SOAR creates space for student success

By Valentina Toro
Features Editor

For many multilingual students, finding a sense of belonging on campus can be just as challenging as keeping up in the classroom.

At the university, a new initiative is working to change that through SOAR, which stands for Support, Opportunity, Achievement and Readiness, a program within the Center for Academic Success and Advising Services designed to support students academically while helping them build community.

"We want to make sure to give them a safe space to come and build that community and meet other people just like them who might be having the same struggles and barriers and share those experiences," Kristin Feliciano, graduate intern for CASAS, said.

SOAR focuses on multilingual students and works alongside existing English Language Learner resources to help students navigate both academic and social aspects of college life.

Feliciano said many multilingual students face challenges that extend beyond coursework.

"A lot of the time, those students face language barriers, which not only affect them academically but personally," Feliciano said. "A lot of the times, it affects their college experience. So, they don't feel like they can connect with others and build community."

Those barriers, Feliciano said, can make it harder for students to fully engage on campus or access the support systems available.

SOAR was created to help bridge that gap by offering a welcoming environment.

"We want to make sure that they have a place where they feel supported,"Feliciano said.

Although still in its early stages, the program is expected to offer a mix of academic and social programming.

Organizers plan to collaborate with campus offices to introduce students to available resources while also hosting events.

"We definitely want a mix of fun and creativity as well as an opportunity for them to advance and become successful personally, academically and socially," Feliciano said.

One of the program's biggest challenges is reaching students who may not be aware of the support available.

"Our number one goal is to bring students in," Feliciano said. "We want to meet all these great, amazing students and be there to support them."

SOAR is designed to serve as that entry point, helping students connect with resources that can support both their academic progress and overall college experience.

Organizers say out-reach and consistent programming are key to building that connection.

Beyond recruitment, the program's long-term goal centers on advocacy and inclusion for students.

"We want to make sure that they have a community to come to and a safe space and make sure that we're advocating for them," Feliciano said.

For Feliciano, the program is also shaped by her own college experience and the importance of feeling connected on campus.

"I think back to my own college experience and how much I would have loved to be able to meet new people and get involved, making sure that we have those supports present so that these students have equal opportunity to academic success at Southern," Feliciano said.



PHOTOS | INSTAGRAM
SOAR official flyer displays information about the services offered to students.



A flyer displays details for the SOAR program's first welcome event.

Student creators grow through new club

By Valentina Toro
Features Editor

For students hoping to turn creativity into something more, The Content Creatives are building a space where ideas come to life.

The student-led digital media club brings together creators across disciplines, from videography to modeling and social media content, with a focus on helping members grow their personal brands and portfolios.

"Literally, our vision is for every member to grow into a confident creator with a real portfolio, a real audience and real opportunities," business administration major and president of The Content Creatives Natalie Forbes, a sophomore, said.

The organization aims to give students practical experience that extends beyond the classroom.

Members work on creating content, collaborating with others and building an online presence that can help them attract opportunities such as internships or future employment.

Forbes said that while platforms like LinkedIn are important, visual and social portfolios are becoming increasingly valuable in creative industries.

The club encourages students to actively showcase their work and develop a digital footprint that reflects their skills.

What sets The Content Creatives apart from other media organizations on campus is its broad and inclusive approach.

Rather than focusing on one specific medium, the club always welcomes anyone interested in any form of content creation regardless of experience.

"It's for anyone that just wants to create content in any form," Forbes said. "You can come here, meet people, collaborate and maybe even find your next creative partner."

The idea for the club grew from Forbes' own experience when she first arrived at the university and struggled to find a space dedicated specifically to content creation.

While other organizations existed, she said there was a gap for students looking to explore digital media in a more flexible, creative environment.

Forbes said creative fields often require students to build their own experience independently, making it essential to have access to resources and opportunities early on.

"For creative paths, you really have to build your experience," Forbes said. "You need a portfolio, and you need to be able to show what you can do."

Through meetings and collaborations, the club provides a space where students can begin building that experience while connecting with others.

Members are encouraged to experiment and support one another's projects

This semester, the organization is focused on expanding its presence across campus.

Increasing visibility through content production and promotion is a priority along with continuing to strengthen the sense of community within the club.

Beyond technical skills, The Content Creatives emphasized confidence and self-expression.

Forbes said many students hesitate to share their work or pursue creative interests out of fear, something the club actively works to address.

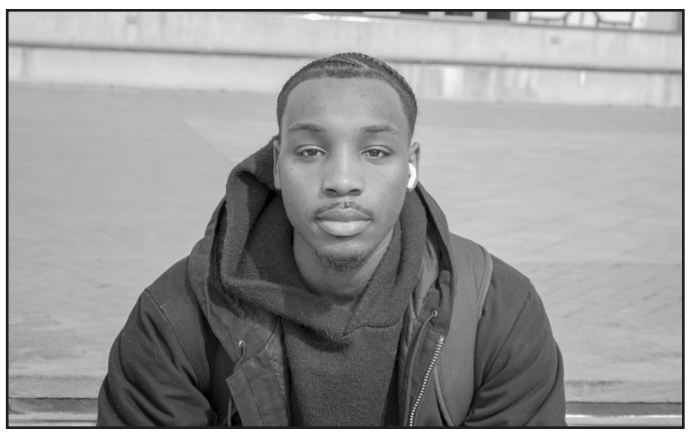
By creating a supportive environment, the organization hopes to help students take that first step toward putting themselves out there.

For those considering joining, Forbes said the decision often comes down to taking a chance on themselves.

"If you're thinking about it, you might as well just join," Forbes said. "Don't be afraid to put yourself out there. This is your first step, and you never know where it's going to take you."

Owls Decide: Dunkin' or Starbucks?

By Valentina Toro
Features Editor



PHOTOS | LILY RAND
"Dunkin', it has a better spot than Starbucks."
-Communication major Malachy Murray, a sophomore



"Dunkin' because I'm boycotting Starbucks, and it's cheaper."
-Computer science major Kieran Veter, a senior



"Starbucks: I mainly like their refreshers, and they have more variety."
-Elementary education major Mia Cruz, a freshman



"Starbucks because it has better quality."
-Nursing major Stephanie Pinard, a freshman



"Dunkin' because I like their food options more."
-Nursing major Leanne Petonito, a freshman



"Starbucks because I always get a nice americano."
-Communication major Saniah Wint, a junior