

Students celebrate love through giving gifts

By Valentina Toro
Features Editor

Students gathered in Adanti Student Center Room 217 on Feb. 11, to build personalized Valentine’s Day gift baskets during Baskets for Beaus, an event hosted by the Programs Council.

The event invited attendees to assemble baskets filled with small gifts, snacks and decorative items, offering a hands-on alternative to traditional tabling events..

“Baskets for Beaus is our daytime programmers’ way of bringing in the Valentine’s Day holiday spirit,” Isaiah Young, a graduate intern for ProCon, said. “We’re making baskets with take-home things like lip balm and other nice stuff and just getting students excited for the time of year.”

According to organizers, the event was designed to combine social interaction with take-home items.

Supply stations included plush toys and candy, along with materials for written notes and themed decorations students could take with them.

In addition to craft supplies, students were offered pizza and wings, organizers also held a raffle with two grand prizes for participating

students. Students were able to choose items based on usefulness and personal preference.

Organizers said the goal was to create a relaxed environment where students could gather and participate in a seasonal activity.

ProCon regularly hosts themed events throughout the semester, and the Valentine’s Day basket format was selected as an interactive option to encourage creativity.

Organizers set up multiple tables so that participants could customize their basket contents based on color, theme or purpose.

Some students built baskets for partners while others customized baskets for friends or family members. Many attendees compared gift items with others at their tables, trading suggestions and adjusting their baskets as they worked.

Business administration major Marquis Ward, a sophomore, said he came specifically to prepare a Valentine’s Day gift.

“I was looking, trying to stack up on Valentine’s Day presents,” Ward said. “I have a girlfriend, and this will be our first Valentine’s Day, so I’m trying to make it memorable and thoughtful.”

Ward said the variety of

available supplies made the process more meaningful than buying a single item.

“There’s a couple of things to choose from,” Ward said. “I can make it nice, make it pretty, and it’s all different things she can actually use.”

Other students said they attended to take a break from coursework and participate in a low-pres-sure on-campus activity.

Organizers said the drop-in format is intended to give students a low-cost way to participate in campus life while marking seasonal moments in the semester. Participants could stay as long as they wanted, move between supply tables and complete their baskets at their own pace.

Nursing major Megan Nguyen, a freshman, said the event offered a welcome pause in the middle of a heavy week of coursework.

“I just needed a break from cramming school-work and studying, so I decided to go to a fun event with my cousin and just do some crafts,” Nguyen said.

Young said turnout met expectations, and the student response was positive throughout the program.

“We got the people that we expected, and people seem happy with their stuff,” Young said.



PHOTOS | VALENTINA TORO

Students working on their Valentine’s Day gift baskets.



Students gathered around a table with food.

Winterfest brings students seasonal fun

By Valentina Toro
Features Editor

Winter activities, crafts and comfort food drew students to the Adanti Student Center Ballroom on Feb. 11 for Winterfest, which served as the university’s spring semester welcome-back event.

Hosted by the Office of Student Involvement, the new event served as a semester kickoff offering interactive activities, a photo station, custom airbrushed hats and winter-themed games alongside snacks and hot chocolate.

“We’re really trying to move toward having a lot of signature events that students can look

forward to every year,” Vanessa Hunter, a graduate intern for the Office of Student Involvement, said. “This is kind of our big welcome back event to help people get back into the swing of the semester.”

Organizers said planning began late last semester, with staff coordinating vendors and specialty attractions, including the synthetic ice rink and craft stations.

Associate Director Eric Lacharity led vendor outreach and activity coordination to determine which winter style features could be safely installed indoors and scaled for student participation.

“This has been in talks since the end of last semester, and it took a lot of time to call the vendors, lot of coordination to figure out what was possible,” Hunter said.

The event is part of a broader effort to build recurring campus traditions tied to key points in the academic calendar, particularly at the start of the spring term when engagement can dip due to weather and workload.

Staff members said Winterfest is intended to function as both a social outlet and a visibility boost for student programming.

The synthetic ice rink and curling lanes attracted continuous

turnout while the snow globe and custom airbrushed hat tables remained busy.

The hot chocolate and cookie bar remained busy, with many attendees stopping for refreshments between activities. Friend groups attended together while others joined between classes.

Students described the event as an easy, low-pressure way to socialize without leaving campus. The mix of interactive stations and free food drew both planners and walk-ins.

Winterfest activities served as a social alternative to smaller tabling events, giving students multiple ways to

participate in one space.

The combination of games, crafts and food options encouraged groups to stay longer and try more than one activity.

“It just sounded really fun: the activities, the pictures, the hats. And we all didn’t have plans, so we came together,” political science major Emma Gonzalez, a freshman, said. She described the event as “fun, delicious and new experiences.”

Organizers said events like Winterfest are designed not only as entertainment but also as early-semester engagement tools.

Large, interactive programs give students

opportunities to gather, participate and reconnect after the academic break.

The drop-in format allowed students to participate without registering in advance or committing to a set time block.

Feedback from this first year will shape how similar events are structured in future schedules and what elements become recurring features.

“That’s our hope: to carry it on every year,” Hunter said. “If students really enjoy certain things, like the synthetic ice rink or the airbrushed hats, we want to bring those back so people have something to look forward to.”

Owls Decide: AirPods or Headphones?

By Valentina Toro
Features Editor



PHOTOS | LILY RAND

“AirPods because it’s more discreet. Headphones are loud.”
-Sociology major Raya Samu, a junior



“Headphones because they are noticeable and loud.”
-Art and design major Tariq Peters, a junior



“Headphones: I think you hear music better.”
-Tourism, hospitality and event management major Emily Read, a junior



“Headphones: I think it’s better sound quality.”
-Art and design major Albany Smith, a freshman



“AirPods: I like the simplicity of it.”
-Social work major Allie Torres, a freshman



“Headphones because the bass sounds better.”
-Environmental and marine science major Ian Morris, a senior