

Episode 14: Saint Leo's Savannah Education Center

Speaker 1:

Saint Leo 360, a 360 degree overview of St. Leo University community.

Greg Lindberg:

Welcome to another episode of the Saint Leo 360 podcast. This is your host, Greg Lindberg. On this episode, we are talking about one of our education centers. And just to note here, Saint Leo has over 30 education centers in seven different US states. So the focus of this episode is our Savannah Education Center in Savannah, Georgia. And joining me here on the podcast is Stephanie Stinski, who is the Director of our Savannah Education Center. Stephanie, welcome to the podcast.

Stephanie Stinski:

Good morning.

Greg Lindberg:

Hey, there. Appreciate you being with us here.

Stephanie Stinski:

Absolutely.

Greg Lindberg:

All right. So we've got a lot to talk about as far as the center and everything. But I did want to just start off with, if you could give everyone just an overview of Savannah, Georgia, just describe the town there, what it's known for, all that good stuff.

Stephanie Stinski:

Sure. So Savannah is definitely known for its history. We are the oldest city in Georgia, and we have one of the largest National Historic Landmark districts in the country. Aside from our history though, Savannah is also known as the most haunted city in America. And we have the second largest St. Patrick's Day parade in the world. So we usually have about half a million people that come to Savannah for the St. Patrick's Day festival that we have each year.

Greg Lindberg:

Wow, very cool. Now as far as the center goes, what's the actual address and the actual location specifically there?

Stephanie Stinski:

So the address is 325 West Montgomery Cross Road, which is the previous location of the VA hospital that was located in Savannah, so we took on half of that building. We are about two miles from our Oglethorpe Mall here in Savannah, and about three miles from the Hunter Army Airfield gate.

Greg Lindberg:

And then let's talk about the actual size of the center. How many square feet do you have there, and then how has it kind of set up?

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Stephanie Stinski:

Sure. We are nearly 15,000 square feet. We have 13 classrooms, a learning resource center that is staffed with a full-time English tutor, and we are about to bring on a part-time math tutor as well. We have a 26-person computer lab, an expansive student lounge that has fresh vending options. A military resource center, a student study room, a cyber bar, and outdoor patio for our students to enjoy.

Greg Lindberg:

Nice. So definitely a lot of different things to offer there.

Stephanie Stinski:

We do. We definitely want to try to offer some diverse options for our students, give them some different areas to enjoy in the center outside of the classroom.

Greg Lindberg:

And then as far as parking goes, I know parking can obviously be a challenge on certain college campuses. What is the parking situation there?

Stephanie Stinski:

We have an expansive parking lot around the center. There is also an additional parking lot being built to the side of the center, as well as across the street from the center. So just to give us some additional parking on top of what we already have.

Greg Lindberg:

Very nice. Now let's talk about the history of the center. And I know Saint Leo has had a presence in Savannah for quite some time, correct?

Stephanie Stinski:

Correct. We have served the Savannah community since 1975. We initially offered courses on the two bases that are here, so that's Hunter Army Airfield and Fort Stewart. But then we became a community education center and are now open to military and non-military affiliated individuals.

Greg Lindberg:

I see, very nice. And then as far as the programs, the degree programs that we offer there, could you just give us an overview of what is actually available?

Stephanie Stinski:

Sure. So on ground we offer a wide range of programs, including associate degrees, with three specialization options. We offer a bachelor's degree. Some of our largest bachelors are going to be business administration, human services, criminal justice, and psychology among others. As well as graduate level programs, such as the MBA, criminal justice and human service.

Greg Lindberg:

And what'd you say, as far as the most popular ones, what would you say are the most popular?

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Stephanie Stinski:

Business administration is our biggest undergraduate program, closely followed by human services and criminal justice.

Greg Lindberg:

And so I would imagine we've also had students that do both an undergrad degree with us there and the graduate degree?

Stephanie Stinski:

Absolutely. We have a lot of students that decide to continue their education with us. They're familiar with the center, they're used to how we operate and the services that we offer them. So they do a lot of times continue through that Master's degree.

Greg Lindberg:

Got you. And then as far as Saint Leo Flex, I believe we do also offer that there?

Stephanie Stinski:

We do. So Saint Leo Flex is our flexible learning experience. And the Flex program allows students to enroll in online programs that are not offered on ground at the center. We want to be able to give our students the freedom to be in the program of their choosing and to take classes in the format that works best for them. So the Flex program allows students to take their classes online, while still having access to the resources at the center. Which include face-to-face advising, tutoring, the computer lab and other support services that we have available at the center.

Greg Lindberg:

So it really is flexibility, obviously flex is a keyword there.

Stephanie Stinski:

Definitely.

Greg Lindberg:

Now in terms of the classes that are offered there at the center, what kind of schedule do you have and what times are classes actually available?

Stephanie Stinski:

Well, we consider ourselves to be an adult education center. So we offer most of our courses in the evenings and on Saturdays. So in the evenings, most of our courses are going to run from six to 11, and on Saturdays, those courses are going to run from nine to two. This allows the working adult a flexible schedule to attend classes around their work schedule and their family.

Greg Lindberg:

Right. And then if you could just speak to the types of students, just in general, the demographics of the students that we have attending that center.

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Stephanie Stinski:

Yeah. So a large portion of our students are working adults between the ages of 36 and 42. We do have students that prefer our daytime classes due to working at night, or parents that attend class while their children are in school. So it's a pretty wide population, but the majority are going to be between the ages of 36 and 42.

Greg Lindberg:

And I would imagine having students within that small range, they can really relate to each other, support each other?

Stephanie Stinski:

Absolutely.

Greg Lindberg:

Nice. In terms of the faculty, if you could just speak to the types of faculty we have there. Is it primarily those that are working during the day and then teach at night or?

Stephanie Stinski:

We do. So we have three full-time faculty members. We have Dr. Leat Kodua in Business Administration, Dr. Tasia Hilton in Healthcare Management, and Dr. Katrina Maxwell in Human Services. So outside of those, we have approximately 40 adjunct instructors that are working in their fields during the day and teach with us at night.

Greg Lindberg:

And I know that bringing that practitioner, that experience to the classroom, is just huge for the students.

Stephanie Stinski:

It's definitely a good experience to be able to sit in a classroom with an instructor who works in that field all day. So they're able to give you a different perspective of it, whenever they can talk about, "Hey, well, I was at work today and this is what happened, and it's associated with what we're talking about tonight." So it just gives a different perspective to the students.

Greg Lindberg:

And then in addition to the faculty, if you could talk about the staff members that we have there.

Stephanie Stinski:

Sure. We have two staff assistants, Joi Williams and Hillary Landuyt. We have our English tutor, Naekeisha Jones. We have academic advisors, Mitria Mobley and Khadijah March. We have an Assistant Director of Admissions, who's Brian Bailey, and an Assistant Director who is Yalonka Mitchell.

Greg Lindberg:

You got a pretty nice sized staff.

Stephanie Stinski:

It is, it's very nice.

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Greg Lindberg:

And then if you could just talk about the support that the faculty and the staff provides to the students, in terms of just the one-on-one interaction and support.

Stephanie Stinski:

Yeah. So the great thing about having staff here on the center is to be able to provide support to students outside of just, "Here's how you do the application, and here's how you get financial aid." So outside of that we're able to really spend that one-on-one time with them to go through their programs.

Stephanie Stinski:

They are assigned an advisor based on their major. So they work with that advisor and they build that relationship and that rapport with that advisor, so that they're able to come in and say, "I'm having this issue outside of academics. What do I do? How can I get through this?" And we're able to assist those students with resources that are going to help them be successful, inside and outside of the classroom.

Greg Lindberg:

Just in general, how would you describe the atmosphere, the vibe of the center? I would imagine it's pretty ... It's like a family, I would think.

Stephanie Stinski:

Absolutely. It definitely is. Savannah itself is a community that is that face-to-face, they want that get-to-know-you kind of feel. So we are like family and we get to know who our students are and work with them in every aspect that they're needing us to be there for them. But you walk in and it's warm, it's friendly. And we definitely want our students to feel that when they're in this building.

Greg Lindberg:

Let's talk about some of the events that the center's involved in. I know a lot of our education centers have open houses and do community service and then different events throughout the year. If you could speak to what Savannah does there?

Stephanie Stinski:

Sure. So we do a lot of community events. We host a lot of events at the center as well to bring the community in. So some of the events that we have offered is our Fall Family and Friends Day. We do a Halloween Spooktacular in the fall for all of the local school-aged children. We host several career fairs. We do a back to school event for the K through 12 students to help them get their necessary items that they need to go back to school and be prepared.

Stephanie Stinski:

We participate in the Salvation Army Angels project at Christmas every year. So the center adopts about 40 angels and we provide their Christmas for the year. We also participate in the Martin Luther King Jr. Day parade, the Veterans Day parade, and the St. Patrick's Day parade.

Greg Lindberg:

Wow. So you really are pretty tied to the community there.

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Stephanie Stinski:

Absolutely. We definitely want to be out in the community as much as possible and involved in things outside of academics, where we can just be a part of the community.

Greg Lindberg:

And like you mentioned, getting kids involved too, and I'm sure some of the students' children can participate in some of the events. And having those connections I'm sure, is really nice.

Stephanie Stinski:

Absolutely. Our students are always looking for ways that they can involve their friends and their family. So whenever we're offering those types of events, they're able to bring their kids and bring their parents and their siblings and their friends just to say, "Hey, this is what I'm a part of."

Greg Lindberg:

Right, exactly. What would you say the biggest benefits are for ... Let's say there's a prospective student out there listening to this in the Savannah area who might be interested in attending the center, what would you tell that individual?

Stephanie Stinski:

I would say the biggest benefit of attending the Savannah center is that we do offer that one-to-one attention and support services for our students that are looking for one-on-one, that face-to-face interaction. Not only with the staff, but with our faculty. We get to know each student individually, and we walk with them in their educational journey from their initial application, through their graduation.

Greg Lindberg:

Very nice. And then just to wrap up here, as far as the contact information if someone was interested in learning more, how can they contact the center there?

Stephanie Stinski:

The center contact number is nine, one, two, three, five, two, eight, three, three, one. Our email address is savannah@saintleo.edu. Our webpage is saintleo.edu/savannah. And we do have a Facebook page and it is under Saint Leo University Savannah Center.

Greg Lindberg:

Alrighty. Well, we definitely appreciate the time, Stephanie, and thanks so much for joining us here on the Saint Leo 360 podcast.

Stephanie Stinski:

Absolutely. Thanks for having me.

Speaker 1:

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