

Swap Shop offers free office supplies

By Valentina Toro
Features Editor

By redirecting unused supplies back into circulation, the university’s Swap Shop gives faculty and staff a free and sustainable alternative to buying new office materials while helping departments stretch tight budgets and reduce campus waste.

Located in Engleman Hall Room C108, the Swap Shop operates as a reuse store where people can pick up donated office supplies at no cost, with inventory supplied by departments across campus.

“I learned about the Swap Shop through the email blasts that they send to staff about it,” Christina West-Webster, a program assistant in the Office of Workforce and Lifelong Learning said.

Run through the Office of Sustainability, the Swap Shop is designed to reduce unnecessary purchasing while keeping usable materials out of the waste stream. Shelves are stocked with binders, folders, organizers and other office basics, along with occasional specialty items.

Instead of immediately placing orders through vendors, employees are encouraged to browse the store first.

The approach supports

both waste reduction and internal resource sharing, two goals that align with broader campus sustainability efforts.

For West-Webster, the shop has become a practical starting point when her office needs supplies. Checking what is available before buying new items helps lower departmental spending and sometimes turns up unexpected materials.

“It’s the first place that we go to find supplies to save our budget — burden on our budget — and it’s a great place to find unique finds,” West-Webster said. Because the inventory depends on donations, the selection changes regularly. That variation makes each visit different and encourages repeat trips when new items arrive.

Beyond cost savings, West-Webster said the environmental benefit is one of the strongest reasons she recommends the Swap Shop to other employees across campus.

“The green sustainability piece of it, I think, is very attractive, at least to me,” West-Webster said. “I would hope to others.”

Unlike ordering supplies online, visiting the Swap Shop requires employees to step away from their desks and browse in person. That element makes the experience more

hands-on than submitting a purchase request through a catalog system.

Staff can compare items directly, take only what they need and avoid ordering more supplies than needed. The model also helps departments redistribute surplus materials that might otherwise sit unused in storage rooms.

Organizers encourage offices to donate extra supplies so they can be redistributed instead of discarded. That reuse cycle — donate, browse and reuse — extends the life of everyday materials and supports campus sustainability goals.

For employees who have not visited the Swap Shop yet, West-Webster said the biggest advantage is straightforward and immediate.

Staff members can walk in, review what is available and leave with needed supplies the same day. That accessibility, she said, makes it especially useful for offices that need materials quickly or are working within tight budget limits.

“I guess it’s very similar to online shopping because you can shop online just the way that you could shop here,” West-Webster said, “but you have the bonus of not having to pay for it.”



PHOTO | WILLIAM GAGNÉ

Office supplies available at the Swap Shop.



Swap Shop sign listing available office supplies and weekly hours.

Communist club builds campus presence

By Valentina Toro
Features Editor

Political discussion is gaining new ground at the university, where a newly formed Communist Club is drawing student interest and promoting conversations about class, labor and socialist theory.

Psychology major Tatum Kerr, a junior and the president of Communist Club, said the club was created in response to what they see as limited political engagement on campus.

“I think that, in general, there was a low level of political involvement and just political ideas on campus,” Kerr said. “Wanting to expand

party efforts at Southern and also just to raise the political level of the campus really inspired me to start the club.”

The Communist Club meets weekly to discuss political theory, labor issues and organizing strategies.

The club positions itself as both an educational and organizing space.

Meetings include discussions of Marxist theory, current events and what members of the club describe as class consciousness: awareness of how economic class shapes social and political life.

According to Kerr, one of the club’s goals is to make conversations

about communism more accessible and less intimidating for students who may only know the term through stereotypes or Cold War history.

“Students and people in general have very polarized ideas about communism,” Kerr said.

The club aims to make students feel more comfortable asking questions and challenging assumptions rather than avoiding the topic altogether.

The university student population, Kerr said, makes the campus a meaningful place for those conversations.

Unlike elite private universities nearby, they described the university as serving many students

from working-class backgrounds who will soon enter the workforce after graduation.

“We’re in New Haven, but we’re not Yale. A lot of students here will be workers,” Kerr said. “I think that’s a great way to benefit people.”

Beyond discussion, the club is structured around political preparation and organizing, Kerr said. Meetings focus on theory, current events and building class awareness among students.

“We want to have people prepared for that,” Kerr said.

Organizers say the club is intended to function as an open forum rather than a closed

political circle.

Their meetings are designed to introduce concepts, encourage questions and allow students with different levels of familiarity to participate in the discussions, even if they are encountering the ideas for the first time.

Members said the club hopes that even students who do not join will leave meetings with a stronger understanding of socialist theory and labor perspectives.

Increased political literacy, they said, can influence how graduates understand workplace dynamics and economic systems.

Club meetings are structured around group

discussion and topical prompts. Organizers encourage debate and leaders said participation ranges from committed members to curious first-time visitors.

The club’s stated mission goes beyond discussion alone. Kerr said organizers want to build long-term engagement and readiness for political action if large-scale labor movements or strikes occur in the future.

“The mission of the club is to educate, organize and recruit dedicated revolutionaries,” Kerr said. “We want to have people prepared; train them to be professional agitators and cadre.”

Owls Decide: Texting or Calling?

By Valentina Toro
Features Editor



PHOTOS | LILY RAND

“Calling because through text, you can’t really see the person.”
-Nursing major Erika Tiburcio, a sophomore



“I guess calls because you don’t have to wait on a response.”
-Psychology major Logan Seymour, a junior



“Texting, probably because I’m antisocial; I can think better through text.”
-Early childhood education major Thalia Paucay, a freshman



“Texting because it’s easier to reach somebody; our generation is more text.”
-Special education major Julián Kruege, a junior



“Texting because I don’t really like talking on the phone.”
-International business major Naydelin Chica, a freshman



“Calling because I feel like it’s easier, and I answer faster.”
-Sport management major Jeanpaul Gámez, a freshman