



April 2024

The PANTHER

SERVING CLAFLIN UNIVERSITY WITH PRIDE

CALA-BASH BEGINS APRIL 7

Claflin's Arts & Letters Annual Bash

April 7th - 14th

CALABASH is an annual Arts and letters festival on Claflin's campus that celebrates the humanities and social science with media, music, food and arts, student organizations, and campus entrepreneurs.

Help us to make this an exciting and successful 2024 CALABASH!

LATRICIA JONES, Reporter

Claflin University's School of Humanities and Social Sciences is gearing up for CALA-Bash from April 7-14.

Dr. Luis Almeida, head of the university's Mass Communications Department and chair of this year's CALA-Bash, recently provided student reporters with updates and insights into the week-long celebration.

Attendees can expect a diverse array of events aimed at showcasing the talents and creativity of Claflin students and the broader community.

The festivities will begin with a Poetry Slam on Monday, where individuals can express themselves in front of the cafeteria, and a graphic novel presentation at the GTK Auditorium.

For art enthusiasts, a canvas painting session capturing the beauty of the arts will be held from 2:30 p.m. to 3:30 p.m.

There will also be a unique opportunity for students and community members to participate in the university's radio station by recording podcasts on Wednesday, April 10.

Additionally, a late-night meltdown event will provide current students with a chance to unwind and enjoy themselves from 10 p.m. to 12 a.m.

The following day, April 12, promises to be jam-packed with events, including a vendor's market near the stage from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m., and three civil rights history tours led by the History Department, starting at the chapel.

CALA-Bash is not only a celebration of the arts but a tribute to the Greek letters at Claflin, so there will be an annual yard step show taking place during the week.

Organizations such as the NAACP and Enveux Co. will be in attendance for the events.

Almeida expressed his enthusiasm, stating, "We are hoping to make this the best CALA-Bash yet."

'SPRING HOMECOMING' PROMISES GOOD TIME

DAMAIA DAVIS, Reporter

Claflin's Arts and Letters Annual Bash will have an increase in events this year, CALA-Bash Chair Dr. Luis Almeida said.

CALA-BASH highlights the work of the departments of the Humanities and Social Sciences.

The festival will take place April 7-14.

Almeida, 2024 CALA-Bash chair and head of the Mass Communications Department, said CALA-Bash is often referred to as "spring homecoming."

The festival has been recovering each year since the pandemic.

Almeida said this year's events will allow the departments to show themselves in more detailed ways.

"We have seven days to really display what is the best in Humanities and Social Sciences here at Claflin," Almeida said.

"So why not go a little deeper and share maybe like more than one event?"

Almeida told students reporters March 9 there are many events that should interest students.

In addition to the senior showcase, the Art Department will host a canvas painting and a T-shirt stencil event during which students can design their own shirts.

"Now the Art Department is having a number of extra events to promote their department," Almeida said.



Dr. Luis Almeida talks with student reporters. (Panther photo)

Almeida said the Mass Communications Department will add two new events surrounding podcasting and broadcast work to its usual Mass Communications Night.

We typically have one, but we are going to have, from now on, at least three events to display what we do," Almeida said. "We have multiple areas of interest that could be good experiences for students on campus to find more about."

The History Department will lead a civil rights tour of Claflin's campus, with three available time slots.

"The multiple-events-per-unit mindset is really something that we worked on this year," Almeida said. "To give options for our constituents."

Almeida said the added events will provide more experiences for CALA-Bash attendees, allowing the community to learn about the departments in entertaining ways.

"CALA-Bash is going to be a fun event this year. Folks should definitely come to campus to have a good time," Almeida said.

"This is the type of event that we should celebrate every year here in Orangeburg."

PANTHERS FROM THE PAST

CALA-BASH 2018



PULSE Dance Company showcase

Amori Washington, left, Valaya Burke, center, and Denijah Henderson strike a pose during their TLC performance at the 2018 PULSE Dance Company Spring Showcase.

The dance was choreographed by Valaya Burke, junior mass communications student.

Claflin Associate Professor of Speech and Drama
Annette Grevious prepares for her role as
Mammy Louise in "The Trial of One Short-Sided
Black Woman vs. Mammy Louise and Safreeta
Mae."



GOFF AVENUE CLOSURE ON HOLD

GENE ZALESKI, Reporter for The T&D

Orangeburg city leaders are still not ready to allow the closure of a portion of Goff Avenue by Claflin University for security reasons until they are certain the road's closure legally does not infringe on private property access rights.

For the second time, Orangeburg City Council unanimously tabled third and final reading to close a portion of the road.

The vote was tabled as council requested the city's attorney put in place wording in the official ordinance that guarantees private property owners impacted by the closed portion of the street have access to their properties in perpetuity.

The delayed vote was also intended to give Claflin University officials more time to finalize details on the type of gate mechanism that will be used to restrict the road's access.

"Anything we put into this document as it relates to closing Goff Avenue all of which needs to be there before we make any kind of decision," Councilwoman Sandra Knotts said.

"Whatever we come up with it needs to be of such that everybody is aware, everybody clearly understands, and I am not just referring to council, but the residents who live in that area as well."

Knotts also said the public should specifically know what type of gate mechanism will be in place before council votes on the matter.

"Right now it is like a piece over there and a piece over here," Knotts said. "How are the residents going to get from point A to point B? Is everybody going to have access and what kind of access will they have."

Claflin Department of Public Safety Chief Melvin Williams said regardless of the gating system or technology, residents will have full access.

"That will not change," Williams said.

Prior to voting on tabling the matter, a letter written to council from Claflin clarified that the university pledges to "maintain uninterrupted access to Goff Street for all residents."

"This pledge is unwavering irrespective of any future changes within the city council's composition or potential shifts in the university's leadership," the letter said.

"This commitment will be clearly noted in terms of ownership transfer to ensure that the resident right to access their properties are preserved under any and all circumstances."

Some Council members requested the language in the letter be made legally binding, which prompted the tabling.

We can put language in either the ordinance to make sure they have a perpetual access to their property," City Administrator Sidney Evering said.

The city has been considering accepting ownership from the state of Goff Avenue from Clark Street to Magnolia Street.

The city could then close that portion of the road and turn it over to Claflin, which would allow the university to control the area along its campus.

One of the city's specific concerns is related to the two properties that are going to be directly impacted by the road closure.

One is owned by Norma Murdaugh.

The other private residence is uninhabited.

Murdaugh has consistently been opposed to the road's closure, saying it would impede her ability to rent the property.

Murdaugh has requested an easement be given but Claflin University Director of Auxiliary and Facility Services Bill Kropff said an easement would not be the appropriate wording to use.

"What we would be doing is granting a right of access and that would be notarized," Kropff said.

The Murdaughs tried to express their concerns about the lack of an easement but were called out of order by Mayor Michael Butler.

Claflin officials have said that allowing the university to close the stretch of the street -about .35 miles - to public access will improve safety. The closure has been prompted by multiple shootings and large gatherings of people on Goff Avenue occurring between August 2021 and January 2024.

Claflin safety officials said there is a plan to have a gate at Clark and Magnolia streets.

The closures of the street would primarily occur at night.

Emergency, fire, and law enforcement services will have unimpeded access to the road as well as property owners.

Council first delayed third reading during its March 19 meeting in order to allow greater input from residents near impacted area to provide their thoughts and input.

A meeting was held with concerned residents on March 26.

Councilwoman Annette Dees Grevious has abstained from all discussions and votes on the issue because of a conflict of interest.

She is a professor at the university.

Williams said resident concerns at the March 26 meeting ranged from speeding on the street and property access."

Williams said some residents requested examples of what a gate system would look like.



Claflin's Department of Public Safety Chief Melvin Williams shows Orangeburg City Council security camera footage of a shooting on Goff Avenue. (TheTandD.com)

On Tuesday, Williams provided a pictorial and video examples of gating systems that would include such things as barcode scanning, key fobs and key pads. Manned gates could also be a possibility, as well as paging systems.

One option, which Williams said he prefers, is two lanes, one that will stop guests and the other that would allow residents immediate access via barcoding scanner.

"There are all types of technology ... available and the types of things that we will be looking at to make this work for everyone," Williams said, noting he prefers the dual access, which can control visitors and allow residents unimpeded access.

Parking permits will provide student access.

Kalu provided a scenario where some students may have a number of non-students in their car.

He questioned if the gating system would catch such situations.

Williams said it would not.

"We don't manage that now," he said.

"Students are allowed to have visitors. If they have three or four or five people in the car, it may be mom, grandma and auntie. We allow our students access to campus without trying to identify every single person."

Kalu expressed concerns that non-students could cause problems, but Williams noted that individuals can still walk onto campus as well as pedestrian traffic will not be hindered.

Councilwoman Liz Zimmerman Keitt said through diligent prayer she has been able to discern that safety is the top priority.

"The safety of the majority of the people is what we want," Keitt said.

"I would really love to see everyone on the same accord. That may not happen, but I wish it would. But if it doesn't, then we have to go with the majority of what people want."

"I do not want to see anybody get hurt just because we did not do what we needed to do," Keitt said.

"Folks are bringing children from different areas of the world for us to take care of and we have that right to take care of everybody."

CLAFLIN CUTS RIBBON ON NEW STUDENT CENTER



The student center ribbon cutting was held March 22 (Larry Hardy/TheTandD.com)

DAMAIA DAVIS, Reporter

President Dwaun J. Warmack cut the ribbon for Claflin's new student center on March 22, a ceremony that marked the official grand opening of the new facility.

The ribbon cutting was followed by guided tours of the completed building for students and other attendees.

All included retail locations were open, and the theater offered its first screening of "Ghostbusters: Frozen Empire"

Kourtney Massop, a senior criminal justice major, said that the first look was worth the wait and even surpassed her expectations. She said it is a needed addition.

"We have more resources here I feel like, from the food and actually having food we desire to eat, and also having spaces where we can just be ourselves or even spend time with our friends outside of our dorms," Massop said.

Massop said the student center can get students more involved with campus life, helping them build relationships with each other.

She said students did not have many places to go during or after COVID.

"It gives people a space to get out of their room and just meet new people," Massop said. "It's a better form of communication and just interacting with new people, just getting that one-on-one interaction with people."

Before cutting the ribbon, Warmack gave his public thanks to everyone involved in the planning and construction process.

"Oftentimes I get to stand up here with the mic and get the credit," Warmack said. "But these are the individuals that put the dedication and hard work in."

Special thanks were given to Trustee William Johnson, who Warmack said played a key role in the project. Johnson, a Claflin graduate, made it part of his promise to give back to the university.

"You committed to being a leal and loyal son of this institution and you've remained faithful," Warmack said. "But because of that, your generous donation and your willingness to broker relationships, this will be here forever."

The 80,000-square-foot, \$40 million student center at Magnolia and Goff Avenue features a 172-seat theater with first-run movies, eSports center, meeting/conference rooms, food court with national eateries and an 800-seat ballroom.

STUDENTS GET EARLY TOUR OF STUDENT CENTER



Claflin University student journalists, from left, Tyuanna Williams, Tyler Starks and Damaia Davis tour the outdoor dining space at Claflin's new student center. (Larry Hardy/TheTandD.com)

TYLER STARKS, Reporter

On Monday, March 18, a group of student reporters was given the opportunity to tour the new Claflin University student center before its opening on Friday, March 22.

Dr. Arthur Doctor, dean of students, guided the tour, showing all three floors of the new facility located at Magnolia and Goff Avenue.

The first floor houses a movie theater, food places, a campus store and an open sitting area. Doctor explained that everything in the student center is cashless, and you can pay with only your card, Apple Pay and even Panther Bucks.

Students will be astounded by the new food options available to them like Papa John's, Q-Doba and Starbucks.

The movie theater was the major highlight of the tour. It can seat 172 and can be converted into an auditorium in the case of a public meeting. The new-release movie, "Ghostbusters: Frozen Empire," played at the theater on opening night, March 22.

The second floor consists of meeting rooms, student study rooms and the new offices of SGA, SAB and Doctor.

The meeting rooms will be open to all campus organizations and members of the community who desire a meeting area.

The chairs and tables can move and adjust to whatever suits the user and devices can automatically link up to the TV.

Student study rooms come in two styles, one with a desk for better studying and another with a beanbag chair for relaxation. Both rooms have adjustable lights.

The third floor is home to the ballroom, game room and an eSports lounge.

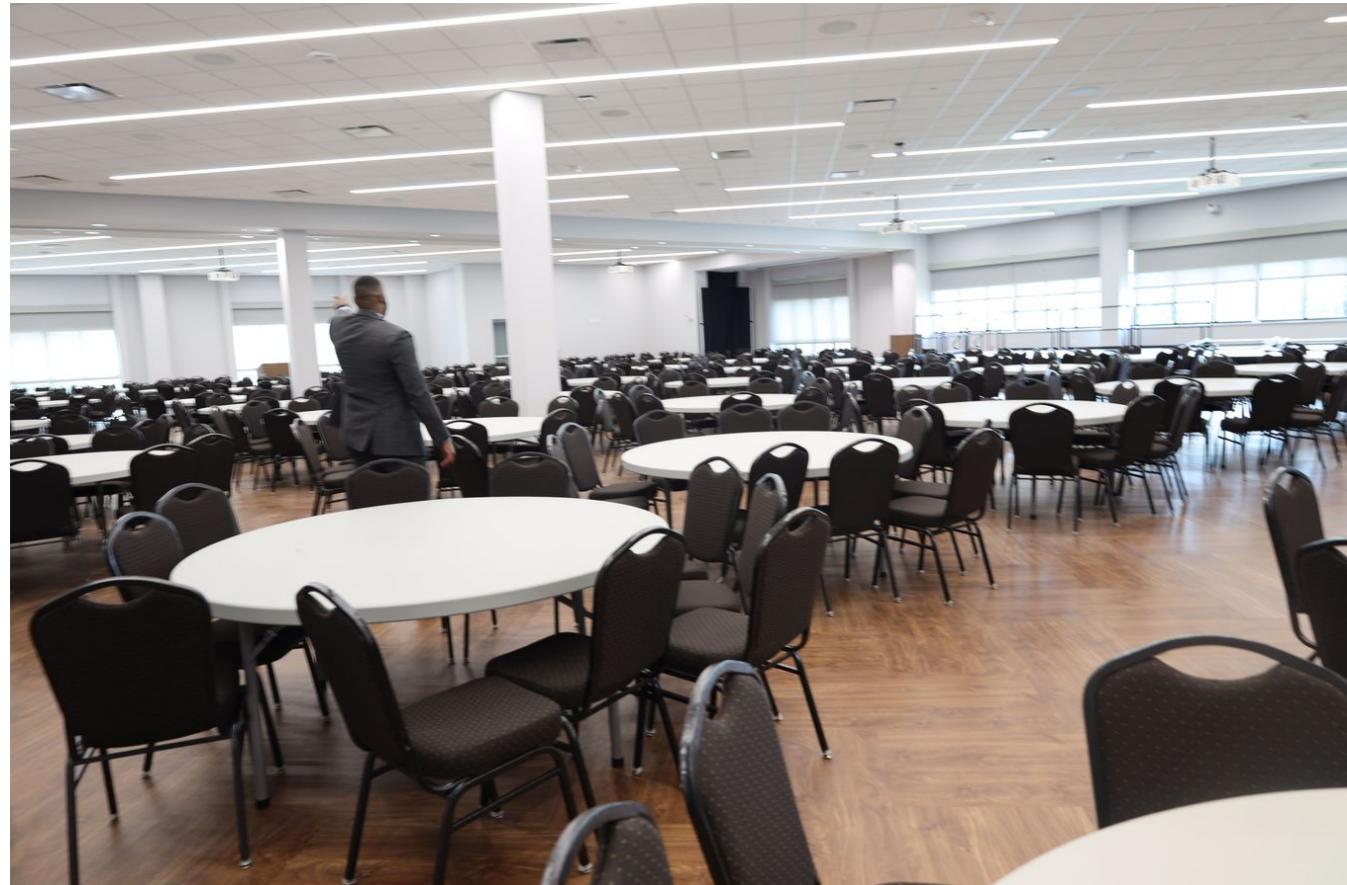
The ballroom can seat 800 people and can be split up into three different rooms. Campus events will be held here, and members of the community can rent it out for their events.

The game room has a few TVs for students to come and bring their game systems in and play them. An outdoor patio is available outside the game room.

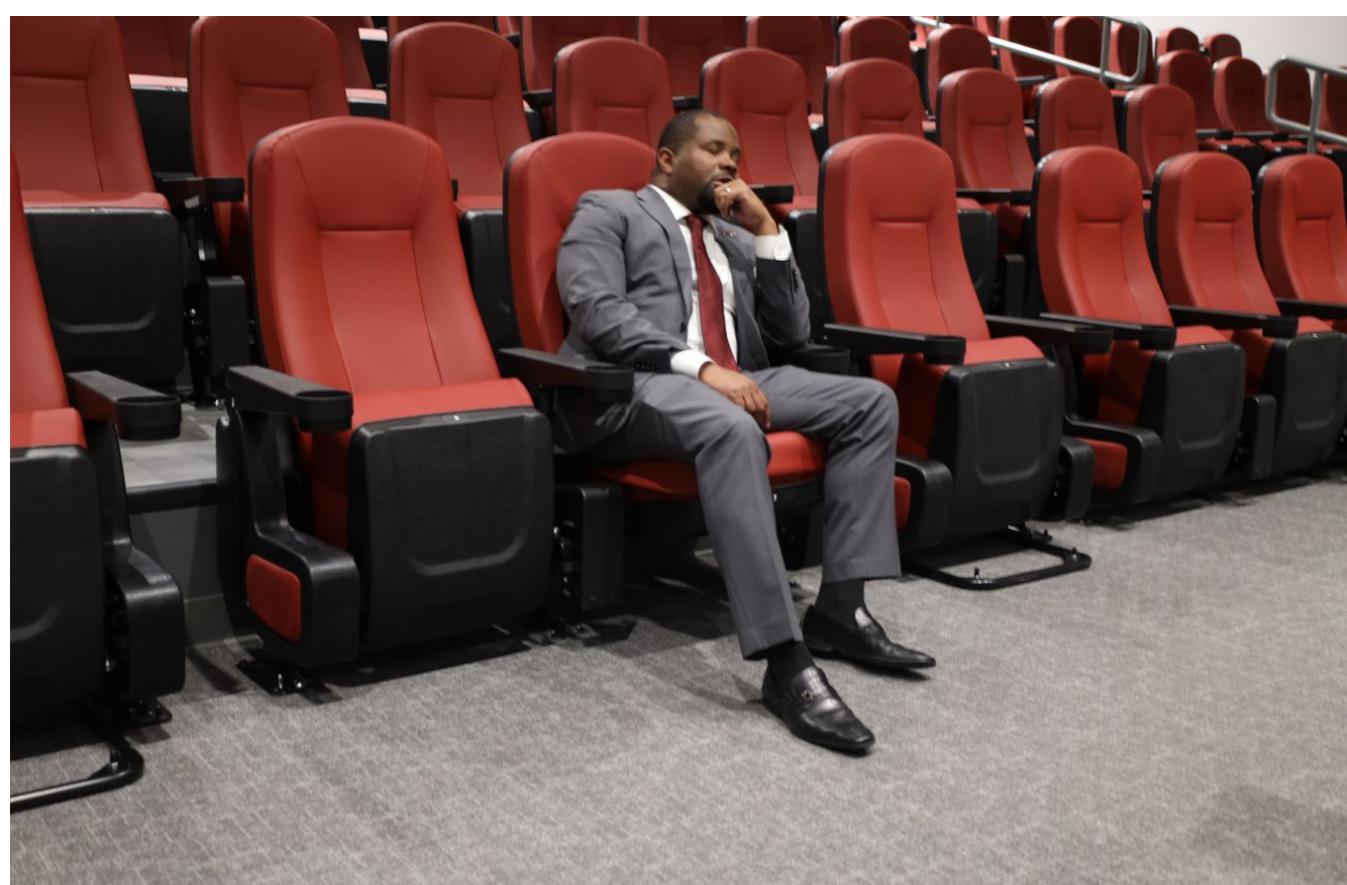
The eSports room is the new home for the school's eSports team. They can practice and compete against other schools' teams in the room.

STUDENT CENTER IN PHOTOS

TYUANNA WILLIAMS, Editor



Claflin's ballroom space seats up to 800 guests.



Claflin University President Dwaun J. Warmack is pictured in the movie theater.



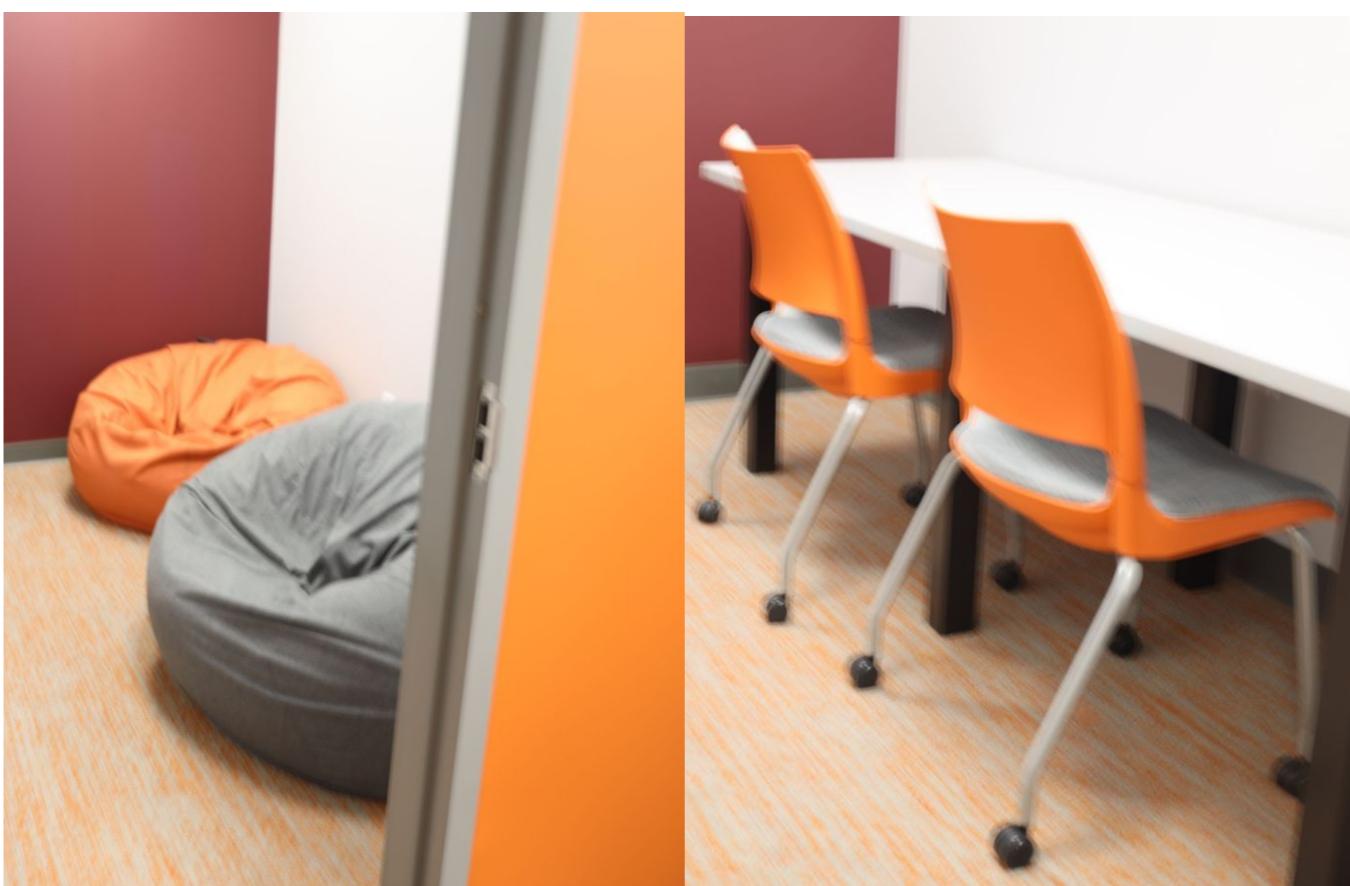
Pictured is one of the conference rooms located in the student center.



Food options in the new center include a QDOBA, Papa John's, Starbucks and a convenience store.



A mini amphitheater is located outside of the new building.



The new student center has study rooms, some containing beanbag chairs.

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