Water fountain sealed off in Morrill Hall

By Brianna Wallen
News Editor

Remnants of the COVID-19 pandemic still linger in Morrill Hall, as a water fountain still remains sealed under plastic covers and caution tape. What was intended as a temporary safety precaution now serves as an outdated reminder of the restrictions from four years ago.

"In 2020, 2021, probably mostly when everybody started coming back to campus, we closed down all the water fountains throughout campus," Eric Lessne, the associate VP for capital budgeting and facilities operations, said.

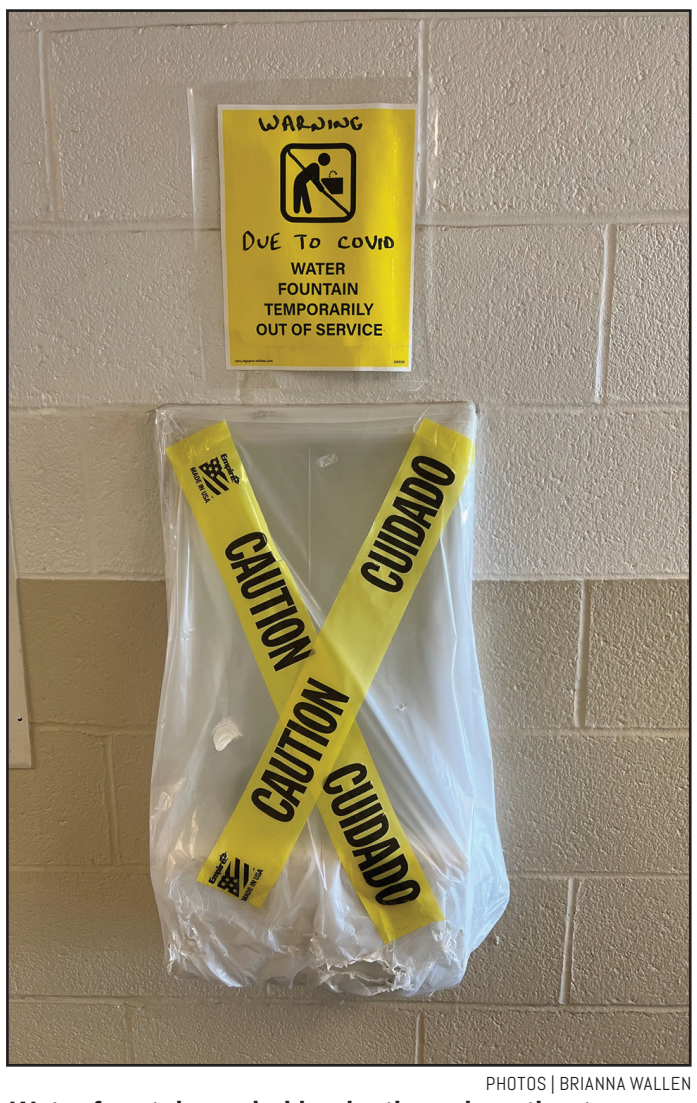
Lessne said that sealing off water fountains was an attempt to help reduce the spread of germs.

"At the time, nobody really knew where COVID was coming from," Lessne said. "We were trying to avoid contact with things that everyone would be touching, such as water fountains."

Lessne said that water fountains still being sealed off is a mistake, as it was something that fell under the radar.

"They should have been taken down. We missed it," Lessne said. "Usually, when we walk around campus and we see something, we'll take it down. It became a commonplace thing, which is unfortunate."

Lessne said he has not received any reports from students or staff about the outdated message.



PHOTOS | BRIANNA WALLEN

Water fountain sealed in plastic and caution tape due to COVID-19 located in Morrill Hall on Friday, Sept. 19.



Water fountain that has brown stain in Morrill Hall on Friday, Sept. 19.

"People see it up, and they don't pay attention, and it's just like a painting on a wall, you know? It's just there, and I'm assuming we did the same thing," Lessne said.

Apart from the covered water fountain, Lessne said plans are in place for remaining water fountains in academic halls around campus to be removed and replaced with water bottle filling stations.

"As we get more funding from the legislature, I will be changing those out to bottle stations," Lessne said. "The intention is to eventually change out as many as we can, with no timeline involved."

Along with relying on funding, Lessne said the project has to be carefully scheduled to prevent distracting students from learning.

"It is a disruptive process, taking the wall apart. You're redoing the plumbing; you're hanging it," Lessne said. "We can't do it while kids are in class because it makes noise."

Lessne said this transition also reflects the habits of students who walk today's hallways.

"Everywhere you walk around, you see everyone has a water bottle," Lessne said.

Lessne also noted that the water bottle stations are more hygienic, as they eliminate the factor of students sharing the same surfaces.

"You just take your own bottle up underneath it, and it fills your bottle, and you walk away," Lessne said.

This no-contact feature can help keep students and staff safe as well as reduce the appearence of dirty sinks.

Lessne highlighted that the available water fountains were often utilized to dispose of liquids rather than used as a resouce to access water.

"People have a tendency to dump their coffee down there," Lessne said.

As Lessne focuses on these changes as well as other projects around campus, he wants students and staff to know that he and facilities operations are there to help.

By receiving these reports, more instances, similar to this can come to light and be fixed.

Lessne said that they prioritize transparency, and their help is just a call or report away.

"We try to be as invisible as possible," Lessne said. "Send your work orders through your RA or HD or professor. If there's a concern, or if there's an emergency concern, they can always call facilities operations."

Lessne told Southern News that the plastic seal on the fountain will be taken down.

A wave in phishing emails target students and staff

By Solé Scott
Editor-in-Chief

The university is seeing an increase in phishing emails affecting all students and staff.

Interim Vice President of Information Technology Walter Schwarz is trying to address the situation and mitigate the problem.

"It's a trend that has been increasing over the years," Schwarz said.

Students are receiving emails in their Outlook inboxes about new part-time job opportunities that are covered under work study.

Psychology major Yadeliz Lozada, a senior, works in the Office of Residence Life and has seen the increase in fraudulent emails.

"Working on campus, people fall for it, and we have to let them know that it's just fake and fraud and to not reply to it," Lozada said.

Phishing emails are starting to become more advanced as fraudsters are sending messages that look like they are coming from another student or a faculty member.

Phishers are using logos and email signatures that mimic university officials.

"It looks like it's coming from an actual person at the university," Schwarz said. "Those phishing messages are the ones that bypass our blocks and our filters."

Currently, this is the university's main problem, but there is a new system in place that will help to mitigate the problem.

"We have email filtering in place that blocks certain domains that have been known to send certain messages like this," Schwarz said.

All the steps the university is taking to combat this problem are in place, but there are still certain fraudulent emails that are bypassing the system.

"I think that people that are incoming freshmen will fall for it because it's their first year and not having any cash and looking for a job, they might think it's real," Lozada said.

Phishing emails are not only on the rise at this university, but all over the country.

According to a Check Point Research report, education was the most cyberattacked in 2024.

In their State of Cyber Security 2025 report, there were over 3,000 weekly cyberattacks at educational institutions.

"We need to advertise this: that it's a fake, don't fall for it, and Southern should do something about it," Lozada said.

Lozada said that students who receive suspicious messages in their emails should report immediately to the Information Technology desk in Buley Library.

"If it's taking you to a place that's some link that has strange text in it, it's taking you to a place where its collecting information on the system that is not an authorized university system, and that is a warning flag," Schwarz said.

Once a student reports the email, then the university's system is alerted. This allows a thorough investigation to take place and for others who may have clicked on the message to be contacted.

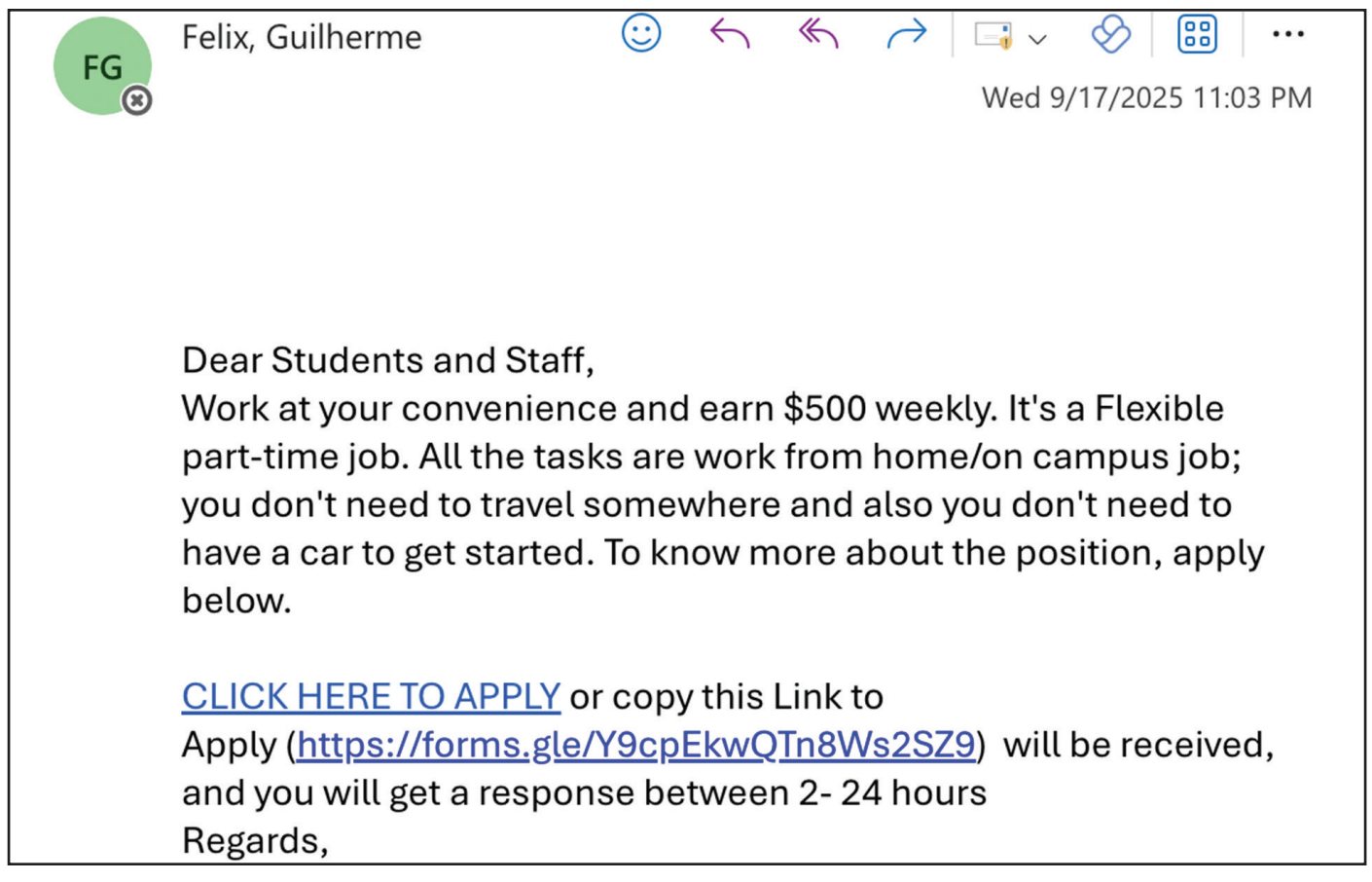
The university is working on other options to decrease phishing emails so students can receive additional support and resources.

"The system office is considering adding additional training for students," Schwarz said. "Right now, our training is focused on staff and faculty only, but I have highlighted the need for students, especially in this area where we are not doing enough in my perspective."



PHOTOS | SOLÉ SCOTT

Walter Schwarz, the interim vice president of information technology, in Buley Library Room 402 on Thursday, Sept. 18.



One phishing email that students and staff received about available part-time jobs, sent on Sept. 17.