



Drew
Class of '19

Monique
Class of '17

Evan
Class of '17

Josh
Class of '15

Monica
Class of '16

*Lauren
Julieanne*
Class of '18

Shai-Ann
Class of '17

Katya
Class of '18

MAKING CONNECTIONS

BY STEVE GERMAIN

New student welcome programs turn hearts green and gold and help USF's newest Bulls succeed.

Then high school student Drew Hays was home in Illinois asking the same two questions as thousands of students across America: "Where should I go to college, and what's it going to be like?" While Drew's brother, Evan, was already attending USF, which was a strong draw in the decision-making process, it was the campus atmosphere and the people he met that made Hays want to become a Bull. "The second time I walked around the campus I knew this was the place," he says.

Question one was answered, but what about question two?

Hays got answers to all his questions and concerns through USF's new student welcome programs, offered by the Undergraduate Studies' Office of Orientation and Student Affairs' New Student Connections. For Hays, Orientation and CampU stood out as the events that put him at ease knowing he had made the perfect choice.

"Orientation was fun and exactly what I was looking for as a new student," the future finance major says. "What could have been a boring welcome lecture actually kept everyone involved and gave me the information I needed very clearly. I got answers to all of my questions, visited the business college, talked with advisers, and I also got to meet my fall roommate and a lot of new friends."

CampU, an overnight, off-campus camp for incoming freshmen, gave Hays an additional opportunity to bond with friends and learn more about USF's traditions. "Even though I have my brother at USF, the friends I made at CampU will really help ease my transition to college. I learned about resources and people I can go to for help, plus I can now sing the USF fight song in my sleep!"

Photo: AMEE BLODGETT/UCM

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— Drew Hays



From Bangladesh to USF



While most USF students are making the transition from high school to college, incoming freshman Adila Hoque has also traveled from Bangladesh to become a new Bull.

The welcome mat for international new students is Orientation's Glo-Bull Beginnings Week, which helps incoming students such as Adila not only transition into life at USF, but to life in America as well.

“The Glo-Bull events were fun and helpful,”

Hoque says. “We got to explore and learn about the USF and the campus, and also got a lot of information on how things work in this country. Our cultures are so different that the Glo-Bull events were great to show us life in America and to get us started in school. I'm very excited by USF's engineering possibilities and so far it's looking really good.”

Rising students: Paying it forward

USF senior Josh Dusing was like many when he first arrived at USF – a self-described “mostly uninvolved” student. That is, until USF's new student programs opened up a world of possibilities for him.

“Going through CampU and Orientation really motivated me to actually get involved and get the most out of college,” Dusing says. “Talking with staff members opened me up to options like Greek life and helped me earn the leadership positions I hold now.”

Dusing is one of 11 student leaders of the Parent and Family Orientation program, which provides information about all facets of campus life – from financial assistance, campus logistics, classes and more – to students' family members.

Evan Hays (Drew's brother), a junior majoring in microbiology, takes his responsibilities as a CampU counselor seriously because he has personally experienced the program's positive impact.

“I came to USF knowing no one and now many of my friends I actually met at CampU years ago,” he says. “I really enjoy giving back to the new students by motivating them, making them comfortable with their new university lives, helping them meet new friends and building their passion for USF.”

Orientation and New Student Connections student leaders are trained extensively on their specific programs and their responsibilities on mentoring new students as peers.

Creating opportunities for success

Even before the first day of class, incoming freshmen and students transferring to USF are immersed in activities to smoothly integrate into campus life, make lifelong friendships, and hit the ground running on their own path to academic and professional success. Orientation, Glo-Bull

CONNECTING NEW BULLS AROUND THE SYSTEM

Programs and activities to help new students successfully transition to college life are in full swing around the USF System. Here's a look at a few:

USF St. Petersburg

■ A re-imagined first-year experience, called COMPASS, integrates students into the campus culture from the start of New Student Orientation.

■ At a special sail-signing event during Move-In Weekend, new students signed the Class of 2019 sail. The sail will fly at commencement as a reminder of the start of their journey.

■ A welcome breakfast before Freshman Convocation included lively parent-led panel discussions and powerful student self-reflection. During the ceremonies, students took the “Commitment to Honor” and were linked with peer mentors and a network of support services.

■ Learning Journeys, an off-campus program, allows students to explore research or academic interests with a faculty member. One group of students, for example, will travel to Weedon Island with a USFSP anthropologist.

USF Sarasota-Manatee

■ A newly revamped Informations Commons combines a student lounge with collaborative study areas and private study carrels, facilitating connections between students, peers and professors.

■ A new basketball court alongside the recently completed sand volleyball court encourages on-campus student interactions outside of classes.

■ A new student ambassador program kicked off the year with a welcome retreat, where club members met with ambassadors from the Tampa and St Pete campuses to discuss initiatives and establish bonds with students throughout the USF System.

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– Adila Hoque



Beginnings Week, CampU, Week of Welcome – which includes more than 100 fun programs such as Kick-off, Capture (the class photo), Charge service day, The Network – and the First Fifty Days, are just some of the initiatives designed to welcome students into the campus community.

Led by Marnie Hauser, director of the Office of Orientation, and Keri Riegler, director of New Student Connections, USF's new student programs will help more than 8,300 first-time-in-college and transfer students transition to campus life this fall.

“The programs are intentionally designed to help each student find their best, personal college experience,” Hauser says. “Our team takes pride in helping each new student become an engaged citizen at USF, setting the tone for their independence, supporting them when/as needed and helping to instill a lifelong love of the Green and Gold.”

The strategies driving the new student programs are intentional and systematically reviewed and revised to generate the best results for both students and university.

“We survey all incoming students along with students who have gone through the programs and we talk to event sponsors, staff and more to get direct feedback on ways we can improve,” Riegler says. “Students have said they want more peer-to-peer interaction, for example, so we added social events with residence mates to build community and a sense of belonging with the university and the people they'll be living with.



Ultimately, our collected data show that these efforts positively impact students' progress toward graduation and their success both inside and outside the classroom.”

USF's strategically designed new student programs help to instill Bull pride, identity and tradition in the hearts of USF's student body – turning Drew, Adila, Josh, Evan and thousands of other students into USF Bulls for a lifetime. ■

ALUMNI WELCOME INCOMING FRESHMEN DURING SUMMER ROUND-UPS

Freshman Axel Cruz chose USF for its great research programs, its size, and because his friends planned to attend the University of Central Florida. He didn't want to follow the crowd.

Still, when he learned about the Alumni Association's Broward County Hometown Round-Up in June, he leaped at the chance to see if he knew other local Bulls-to-be, and to meet some he didn't know. He got all that and more.

“I'm much less nervous after seeing what a family community there is over there. There's a really strong bond among alumni,” he said after the get-together. “I got useful tips and they had prizes. I won a \$100 gift card!”

USF alumni host about a dozen free round-up events each summer across the country, helping incoming freshmen and their families become Bulls



Country citizens long before the first class.

“Parents come with lots of questions and a goal to meet as many other parents as possible,” says Kerry Cerra, '94, who's been hosting the Broward round-ups with husband Shawn, '93, for about six years. “I drench our house in green and gold for these shindigs. I hope it gives the students a sense of pride and gets them excited about being a Bull.” ■