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## THE NEW LYNN UNIVERSITY CENTER

by Cassidy Clevenger

Education is what remains after one has forgotten what one has learned in school—while there is controversy over who originally made this comment, it still serves as poignant reminder for what students will value in their educations. Certainly students do study, and can recall years later, a laundry list of memorized facts, but what will they remember more fondly and with more detail twenty years later: their 200-level Economic lectures, or the study group they spent dozens of hours with that same semester?

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### Peer Positivity and Productivity

Researchers T.G Kotze and PJ du Plessis from South Africa’s University of Pretoria examined the importance of student socialization via service delivery—meaning, when students help one another through the medium of university services, all students involved tend to perform more effectively academically; by utilizing co-production and active learning, students can gain a better grasp on their expected roles, feel more confident in their abilities, and feel greater intrinsic and extrinsic rewards.

Lynn University in Florida has recently announced their new University Center. The Center, aside from being architecturally stunning, stands to promote student engagement with both their peers and university faculty. The Center has developed special boardrooms for student organizations, such as SGA, to work collaboratively, privately, and efficiently.

Some students say they are excited about using the new board room because it allows them a professional space to work, and they feel like it is preparing them for the future. Gregory Malfitano, Senior Vice President for Development and Administration at Lynn University, explains that the university center focuses on the needs of its students. This includes enhancing their student organizations, promoting collaboration, and supporting student leaders by providing the necessary spaces and technology for their success.

Similarly, the all-in-one design of the Center encourages students to want to take part in more on-campus activities. This involvement includes everything from dining, to studying, to recreation, to attending guest lecturers. To refer back to Kotze and du Pless, when students

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study and work together, they gain more from the experience. The multitude of public and private areas in Lynn's Center gives students a medium to reach their full potential—not just as students, but as future community members.

The Center's third floor is designed to promote students' individual and communal growth—it has an open-concept, co-working space that is available to faculty of all disciplines who wish to utilize a different type of classroom experience.

Lynn University President, Dr. Kevin Ross, is particularly proud of the Center, because this floor is also home to Lynn's Social Impact Lab and Watson Institute, both of which provide experiential learning opportunities for students. These labs generate positive impact locally and globally, thanks to the Center's sustainable business concepts.

### Having a Center in the Community

There is a reason some of the most successful communities throughout history have a well-defined center. The Roman Empire had its forums; ancient Egyptians had the Library of

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Alexandria; the Chinese Empire had the Yellow River for trade and agricultural sustainability. Point being, in order for a community of any size to function to its fullest potential, there needs to be a central point of significance to bring the culture together.

According to Professors John Lounsbury and Daniel DeNeui of Knoxville's University of Tennessee, students from smaller universities (fewer than 2,000 students) felt a stronger sense of belonging, togetherness, attachment, investment, commitment to the college, and a stronger sense of community.

Presumably, larger (and more urban) campuses likely have more off-campus activities for students to participate in, and they are more likely to explore off-campus means of entertainment or solace; however, if the campuses have enough activities and enriching environments for students, they are more likely to stay on campus, and engage in the on-campus community life. This is why Lynn developed new pathways for foot traffic and vehicles to be able to reach the Center from most any part of campus.

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The Lynn University Center was designed to serve as a central hub for the entire student body. President Ross notes their new strategic plan for Lynn over the upcoming year involved this Center's centralized hub; they wanted to provide a space for students to work and play on the campus. In addition to its convenient location, it is also available to its students 24/7.

### Highlighting the Heart of the Campus

The Center is meant to serve as an all-in-one location for the students. Ross continues, "The building now pulses with activity, day and night, and provides students with access to social support and dining spaces, all in one spot." Some of the amenities include a coffee bar, a pub, tutoring, a large green-space amphitheater, Christine's Park, and a recently expanded lake area.

Christine E. Lynn, chair of the board of trustees of Lynn University, has given \$15 million for the construction of the Christine E. Lynn University Center. She has donated to numerous projects over the years, and her donation toward the Center was the largest donation Lynn University has ever received.

In fact, the aesthetics are informed by Ms. Lynn's personal aesthetic. Ms. Lynn wanted a clean landscape so everything could be seen. She wanted the park to "highlight the heart of the campus."

By being the central point for the whole campus, it is fully available to all students—both for those who live on or off campus—as well as the greater community. Ross explains that Lynn offers many events that

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are open to students, faculty, alumni, and the general public; such events include Live at Lynn Theatre series, Fighting Knights games and the Dialogues Speaker Series. Additionally, the amphitheater space can be used by teachers who want to enjoy the beautiful South Florida weather while lecturing to eager minds.

### Come Together to Grow Together

College is a time for growth, self-exploration, unification, and education. Students, such as the ones at Lynn University, are gaining so much more than knowledge while they are on campus. The relationships students develop with their peers, mentors, and faculty are the basis of not just fond memories but also critical life skills; these bonds also impact life satisfaction and professional development. The amenities student centers offer, such as open architecture, student boardrooms, and extracurricular events are integral to the college experience.



**ABOUT THE AUTHOR:** Cassidy Clevenger is a Samford University alum. She is currently in graduate school at Samford in the MSW program, while working as a staff writer for *Private University Products and News*.

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