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A record freshman class and a record number of students in university housing

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Residential tower at the University Student Center

Hundreds of USF St. Petersburg students will move into residential student housing on Saturday, the largest number in the history of the university, which also will welcome its largest freshman class ever.

The move-in marks the opening of the new University Student Center, a \$21 million facility expected to quickly become the main gathering spot on campus. It represents a significant step in the evolution of USFSP toward a more traditional, residential campus.

Nearly 650 students will live in university housing this year. Both residence halls are full and dozens of students will move into university-controlled rooms at the Bayfront Hilton near the campus, complete with student resident assistants. This is the third consecutive year the Hilton has accommodated the increased demand for student housing at USFSP.

Saturday's move-in will take place from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m.

Besides the residence hall, the University Student Center (USC) includes a modern dining hall called The Reef, offering USFSP's first full-service meal plans; a game room on the first floor and student lounges in the residential tower; two outdoor basketball courts; and event/meeting space on the second floor. The student residence rooms have views of the downtown St. Petersburg skyline and Tampa Bay.

The USC was financed largely by a fee the students supported and the Legislature approved, along with revenue generated by room-and-board fees.

Move-in day is always an exhilarating experience, with students, family members and friends helping tote pillows, crates and clothing, sharing excitement for new beginnings, joyous hellos to new roommates and tearful goodbyes with parents and family members.

It is a particularly exciting day for freshmen. The freshman class of 2016 will number about 700, a record for USFSP.

This year's move-in day was originally planned to happen over two days, but changed to one day because of the large number of road closures for the official kick-off event for the Republican National Convention at Tropicana Field on Sunday, Aug. 26.

All students, faculty and staff have been urged to avoid the campus on Sunday, Aug. 26, because access to and from USFSP will be limited. Classes begin as scheduled on Monday, Aug. 27. Little impact is expected on USFSP that week.

The official launch of the University Student Center will be at 4:30 p.m. Sept. 6.