

## Good Company

Living-learning community offers special programs and academic extras for first-year business students

IT MAY NOT BE MTV'S REAL WORLD, but freshmen calling Maple Hall's Bulls Business Community home are learning real-world lessons on one of USF's newest residential floors.

One of several new initiatives launched by the College of Business, the Bulls Business Community is a living-learning center where business majors can begin developing as professionals from their first moments on campus.

Even with orientation and welcome events, freshmen often worry about navigating systems or getting lost amid 45,000+ peers. Almost all students admit a twinge of nervousness.

"USF does an amazing job of making freshmen feel comfortable in a new environment," says Ashley Parkerson, one of the Bulls Business Community's first residents. The 18-year-old admits she was excited and nervous about her first year, and comforted knowing fellow residents have similar interests, schedules and first-year classes.

"I am excited about everything and want a positive, well-rounded experience. It's nice to room with others who are interested in business," she says. "It gives us opportunities to help each other or study for big tests. I love the idea of grouping hard-working students who have the same interests."

"We're building a small community within a big university," explains Dean Robert Forsythe, noting that the business school program includes social and academic extras. "It's more than simply a place to sleep and study."

Campus life includes eating, sleeping, partying and studying, and Forsythe says residents of

the Bulls Business Community don't miss out.

"Students enjoy all the benefits of a traditional on-campus lifestyle, plus extra perks," he says.

These "perks" include learning experiences not normally found in a classroom, such as "Business Etiquette" or "Dress for Success" seminars, opportunities to network with business leaders, and on-site academic advising.

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– Ashley Parkerson

"Improv Night" is also part of the program.

"People may not associate improvisation with business, but Improv Night helps foster a well-rounded business skillset in a fun, casual way," he says.

"Students get to know each other quickly, learn to think on their feet, gain public speaking experience and learn a key business lesson when they realize the best improv players are those who make everyone look good."

Since residents are all part of the same college and at the same place in their academic career, they can build friendships by studying or researching for similar assignments. They know when assignments are due and can help peers struggling to balance school and fun.

"Unfortunately, we've all heard stories of high achievers who lose focus the first year of college," says Forsythe. "With a built-in support network, we may be able to 'catch' such students before they fall too far."

Like Forsythe, business major Steven Giovannello, the floor's resident assistant, sees the benefit of such support first-hand.

"This place is fun, enjoyable, brings residents closer together, gets them more involved and in the end, will help us be more successful."

– Lorie Briggs



JOSEPH GAMBLE