Bible study creates campus community

By Valentina Toro
Features Editor

La Fe Bible Study is more than a weekly Scripture reading; it is a space where Latino students at the university can unpack faith, culture and generational expectations without having to explain themselves.

La Fe operates under InterVarsity Christian Fellowship and was founded in Fall 2023. What began as a small Bible study has grown into a student-led ministry focused on identity and fellowship among Latino students on campus.

"I feel like when I first started coming to Southern, we kind of lacked a Christian community," nursing major Maryanna De Almeida, a junior and leader of La Fe, said. "With InterVarsity, Bible studies have been here for a long time. But more targeted toward Latinos, we've never really had that."

De Almeida began leading La Fe during her first semester alongside InterVarsity and La Fe campus staff minister Danielle D'Oliveira.

After the campus staff minister departed, De Almeida continued guiding the weekly Bible studies with a fellow InterVarsity member, who is also a student leader for La Fe.

Their leadership has expanded each semester as more students have stepped into organizing roles.

The group's mission centers on what members call "identity in Christ," while also acknowledging the cultural experiences unique to Latino students.

Meetings typically include Scripture readings, open discussion and time for students to share personal reflections.

De Almeida said La Fe intentionally addresses topics that are often left unspoken within Latino communities.

"One of the main things that we talk about in La Fe is our identity in Christ," De Almeida said. "In the Latino community, there's a lot of stigma and a lot of cultural things that can cause what we call church hurt. We want to provide a space where we can talk and not feel like we need to over explain ourselves."

She explained that cultural expectations, family dynamics and generational differences can make conversations about faith complicated for some students.

La Fe seeks to create an environment where those experiences are understood without judgement.

"A lot of times in Latino culture, we push things under the rug, or we don't want to talk about things," De Almeida said. "We wanted to provide a space where the new generation can talk about those things, dissect them and feel appreciated and loved in that."

For De Almeida, the space is about more than weekly meetings. It is about representation and reassurance, a reminder that students do not have to separate their fate from their cultural identity.

La Fe meets weekly in Adanti Student Center Room 303 and welcomes students of all backgrounds, whether they are new to Christianity or have been practicing their faith for years.

While rooted in Latino fellowship, the group encourages allies and curious students to attend their weekly Latino Bible study on Thursdays and also their large group meetings on Wednesdays in Adanti Student Center Room 309.

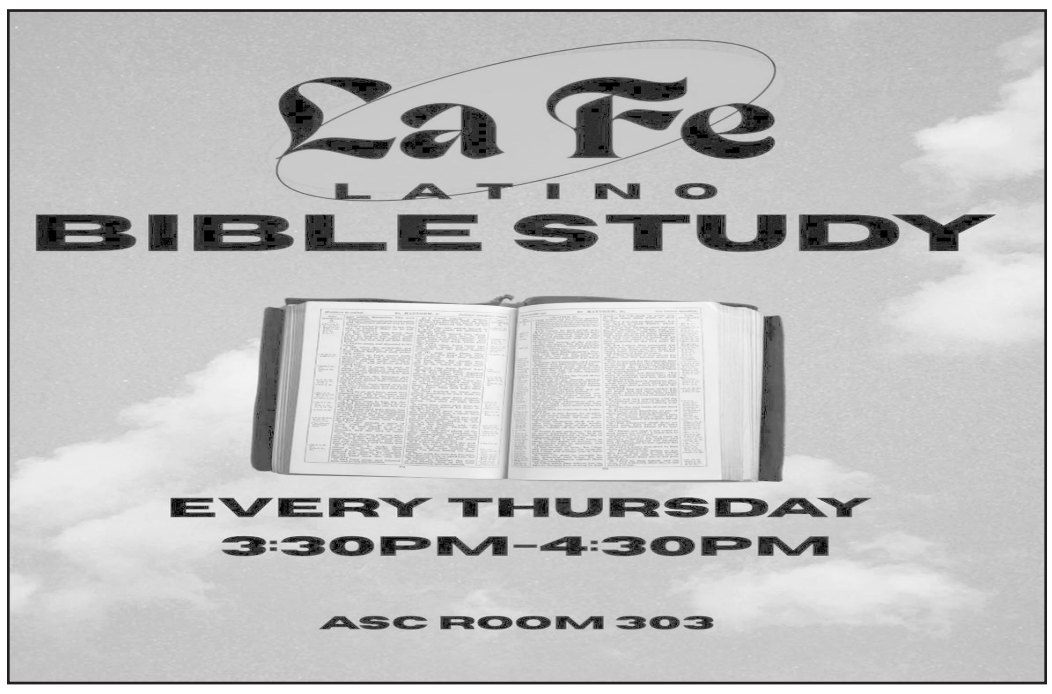
At its core, De Almeida said, their goal is simple.

"We just want to create a Christian community where we feel welcomed and like it's our own," De Almeida said. "A place where Latino students can grow in faith, talk about what we go through and know that they're not alone."



PHOTOS | VALENTINA TORO

Students gathered around a conference table during La Fe Bible Study.



The La Fe Latino Bible Study flyer for weekly fellowship and Scripture reading.

Students demand fair education funding

By Victoria Cruz
News Writer

On Feb. 17, students came together to write to their state legislators to protect higher education by fighting for a fair slice of state funding. The event was a response to Ned Lamont's most recent budget proposal that puts higher education funding at risk.

Ned Lamont's recent budget proposal under cuts funding for the Finish Line Scholarship. This scholarship enables students from community colleges to transfer to four-year state institutions with little to no extra cost.

"If it were not for extra scholarships, I would not be here. I think it is important to make sure your voice is heard. Even if it is a bunch of small voices, they all come together to make a lot of noise," biology major Amelia Casman, a sophomore, said.

Last year, students partnered with the Connecticut State University American Association of University Professors to fight for a debt-free college completion program as an extension of Pledge to Advance Connecticut.

The Connecticut General Assembly passes budgets on odd years for the next two fiscal years, alongside a two-year bond package.

Before budgets are approved, committees will go through the budget proposal considering cases made at public hearings and by agency heads.

When negotiations are complete, and if the budget is passed, then adjustments cannot be made for another year.

Many current university students started their journey at state community colleges.

The Finish Line Scholarship bridges the financial gap for students to complete their bachelor's degree at CSCU schools.

Lamont's new budget proposal undercuts funding for these higher education programs, which allows students to transfer and graduate with a bachelor's degree tuition free.

Many university students rely on funding to continue their education.

These educational opportunities create pathways for all students to access higher education.

The goal of the event was to uplift student voices and educate the university community on the importance of civic engagement.

"I came because I struggle a lot financially; if I had access to something like this, I would not be struggling as much as I am. It would give me a lot more freedom to continue my education. Everyone deserves a chance to further their education and better their lives," exercise science major Heather Gaudet, a senior, said.

A highly educated populous has positive economic repercussions for the state by creating opportunities to fill workforce gaps.

Connecticut is ranked as one of the highest states in education quality but often ranks the lowest when comparing affordability.

Sociology major Susan Garlington, a senior, said that as she plans to attend graduate school, continued funding is critical to helping her complete her education.

She emphasized that education should not depend on finances.

"Education should be a fundamental right, and everyone has the right to education,"Garlington said.

The university community rallied together to share their stories about how budgets like these impact real people, emphasizing the importance of higher education to those charged with protecting student interests at the state level.

University students are the leaders of tomorrow, and their education quality, accessibility and affordability are at risk.

Owls Decide: Hot chocolate or coffee?

By Valentina Toro
Features Editor



PHOTOS | LILY RAND

"Hot chocolate. I just love chocolate."
-Elementary education major Faith Lally, a sophomore



"Coffee because I'm Colombian."
-Psychology major Isabel Alvarez, a sophomore



"I don't like either of those, but I guess I would prefer coffee."
-Marketing major Evelyn Buckner, a senior



"Hot chocolate: it has a better taste. I feel it's just better to drink in the winter."
-Sport management major Evan Cronk, a senior



"Hot chocolate: it's better to drink it in the winter, has a better vibe."
-Physical education major Ronnie Curtin, a junior



"Hot chocolate – it's a comfort drink."
-Early childhood education major Alexa Gladysz, a junior