have a fun night.



PHOTOS | WILLIAM GAGNÉ

Cheerleaders dancing at the ‘Pep Rally’ in the Wintergreen Parking Lot on Thursday, Oct. 8.



Students standing in the crowd while emcees perform on stage.



Communication major Aidon McCray, a junior, and business administration major Chaz Jamez, a junior emceeing.

Growing threat of phishing emails

By Elena Panora-Jara
Contributor

When earth science major Eliza Sweeney, a sophomore, received an email warning that her university account could be deactivated because she was registered at multiple institutions, the message made sense.

The first-year transfer student had active email accounts at other schools, so she wondered whether the university somehow knew about them.

“I literally had to text my mother a screenshot, and I was like, ‘do you think this is real?’” Sweeney said.

It was not real. It was a phishing attempt, and just one kind of message that students regularly encounter in their Outlook inbox.

These emails range from scams promising free items to impersonations of legitimate university communications.

As spam and phishing emails continue to make their way into inboxes, students must determine whether a message is real or not.

According to Tom Armstrong, vice president of technology and chief information officer, the university uses multiple layers of cybersecurity to filter through emails for malicious links or harmful scams, while staff members review suspicious emails.

The university also relies on students reporting messages they believe are phishing attempts.

At the same time, the university must determine the level of cybersecurity enforcement it uses to protect students without hindering genuine communication.

“We try to find the balance between ‘how locked down do we want to be?’ versus how open so we can enjoy that collaborative sort of nature in higher ed,” Armstrong said.

But even with safeguards in place, Armstrong recognizes that phishing emails can be difficult for users. He said attackers are becoming more sophisticated, and emails are becoming increasingly realistic.

“The logos are right; the colors are right. They’re using the name of someone right. So really it’s getting harder for our users,” Armstrong said.

For students like nursing major Maylin Mercedes, a freshman, a key factor in telling the difference between a phishing attempt and a real email is looking for the university logo at the bottom.

“I know that all the verified emails and stuff, they have it. All the scam ones I noticed don’t have it,” Mercedes said.

One email detailed a remote job offer, but Mercedes immediately recognized it as suspicious.

“I just knew like, oh, that’s too good to be true. Like there’s no way,” Mercedes said.

Armstrong said students who are unsure about an email they received should pause before responding and verifying the message before doing anything else.

“If you’re not sure, call the help desk,” Armstrong said.

According to the “Help Desk” page on Inside-SouthernCt.edu, it is important to contact the help desk if you suspect you are a victim of malicious spam/phishing.

“It is not only for your protection, but also for the protection of the university that you have your account and university machines inspected” the website states.

For more on this story visit thesouthernnews.com

Food insecurity drives demand

By Lily Dalton
Contributor

The university Food Pantry has seen an increase in usage, as rising living costs and greater awareness of the resource have brought more students through the door.

Over the past three years, the pantry usage has more than tripled, recording 1,381 visits throughout the 2023-24 academic year compared to 4,971 visits documented during the 2025-26 academic year.

“Prices haven’t been this high in a while, so students genuinely need this food rather than want it,” Food Pantry graduate intern Zaina Gebril said.

The need for the Food Pantry was clear throughout the campus community.

“On average, 1 in 3 college students face some type of food insecurity,” Alandre Alexis, student affairs case coordinator for the dean of students and food pantry supervisor, said. “With around 9,000 students at Southern, 3,000 students on our campus are dealing with food insecurity, yet we still expect them to write a 15-page paper on the American Revolution; you can’t do that while trying to focus on your basic needs.”

Recent federal cuts to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program have also resulted in an increase in the pantry’s usage.

“Honestly, when SNAP got cut, it was really hard to keep up with the pantry,” Gebril said, “since everything was more expensive and there was a higher demand for groceries.”

Reduced stigma surrounding food insecurity has also positively impacted the food pantry’s usage.

“We, as a state institution, are a close, true representation of our surrounding communities, many of which are low-income,” Alexis said. “However, part of me wants to think there are some positive reasons behind the increase; I think we’ve done very well addressing the stigma when it comes to visiting the pantry, so we’ve seen a lot more people be willing to use it.”

With an increase in demand, the pantry now operates year-round. They are open 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Mondays and Wednesdays and 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. Tuesdays and Thursdays.

“I feel very comfortable using the pantry. There are not many restrictions, and I haven’t had a bad experience,” nursing major Chrystophe Obiang Ze, a senior, said.

The pantry aims to be easily accessible to all students.

“Food insecurity looks different for everyone; there is no definitive picture of food insecurity. It really could look like any of us,” Alexis said.

The pantry has put limits on student intake to make sure every student has fair access.

Students are allowed to take two of the same item, such as drinks and canned items, at a time.

“We’re here to provide for all students, but I do wish that everyone respected the limits we have in place,” Gebril said.

The pantry demand has opened up new opportunities to access all kinds of necessities.

“It started off with mainly canned goods, now we have donations from bakeries with pastries and all kinds of ready-to-go meals,” Gebril said. “We’re getting a lot more produce and healthier food items, toiletries, hygiene items and baby supplies.”

“I really like the cereals and drinks they have; they’re the ones I really rely on,” Obiang Ze said.

With the growing need and high demand for the pantry, keeping the shelves stocked remains a top priority.

“Make the small effort to help; no effort is too small,” Alexis said.

The university community can support the pantry by donating through the Support Our Student fund or purchasing needed items through their Amazon Wishlist.



PHOTOS | LILY DALTON

Food Pantry graduate intern Zaina Gebril on Aug. 31.



A sign marking the entrance to the university’s Food Pantry located in Wintergreen Building.