



SERVING CLAFLIN UNIVERSITY WITH PRIDE

STUDENTS READY FOR HOMECOMING CONCERT WITH 4 ARTISTS

EVAN JENKINS, Reporter

DAMAIA DAVIS, Editor

Students and their campus leadership are reacting positively to the selection of concert artists for Homecoming 2024 in November.

Kofi Springs Jr., executive assistant for SAB, and Iyanna Pickens, SAB director of communications, announced the homecoming lineup during a Sept. 5 reveal event in the W.V.M. Fine Arts Center auditorium. The artists are "Pretty Girls Walk" rapper Big Boss Vette, "Him" rapper Big Yavo, "Pretty Brown" rapper YTB Fatt, and Bossie Badazz.

"I am extremely excited. Homecoming always falls around my birthday, so I am happy to celebrate my birthday around classmates and such well-known stars," Naaziah Harrison, outreach and engagement Vista specialist, said.

The Claflin Student Government Association president said the event has bonuses compared to previous concerts.

"Comparing to last year's homecoming, we were able to get four artists instead of two and stay within the budget, so I really feel like we have a great lineup," junior Joshua Williams said. "And I am ready for homecoming."

So is Usir Jackson, freshman class president.

"I was skeptical after hearing Big Boss Vette's name, but after hearing the others, I was impressed when they announced Bossie, Big Yavo and YTB Fatt," Jackson said.

"Since this is my first homecoming as a college student, I do not know what to expect, but I am satisfied with the lineup."

The homecoming concert will be held Nov. 23. Doors open at 8:30 p.m. and the show starts at 9:30. The link to purchase tickets can be found in SAB's Instagram bio.

'SPECIAL' HOMECOMING LINEUP

Student Activities Board official Kofi Springs Jr. gave an inside look at this year's homecoming artist selection.

This year's release event was themed on the comedy show "Wild 'n Out," and featured games and music for students to enjoy. During a Sep. 9 interview, Springs said homecoming should be a fun time for students.

"We're not getting any younger," Springs said. "This is our school, this is our homecoming, so let's enjoy our homecoming."

Springs shared his own excitement for the concert, wanting to make the most of his senior year homecoming.

"I like music from all the artists that we have chosen," Springs said. "It's my last homecoming so I'm really excited."

Being seniors made the lineup selection feel more personal to many members of SAB's executive board. He said they wanted to make sure they catered to the students' tastes.

"We wanted this one to be really special," Springs said. "We always look for essentially what the student body wants, that is our biggest goal."

As a promotional choice, the artist release was held earlier than last year. More student performers are expected to be announced through SAB's social media.



Students celebrate after the Sept. 4 concert announcement. (Panther photo by Damaia Davis)



MATRICULATION DAY: FRESHMAN GET LESSON IN TRADITIONS, WARMACK GETS HONOR

BETHANY SCRIVEN, Reporter

The 156th Matriculation Convocation was held at Tullis Arena on Sept. 10 celebrating the start of the school year and officially welcoming the freshman class of 2028 at Claflin University.

Matriculation Day is a Claflin tradition. For over 150 years, the university has held a ceremony to celebrate the start of the academic year.

Claflin's new provost, Dr. W. Franklin Evans, explained the meaning of the tradition alongside the school's history.

"Well, what is a convocation? Well, a convocation is an assembly, an official gathering. And so we have gathered here this morning, officially to celebrate the dawning of a new academic year, an academic year full of excitement, expectations and opportunities for our new students, our new faculty, our new staff."

"We say, welcome to the Claflin family, to our sophomores, juniors, seniors and returning graduate students," Evans said.

"Claflin College opened its doors as the first historically Black institution here in the state of South Carolina, opening its doors to students, regardless of race, color or gender. ... Claflin University was named in honor of two individuals, Lee Claflin, a good Methodist layman from Massachusetts, and his son William Claflin, the governor of the state of Massachusetts. Both were strong abolitionists who had a passion for higher education and the uplift of African Americans," Evans said.

The president of Claflin University, Dr. Dwaun J. Warmack, recently celebrated five years as the institution's ninth president. During the convocation, Warmack highlighted the class of 2028's accomplishments.



Bishop Simeon Moultrie and Claflin President Dwaun J. Warmack. (Photo via Cecil Williams Photography)

The class average grade-point average coming into Claflin is the second highest over the past seven years, Warmack said.

"This class of 2028, you came in with a medium GPA of a 3.6," Warmack said, expressing his anticipation that the class will showcase excellence and further show "Claflin magic" throughout their matriculation.

"This is just a microcosm of the excellence that is in this class. At graduation, I will talk about what I define as Claflin magic. This is just the beginning of what that magic looks like as you matriculate and understand what it means to get Claflin confidence and graduating from here as a visionary, continue to lead the way, continue to set the path."

Warmack was awarded the key to the City of Orangeburg by Mayor Micheal Butler.

Butler said Warmack "has brought great sustainability to this college and to the growth of this college. So we want to thank you, myself, the city council and our administrator. We are giving you the keys to the city."

Newly installed 66th Student Government Association President Joshua Williams spoke about the importance of determination and faith during difficult times.

Williams titled his speech "W.O.W. (Willingness Over Worry)," encouraging the audience to overcome challenges through faith.

Williams shared his personal story about overcoming difficult times after having strokes during the summer.

He credited Claflin University for always maintaining a family-oriented environment.

Williams said, "The same willingness over worry that helped me overcome a rough time in my life, as I fell victim to sporadic strokes on the left side of my brain that left me unable to walk just on July 19. But I stand here as a testimony and a product of a nurturing environment."

"One thing that Claflin prides itself on is being a family-oriented environment to all of its fields, and that is one thing I appreciate most during such a difficult time in my life."

"This same atmosphere is nothing short of what you will experience on the Hilltop ... and the care and support offered by Claflin University to the students is unmatched."

MATRICULATION DAY: PANTERS URGED TO BE LIKE A PANTHER

ALEXIS WILSON, Reporter

“Panthers don’t make noise, they make moves,” the 2024 Matriculation Day speaker told students.

Bishop Simeon Moultrie, founder and pastor of The Brook in Columbia, defined what it means to be a panther and encouraged students to apply the cat’s characteristics to their studies. He spoke Sept. 10 at Claflin University’s 156th Matriculation Day at the Jonas T. Kennedy Health and Wellness Center.

Moultrie defined a panther in four ways: focused, silent, strong and adaptable.

“When a panther moves, he stays focused on his prey and his goals because he realizes he cannot attain what he is trying to reach for if he loses focus,” Moultrie said. Panthers do not lose sight of their main objective, survival.

Like panthers, students must maintain a high level of focus amid distractions, Moultrie said.

Students must make wise decisions on time management and understand what they are supposed to do while attending Claflin, Moultrie said.

He said panthers do not tell others what their next step is.

“Panthers don’t make noise, they make moves,” Moultrie said.

Moultrie encouraged students to be cautious of what they post on social media and continue to advance in college silently.

“People always want to post certain things -- ‘look at what I’m doing’ -- but Panthers don’t make noise, they make moves,” Moultrie said.

Panthers possess a strength like no other, Moultrie said. “Panthers have the ability to attack and handle animals larger than themselves.”



Bishop Simeon Moultrie, founder and pastor of The Brook in Columbia, speaks Sept. 10 at Claflin’s Matriculation Day. (Photo via Claflin Facebook)

So do Claflin students, he said.

“You are in this room today because there is something in you that says I can attack and defeat something bigger than me,” Moultrie said.

He told students they will graduate with “degrees and opportunities.”

“When you understand that you have to stay focused on your goal, nothing can defeat you, nothing can stop you. And you will walk across this stage in four years with degrees and opportunities and you will have scholarships to graduate debt-free,” Moultrie said.

Moultrie’s cited adaptation skills as a last panther characteristic. “Panthers know how to thrive, not (just) live, in diverse environments.”

Moultrie recommended that Claflin students adapt to their challenges and confront setbacks with the willingness to adjust. He encouraged them to take the next four years learning how to be themselves despite what they see others doing on social media.

“You have to be able to look at your challenges and say, ‘I know how to adapt. I know what to do and when to do it! You need to learn in the next four years to be yourself. Don’t believe the hype, because 70% of the stuff you see people post are lies,’ Moultrie said.

He ended by urging students to stay focused, strong and resilient, telling students they are here because they are Claflin Panthers.

“That’s why you’re here because you are a Panther. You’re not a Bulldog, you’re not a Gamecock, you’re a Panther. And because you’re a Panther, I need you to move like a panther,” Moultrie said.

Other Matriculation Day speakers included: Dr. Dwaun J. Warmack, ninth president of Claflin; Dr. Karina Liles, department chair of Mathematics and Computer Science; Joshua Williams, the Student Government Association’s 66th president; Genesis Morris and Derrion Campbell, Mr. and Miss Claflin University; and Lauren Smalls, freshman mass communication major.

THE GENESIS OF REVIVAL AT CLAFLIN

ZYNEA WILLIAMS, Reporter

"People should not be walking around campus bound with depression and anxiety. The Way, The Truth, and The Life is an outlet," Titus Galloway says.

The Way, The Truth, and The Life is an official Christ-centered organization at Claflin University. Bible studies take place in the student center on the second floor every Wednesday evening from 7 o'clock until 8:45.

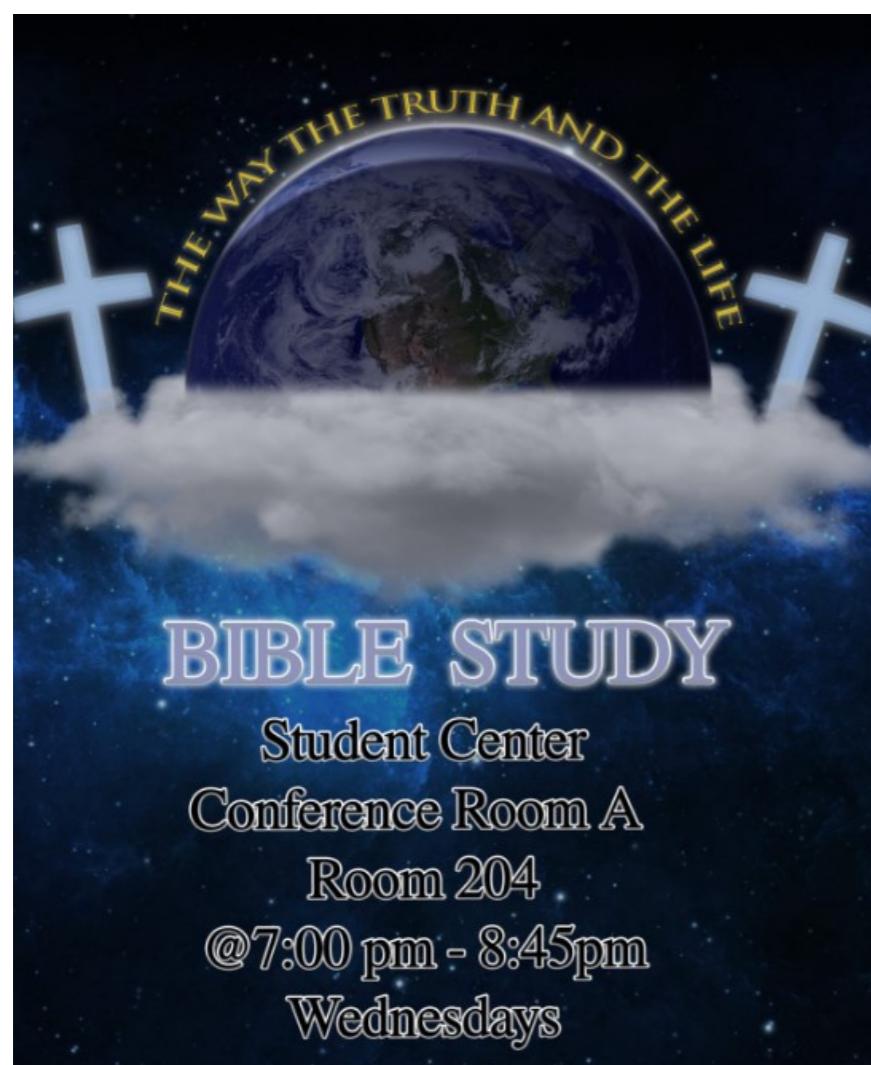
Galloway, senior business management major who is the president of the organization, said The Way, The Truth, and The Life began as a vision "given to him by God."

"Purpose is in God, and I want people to see our organization as a place where they can find God as well as their purpose. It brings life to campus," Galloway said. "It does not always need to be a party for people to have fun."

Last September, Galloway and his vice president, Nailah Outing, began to meet on campus with other followers of Christ even though they were not an official organization.

"Titus asked people who were over the Grace Thomas Kennedy building if they would leave the door opened for us and we had approval for using the building; however, we did not know we needed to have an official organization," said Outing, senior environmental science major and vice president of The Way, The Truth, and The Life.

"We were not authorized at first, but we were just students simply gathering because we loved the Lord and were eager to learn more about him."



The first Bible study this academic year was held on Sept. 4 in the student center, led Titus Galloway. (Panther photo by Hailee Goldwire)

Galloway and Outing said Bible studies ultimately got shut down by their fifth gathering even as attendance was nearly doubling at every meeting.

"We met in Commons Lab one night instead of GTK and someone saw us and called the cops," Outing said. "The security guard did not know what was happening because he just came due to the call, but he was not expecting to see students having Bible study."

"Really when God stopped the Bible study, he began working on Titus and me by addressing things within our hearts so that we were accurately representing Christ," Outing said.

"We do not want people who have a foundation of faith to be deceived by the enemy because they do not see another example," Galloway said.

"We are fed up with the enemy trying to take our generation. We are going to stand firm in faith, and we are excited to simply do kingdom work."

The Way, The Truth, and The Life is now an official organization. Its adviser is Kevin Murray, a police officer and ordained minister.

"It was a fresh fire and God had to calm us down in order to refine us and the organization," Outing said. "Titus initially began seeking to follow God alone on a college campus surrounded by temptation. He soon became a new creation in Christ."

"I believe his thought process was, 'I have been brought into freedom, now how can I help others around me be free?'"

"It began a year ago, but now God has allowed us to effectively start again because we are mature in Christ and we want community," Outing said.

"It's really God's plan for Claflin University. He wants to bring revival to campus," Galloway said.

"Most people really enjoyed our first Bible study, and I am expecting an even bigger turnout (going forward). To God be the Glory! Christian movies, checkups to see how everyone is doing, and many more events are in the works."

"The community is what is going to keep the campus alive so that even when I graduate, there is always someone passing the torch. I want people to see Claflin and want to come because it is a powerful Bible study on campus," Galloway said.

"This is going to be a new beginning. Remember that Jesus loves you, no matter how deep you are in your sin, or if you feel condemned. Jesus died for you in that very place. In God is true peace, joy, love and happiness. Remember, Wednesdays at 7 p.m. in the student center," Galloway said.

CLAFLIN THEATER LAUNCHES THROWBACK THURSDAY MOVIES

SAVANNAH JEFFERSON, Reporter

Claflin University's public theater is adding a little nostalgia to complement its lineup of first-run movies.

The theater is beginning a new program called Throwback Thursday and is also providing children's deals for the community. The opportunities are designed to foster more engagement from the student body and the community, which is encouraged to see films at the Claflin facility.

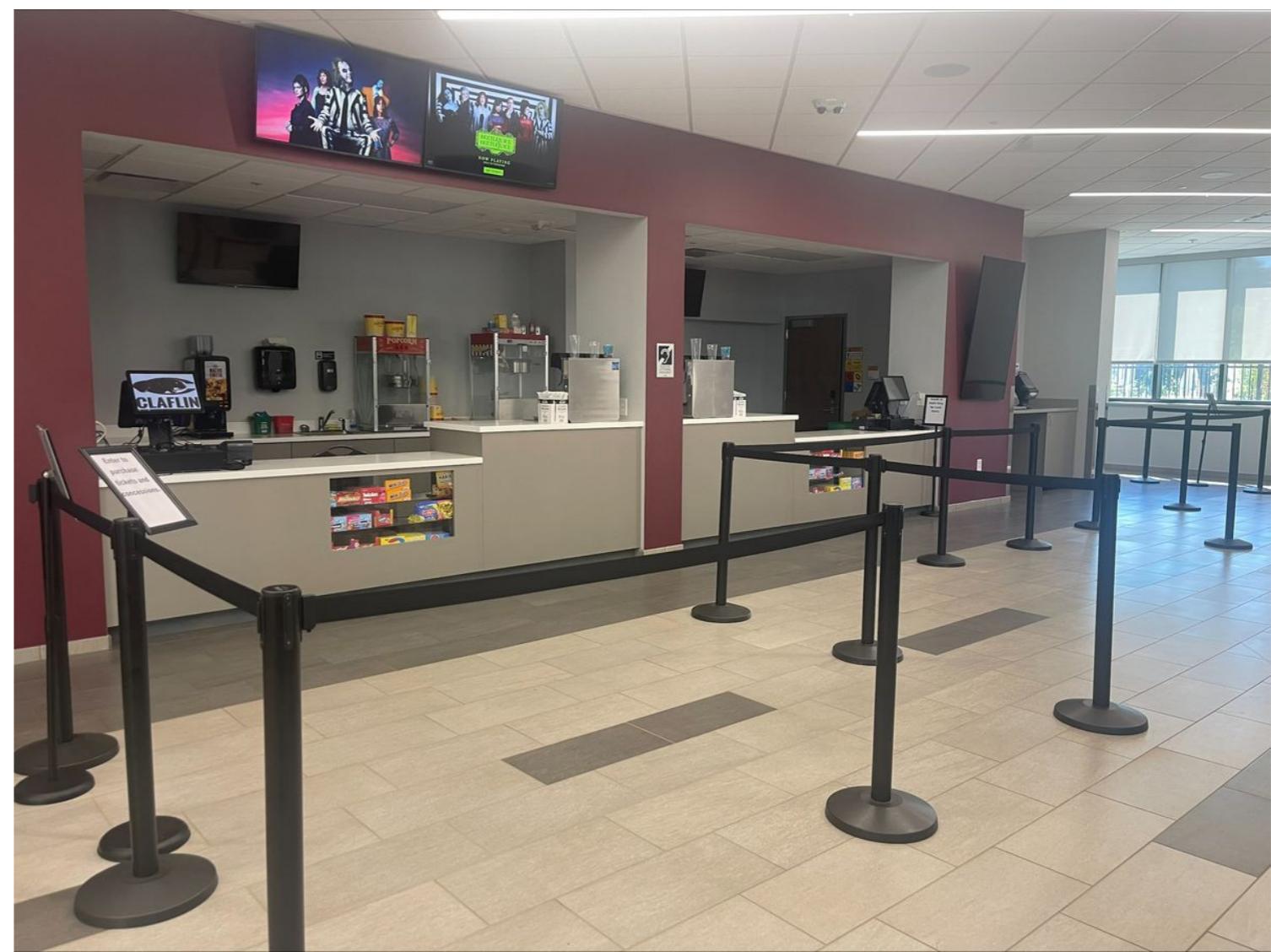
Throwback Thursday is a biweekly program created to give students something different. It offers movies that have been popular in the past, and these movies are free of cost for students.

Jammarrea Shephard, a senior at Claflin who works in the theater as one of the building managers, said, "We try to make sure we value everyone's opinions since the student center is a public space. I think students obviously have just a little bit more input as they are more tapped into the social media space, so we do take into great account what they may enjoy, but overall, we try our best to see how those in the minority of our community feel about things."

Referring to the community and student involvement, Shephard said, "It is usually a solid mix. It also often depends on the day of the week; weekends are good because locals will have something to do during an off day. Whereas on the weekdays, many students enjoy a movie after class."

Although there is a steady flow of people attending the theater, Claflin's management encourages a broader number of students to take advantage of the theater.

Students were given an anonymous poll questioning why more have not taken advantage of the theater, with 341 students responding. They were given three options: cost, not enough movies playing and the need for better advertising.



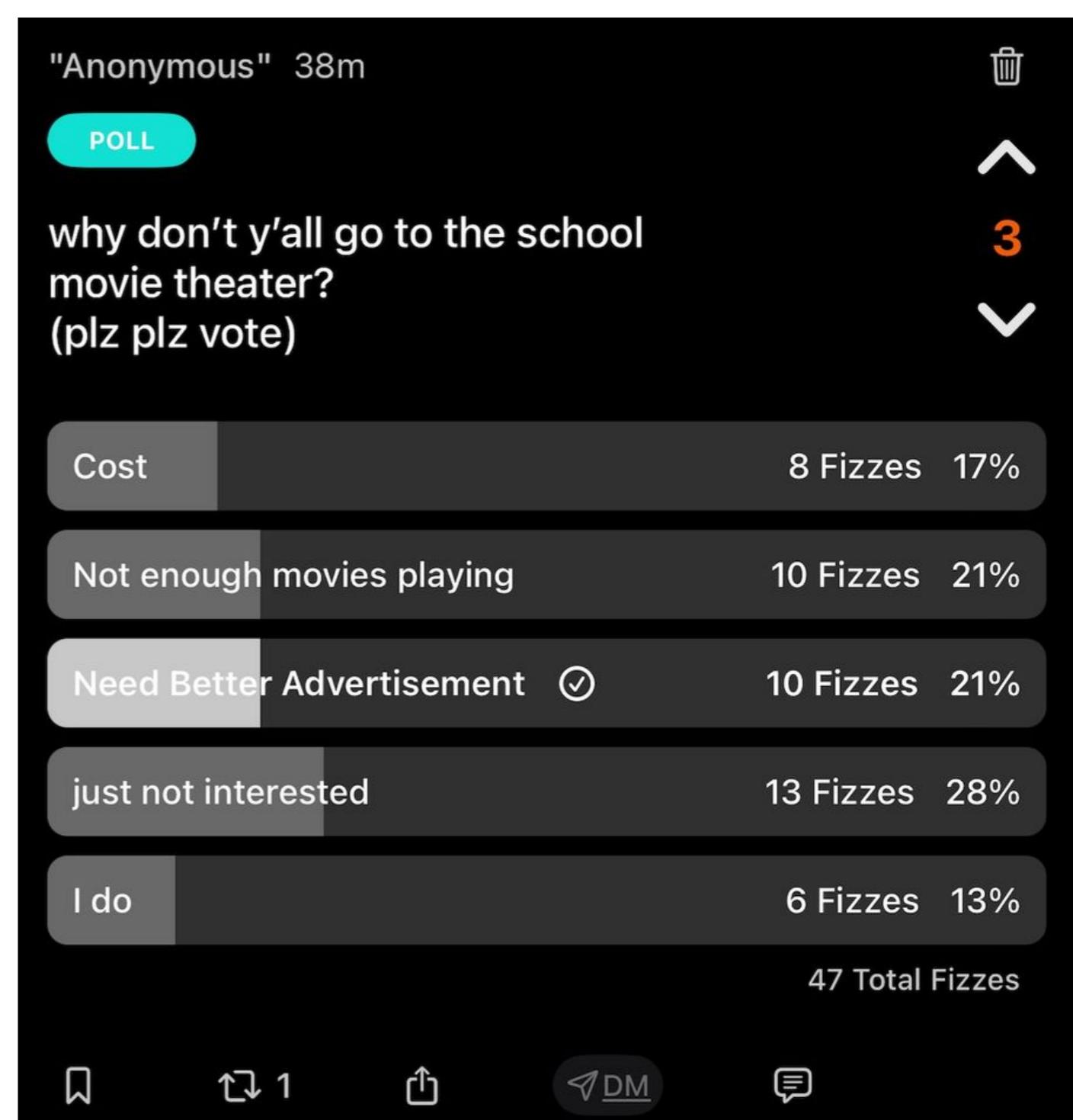
The Claflin University theater in the student center seats 172 people and has the amenities of commercial theaters. (Panther photo by Savannah Jefferson)

The leading option was a desire for more than one movie to play throughout the day. The second-leading option was the need for better advertising. Cost was the lowest voted option.

As to further feedback, management encourages students to use their online pages.

"We are conducting surveys and gathering feedback from students at Claflin as well as State to stay involved with the students and hear them out," Shephard said.

"We have an official Instagram website @claflintheater free for all to use and we try to work with Claflin's Student Engagement and Leadership, as well to promote upcoming showings and events."



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THE RETURN OF CLAFLIN'S FARMERS MARKET



The Claflin University Farmers Market is open on Thursdays from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. outside the Jonas T. Kennedy Health and Wellness Center on Magnolia Street.



TYLER STARKS, Reporter

The year is 2019. Vice President of Fiscal Affairs Tijuana Hudson began an initiative to promote healthy lifestyles and wellness to the students of Claflin University and the local community

Claflin's Farmers Market was born.

Hudson contacted local South Carolinian and farming expert Frances Koon to help run and set up the market. Koon was surprised by the call, but coming from a rich history of farming, she was the chosen person to help establish the new farmers market.

The market located at the Jonas T. Kennedy facility, which was newly expanded in 2019. Farmers from all over came together to sell their produce such as watermelons, green beans and tomatoes.

Claflin's Farmers Market lasted from May to November in 2019, however, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, it didn't return the following year. Its fate remained unknown until this year when the market made its triumphant return with Koon coming back to run it.

"This will be a tremendous help for our local farmers," Hudson said. "Claflin is delighted to provide this resource for them."

"We are excited about providing this opportunity to the community," Hudson.

Restarting in June, the market has become a positive and enriching experience for students and community members alike, where they can get fresh fruits and vegetables and support local farmers.

"I think one major benefit for me is showing the community and students that they can start their own garden and grow their produce.", said Brianna Stafford, a senior environmental science major.

She also highlights that the market supports local farmers of the community and the importance of doing so.

"I believe the benefits are being able to get access to fresh, awesome produce and being able to make connections with the local farmers of the community. It's a very great experience," said Anasha Leary, a senior bioinformatics major.

The Claflin University Farmers Market is open on Thursdays from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. outside the Jonas T. Kennedy Health and Wellness Center on Magnolia Street.

STUDENTS 'REMINDED' ABOUT DRESS CODE

DRESS CODED



ALHAYA BRICKLE, Reporter

ALEXANDER BRIGGMAN, Reporter

Students are being informed that Claflin University has an enforceable dress code.

Dr. Leroy Durant, vice president for student development and services, said a Sept. 3 letter to students is "a gentle reminder."

It states: "We, at Claflin University, believe that student dress and overall appearance should foster a positive and productive environment and should reflect pride in oneself as well as in our school.

"We further believe that student dress and appearance is a shared responsibility. It is our sincere desire to provide adequate leeway for individuality, while simultaneously maintaining a standard of good grooming and personal modesty."

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Students have mixed views and concerns about the dress code, with some believing it to be fair and others saying it is unfair and imbalanced.

Julissa Clyburn, a sophomore, said, "It feels fair. It's better here in college than in high school, as more high schools are directed towards women."

But junior Payton Price-Walker said, "I feel like some parts of it are too much. We should wear what we want, and shouldn't be judged for what we wear to class."

Speaking anonymously, another student agreed.

"I don't care about what Dr. Durant has to say about how I dress, I'm grown."

And also speaking anonymously, one professor chimed in:

"I think that when these young adults come to college, they are comfortable with wearing what they want and caring about others' opinions about how they are dressed, not realizing that this is the place where we as professors, who have also experienced this, want students to be able to express themselves while also preparing them for their career and the professional world."

Appropriate attire

According to the dress code, top and bottom coverings should be always worn. Examples of appropriate attire for various occasions include:

- A. Classroom, cafeteria or university offices -- casual or business casual.
- B. Formal programs – Matriculation Day, chapel, convocation, Founders' Day and other college functions -- business or business casual.
- C. Interviews – business.
- D. Social/recreational activities, residence hall lounges (during visitation hours) – modest, casual or business casual.
- E. Galas or balls – Formal and semiformal attire.

Inappropriate attire/appearances

According to the dress code, inappropriate attire and/or appearance include but are not limited to:

- A. Caps, do-rages, skull caps, stocking caps, bandanas, and/or hoods in classrooms, cafeteria or other indoor venues; these items can be worn in the privacy of student's residence halls.
- B. Head coverings and hoods for men in any building; baseball caps and hoods for women in any building.
- C. Sunglasses or shades in class or at formal programs.
- D. Clothing with derogatory, offensive and/or lewd messages either in words or pictures.
- E. Clothing that is excessively tight, short or revealing.
- F. Men and women's pants that are worn low enough to reveal underwear, undergarments, or secondary layers of clothing.
- G. Improper fitting or lack of undergarments.
- H. Bodysuits and leggings worn as pants (unless they are under dresses, long tops, or skirts that are of appropriate length).
- I. Dresses, tops, shorts, or skirts that are inappropriate length (i.e. hot pants, tootsie shorts, miniskirts or mini dresses, bralettes or crop tops that are bra length).
- J. Pajamas worn in public or in common areas of the university.
- K. Sports jerseys and undershirts worn outside of residence halls without a conventional T-shirt underneath.
- L. Inappropriate shoes (i.e. Faux Fur Slides and sandals, furry crocks, and bedroom slippers).

SUITABLE APP: NEW WAY TO STAY CONNECTED ON CAMPUS

JORDAN PATTERSON, Reporter

Claflin University has introduced a new tool to help students get more involved: the Suitable App.

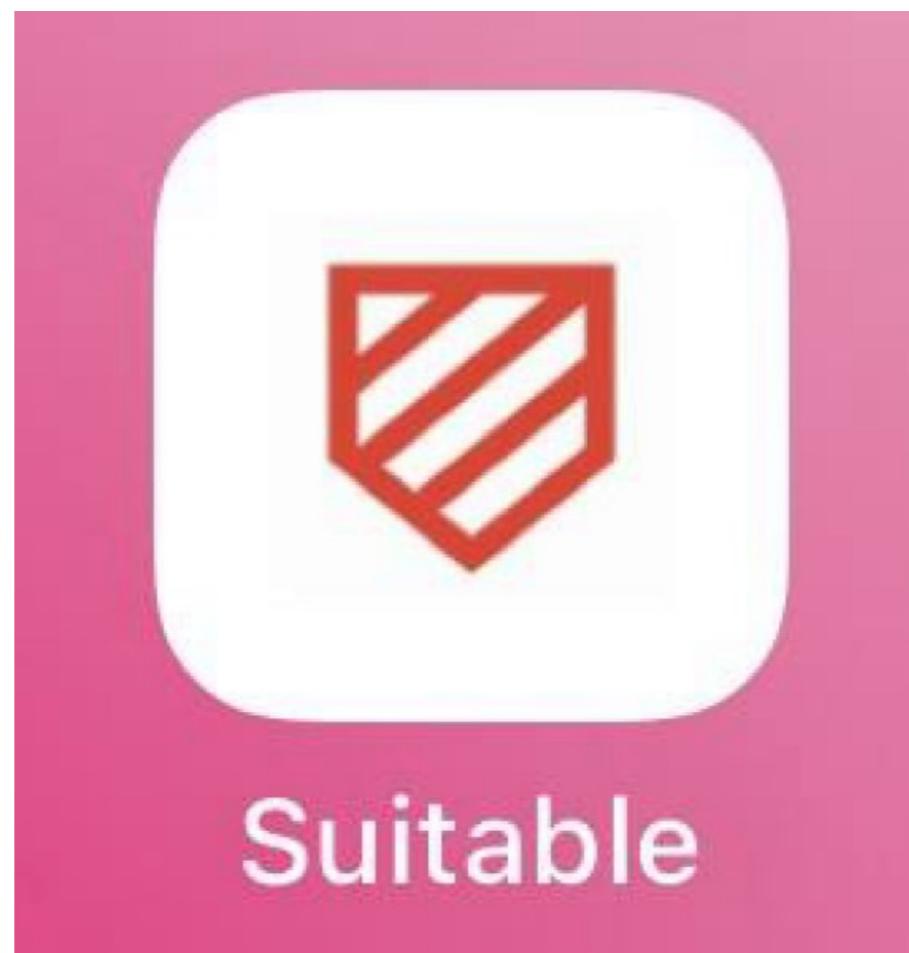
The app is designed to make it easier for students to stay up to date with campus events, including Student Government Association meetings, Student Activities Board events and programs hosted by campus organizations.

The app is a big step forward in improving student engagement, said Dean of Students Dr. Arthur Doctor, who helped bring the app to Claflin.

Doctor believes it will make a huge difference.

"With appropriate buy-in from our students and organizations, I think it can be a game changer for student engagement on campus," he said.

The Suitable App does more than show upcoming events.



"It is a one-stop shop for all events and programs that are happening," Doctor said. "It also allows students to learn about all the different organizations on campus to help them get better involved."

One of the biggest improvements is how easy the app is to use compared to PantherX, the university's older platform.

"It is more accessible to students via their phone, so student organization leaders can access it, and they can submit requests easier rather than going on their computer," Doctor said.

"It also allows me to approve it in real time and brings all of our processes to one place."

The app's mobile-friendly design makes it easier for students to not only find events but also track their involvement, helping them stay active and engaged in campus life.

Whether they are looking for a new club to join, checking on SGA activities or exploring leadership opportunities, students now have everything they need in one app.

MASS COMMUNICATIONS MAKES STUDIO IMPROVEMENTS



Claflin's Mass Communications Department's studio was refurbished over the summer. (Panther photo by Jayla Odom)

JAYLA ODOM, Reporter

Claflin University's Mass Communication Department has enhanced the ways students can learn to work with various media.

Dr. Luis Almeida, interim department head, cited improvements:

- Two microphones were added to the podcasting studio.
- The audio engineering studio was repurposed, increasing the number of computers from one to four.
- The studio was refurbished and repainted over the summer. During the effort, numerous VHS tapes were found. The plan is to repurpose and preserve them for the department's historical content.
- A new system was put in place for organizing the inventory of cameras, microphones and other equipment, making it easier to check out items.
- Two panels were added to the studio TV set, allowing for a third camera angle and providing more space for a professional appearance.
- The lighting in the studio was revamped and repositioned to enhance both brightness and professionalism.

• A TV was installed on the second floor of the Grace Thomas Kennedy building where mass communications classes are held. The plan is to showcase students' work, including projects like Panther TV.

Almeida's role at Claflin involves working with faculty members to advance the department in alignment with the university's values, which emphasize using technology in experiential learning activities.

Additionally, he is dedicated to serving students in every aspect of his role. He is currently on a committee focused on supporting the Mass Communications Department and advancing Claflin through its programs.

Some students Almeida highlights are: Kenneth White, who teaches photography; Damaia Davis, editor of The Panther student newspaper; Nyree Jordan, who contributes to the social media campaign; and Cheyanne Chambers, who assists with the Panther TV News Studio.

CLAFLIN STUDENTS RESPOND TO HBCU SICKLE CELL BLOOD DRIVE

BETHANY SCRIVEN, Reporter

The American Red Cross provided Claflin students the opportunity to serve the community by donating blood at the Aug. 28 HBCU Sickle Cell Blood Drive.

The event was held in conjunction with the Red Cross Sickle Cell initiative, which was begun in 2021 to increase the number of Black blood donors to help patients with sickle cell disease, which mostly affects African Americans.

“The purpose of blood drives is to collect units of blood to distribute to our hospitals for our patients requiring a blood transfusion,” said Vesha Jamison, sickle cell account manager for the South Carolina Region of the American Red Cross Blood Services.

“It is super important, especially on campuses like Claflin, because that is where we collect a number of diverse units for our patients with sickle cell disease,” Jamison said. “There are certain antigens that we look for when screening units of blood specifically for patients with sickle cell disease, and they are more than likely to find more compatible matches from those that are from the African American community.”

The HBCU Sickle Cell blood drive was made possible by a few passionate Claflin students.

“That particular blood drive came about because of Allanah [June], and she shared her with us ... being a family member of someone with sickle disease, and one of the programs that she was a part of this summer was a paper dedicated to sickle cell disease, which off sprung the idea of hosting a blood drive at Claflin University,” Jamison said.

June, a junior biology major, said, “Volunteering at the blood drive was important to me because not only did I schedule it, but it was to raise awareness for sickle cell anemia. Many individuals with sickle cell need constant blood transfusions, and the American Red Cross plays such a major impact.”

Jamison also cited Claflin’s HBCU Red Cross Ambassador Jayques Nelson.

We also have an HBCU ambassador on the campus of Claflin, so I know that we will be hosting another drive here in the fall and another in the spring. ... That particular ambassador was chosen through our HBCU Ambassador Program, which is open to all HBCUs across the country.”



A right is Claflin's HBCU Red Cross ambassador Jayques Nelson.



The Claflin blood drive was held in conjunction with the Red Cross Sickle Cell initiative. (Panther photo)

“Nelson, a junior mathematics major, said, “As an ambassador, my main task is to help host blood drives on campus. Growing up, I had a friend who had sickle cell. I saw how this impacted her and how it ultimately led to her death. I believe in the mission of these blood drives in helping people like my friend.”

Jamison said the blood drive at Claflin made a huge impact for the Red Cross.

“Claflin has always done an excellent job on their blood drives from the years before with the previous ambassador; it is just remarkable working with Claflin University, and they made sure of a huge impact.”

“We are able to collect a great number of what we call our CEK negative units, which are those units specifically with patients with sickle cell disease. Because 90% of those donors being diverse donors, we are able to see an impact huge on our blood supply when it comes down to collecting those units that we need for patients with sickle cell.”

Claflin students will get another chance to donate blood in November.

“Our next blood drive at Claflin University will be on Wednesday Nov. 6, and we will also have one in the spring as well,” Jamison said.

She also gave a helpful tip on how to prepare for a blood drive: “One of the main things you want to prepare for a blood drive is make sure you eat iron-rich foods leading up to [the blood drive], hydrating very well especially the morning of, and also before your appointment time you want to make sure that you have a have a well-balanced meal.”



Allanah June made the blood drive happen.



Jayques Nelson

INVOLVEMENT NOT NEW FOR SGA PRESIDENT



Claflin SGA President Josua Williams

LATRICIA THOMAS, Reporter

“I believe in being involved and being the change you want to see.”

The approach is not new for Claflin’s 2024-25 Student Government Association President Joshua Williams.

“I would say that I had a very balanced childhood,” said Williams, who grew up with his parents and three older siblings. He was the youngest in his household and said that impacted the way he is today.

“My childhood molded me into the independent go-getter I am today,” Williams said.

Although he usually got what he wanted, he remained humble.

“I know what it’s like to get what I want, but I also know what it’s like to go without,” Williams said.

He got involved with student leadership as a freshman at Claflin, becoming Mr. Freshman. During his sophomore year, he was elected Mr. Orange and Maroon.

Now he is in the top student leader position as SGA president with strong feelings about helping not only Claflin but his community.

“I saw some things that I wanted to change, turn around and be impactful towards as well as the student body, so I felt like a good representation of that,” Williams said. “That is ultimately why I ran to be SGA president.”

Williams’ long-term goals are to be a real estate agent and entrepreneur. By doing this, he hopes to have a big impact on his community.

“I look forward to giving back to the community through my career goals,” he said.

Williams said there are pros and cons to being a part of SGA but ultimately the experience is worth it.

“The main con for me is that balance between social life, academics and also having the obligation of being a student leader,” Williams said.

He continues to find the balance with an eye on his mission.

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“The main con for me is that balance between social life, academics and also having the obligation of being a student leader,” Williams said.

He continues to find the balance with an eye on his mission.

As he said: “I believe in being involved and being the change you want to see.”

STUDENTS CAN GET RADIO EXPERIANCE

KEONDRE BENJMEN, Reporter

CU Panther Radio is not your typical campus station.

“CU Panther Radio is an internet radio station, so it is not a regular radio station like 93.7 FM. It’s basically a streaming service,” said Dr. Luis Almeida, interim chair of the Department of Mass Communications.

Almeida wants CU Panther Radio to grow with involvement of students.

“What the department wants to do is for radio on demand and for students to come in and make their own podcast, music, music shows or radio shows with their own music,” Almeida said.

“It is also to help students with their resumes and for students to get jobs from working on an internet radio station and having some type of job experience,” Almeida said.

Almeida said the radio work can help students when it comes to broadcast journalism as they get experience in being part of station that features news and sports. It also can help students practice with recording their voices and making sure they have the right sound quality.

“I really want students to consider adding a class called Sound Production 1 with Dr. (Patrick) Stearns so they can practice how to use sound and so Dr. Stearns can help the students have a good speaking voice,” Almeida said.



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As to rules and regulations about which students should know regarding starting a podcast or being a DJ, Almeida said:

“One of the biggest rules is according to the FCC, we can’t have any foul language and not talk or discuss sexually explicit content. The entire radio station has to be clean and if there is any foul language, it has to be edited out. ... Otherwise it’s going to be a problem.”

Freshman president wants class to be a community

ALEXIS WILSON, Reporter

The new freshman president aims to establish a sense of community among the class of 2028.

Usir Jackson, a computer science major, is the Claflin University freshman class president for the 2024-25 school year.

“I have a simple goal, I want to build a stronger connection between the freshman class,” Jackson said.

He based his campaign on kinship and creating those connections among freshmen. He wants the class of 2028 to be a strong community in their later years of enrollment.

“My campaign was based off building a community within the freshman class, fostering the foundational relationships so in later years we will have a strong community,” Jackson said.

Throughout his campaign, he faced challenges of time management. Balancing the workload and executing a successful campaign were difficult, Jackson said.

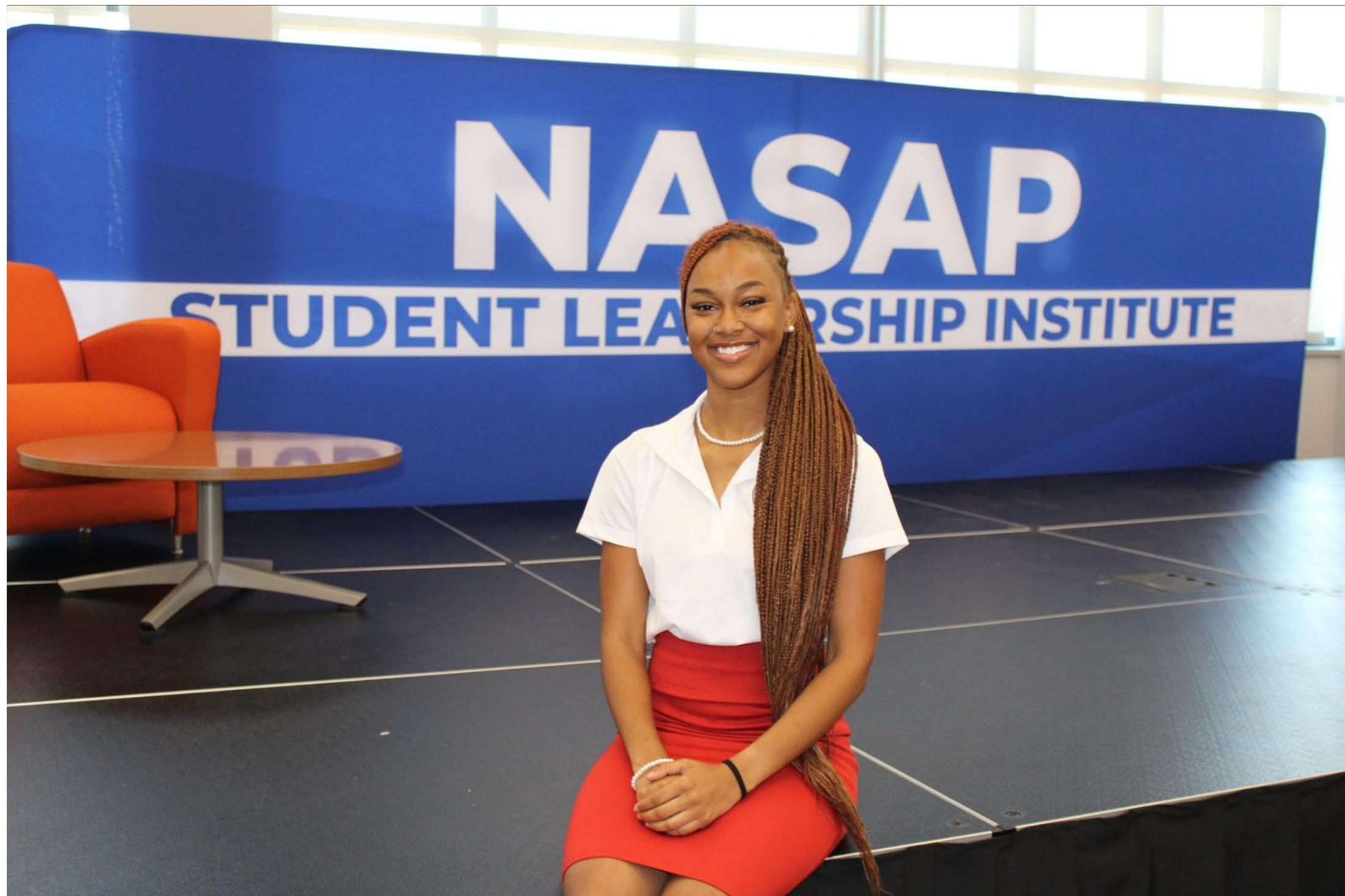


Usir Jackson is the newly elected president of the class of 2028. (Photo special to The Panther)

An interest meeting was held Aug. 22 and election campaigning began Aug. 26, giving candidates only one weekend to ready their campaigns. Preparing events, printing flyers and talking to people were demanding. Also, classes began giving out coursework, so it was challenging to manage the campaign and complete assignments, Jackson said.

Jackson assured the freshman class that he will represent and communicate with its members: “just being of the community, talking to everybody and meeting new people.”

THIS PANTHER HAS A PASION FOR ADVOCACY



Promise Joseph is a communications major and political science minor at Claflin University.

DAMAIA DAVIS, Editor

From the campus to Orangeburg City Council, Claflin student Promise Joseph has been unafraid to be a voice for change -- and her journey started with a Netflix series.

Joseph's interest was sparked by Netflix's "When They See Us," a series based on the Central Park Five, a 1989 case in which five Black and Latino teens were wrongly convicted of raping a white jogger in New York City. After watching, she knew she wanted to pursue a career in law.

"I pretty much started to educate myself more on the policies and things that were being pushed out and put into play that would affect my people and our day-to-day life," Joseph said. "And it essentially made me want to become a lawyer because I realized we needed more representation in the courtroom."

She stays set on these goals by keeping herself busy. This year, she is spearheading the election efforts on campus through events such as the Aug. 26 student-led voter panel

"I don't even give myself time to think about being discouraged," Joseph said. "And in the work that I do, I don't have time to be discouraged."

Joseph, a communications major

and political science minor, came to Claflin knowing she wanted to run for something. When she lost in the freshman elections, she shifted her focus to networking.

Attending campus events and communicating her goals to faculty, Joseph was determined to make a name for herself.

"I made sure everyone knew who I was," Joseph said. "Those connections are everything because I really wouldn't be anywhere that I am today without the connections that I've made along the way."

Speaking up for her peers, Joseph became an active part of the Goff Avenue conversation with Orangeburg City Council, which over some protests earlier this year gave Claflin approval to close Goff to vehicular traffic in the portion of the street that runs through the campus.

"I went there meeting after meeting and said what needed to be said because who else was going to do it if I didn't?" Joseph said. "And that pretty much kind of got people paying attention a little bit more."

Seeking education and getting involved on campus gave her confidence as an advocate, and she encourages other students to do the same.

"Being educated really just makes you want to fight for these things," Joseph said, "because you understand what it took to get here, where we're at right now, and where we could go."

VOTE HBCU PANEL READIES STUDENTS FOR THE POLLS

DAMAIA DAVIS, Editor

Students opened a conversation on the importance of their vote in a panel discussion held ahead of Nov. 5 elections.

Speakers included students Genesis Morris, Breeze Smith, Kaliyah Hall, and alumni Anthony Hallmon. The event was held in Claflin's theater to give students a safe space for a typically “stigmatized” conversation.

“I feel like hosting town halls or just spaces for open dialogue would definitely break down the stigmas and barriers surrounding voting,” said Morris, the current Miss Claflin. “And it would allow us to come with the open mind and a willingness to actually engage and participate in elections.”

Claflin has a long history in social justice. Engaging with other students is one way to foster that sense of unity.

“We know that change doesn't happen overnight,” Morris said. “But I believe that there is power in numbers, that we show up with a collective effort.”

The panel agreed education is important in keeping people engaged. Hall said the issue became evident when she was an intern in Congress from Georgia's 2nd District.

“When I worked in Congress, I would get so many phone calls from constituents,” Hall said. “And a lot of them were valid questions, but a lot of the questions were based on the fact that they don't understand basic civics.”



On the panel for discussing elections and voting are (from left) Breeze Smith, Kaliyah Hall, Anthony Hallmon, Genesis Morris and Promise Joseph. (Panther photo by Damaia Davis)

Hallmon is concerned about the effect that lack of knowledge has on voting.

“A lot of times when people are not educated on what's happening, they don't vote,” Hallmon said.

Through social media, students can share and consume media faster than ever. Smith described this as a “double-edged sword” with campaign information.

“We don't have to sit and watch for hours, or we don't have to read for hours to understand something,” Smith, an HBCU White House Scholar, said. “But you just have to definitely make sure it's a credible source.”

The panelists also stressed the importance of local elections.

“Voting is from the ground up,” Smith said. “So if you're not also participating in your local elections, your livelihood on a daily basis is being impacted.”

Hall said the lack of attention to local elections leads to voters not understanding policies that affect their daily lives.

“We really emphasize the presidential election,” Hall said. “But who your congressman is, or your senator, is just as important; who represents you in the Statehouse is just as important.”

Panelists encouraged students to investigate the policies behind the Democratic and Republican labels and candidates.

Smith said many Black voters subscribe to a “vote blue no matter who” mentality without looking at how policies affect them.

Hallmon is chair of the Orangeburg County Democratic Party. He said he is willing to be a resource in bridging the gap.

“That's one of the things that I'm hoping to change as the chair of the local Democratic Party here, is to get more candidates and elected officials on these campuses talking to students,” Hallmon said. “That's the only way we can get the energy to change if the students are aware, if we're educating the students on what's happening.”

CLAFLIN STUDENTS WILL 'MARCH TO THE POLLS'

CHEYANNE CHAMBERS, Reporter

In an effort to increase voter turnout among young adults, Claflin University student Promise Joseph is spearheading a "March to the Polls" for the upcoming presidential election.

The event aims to mobilize the student body and the local community to participate actively in the electoral process.

"It's very important that our students exercise their right to vote. As a historically Black college or university, the oldest in the state of South Carolina, we have a civic and moral responsibility to have our students engaged in the process," Claflin University President Dr. Dwaun Warmack said.

The march is scheduled for the morning of Election Day, Nov. 5, and is planned to start at JTK Gymnasium for Claflin students. Students will walk through Claflin's campus to one of the connectors to South Carolina State University, where SC State students will then join the march.

All students will march through SC State University to the polling site inside the Smith-Hammond-Middleton Memorial Center.



"This event is about more than just getting people to the polls," said Joseph, Claflin HBCU VOTE Fellow. "It's about fostering a culture of political engagement and making sure that every voice is heard."

Joseph is a junior mass communications major with a concentration in digital media and a minor in criminal justice. She is currently serving as the treasurer for the Claflin University Student Government Association and holds the position of VOTE HBCU Fellow for Claflin this year.

VOTE HBCU, launched through HEADCOUNT & XCELEADER, is a 10-stop tour designed to empower HBCU students with the tools, resources and cultural engagement needed to amplify their voices in the upcoming election.

As the presidential election approaches, similar initiatives and events have been taking place, such as voter registration drives, debate watch parties and forums focused on political discourse.

"Our most recent voter registration drive, in partnership with VOTE HBCU, resulted in about 125 new registrations, and during the freshmen orientation week, we had about 115 students register," Joseph said.

Joseph has hosted two voter registration drives for students since the start of the 2024 semester. One took place specifically for freshmen during their orientation week, and the other was on Aug. 26 for all returning students.

Claflin held a similar March to the Polls event during the last presidential election in 2020. While only 30 students attended that march, the increased focus on voter initiatives is expected to draw a larger crowd this year.

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