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USFSP Establishes New Living/Learning Community

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— From left: Senior Biology major and RA Teri Deardorff, and freshmen Chloe Hayes and Mariah Ross

Twelve biology majors living on the second floor of USC are members of BioLife, a new living/learning community on campus. According to Norine Noonan, professor of biology, the administration approached her department earlier this year about forming the community because biology is USFSP's largest single major.

"The literature on learning communities is very clear that, when done well, they lead to better student outcomes and more engagement of the students with the campus," says Noonan, who describes herself as the cruise director of the group.

"They've only been together for three weeks, but from what I can see, all of the students are excited about the possibilities," says Noonan. "In the spirit of misery loving company, they will be there for and with each other when they need a study group or for the myriad of other things that cause stress."

'I am very excited about this living learning community,'" said Han Reichgelt, Ph.D., regional vice chancellor of Academic Affairs. "Experience with living/learning communities elsewhere clearly demonstrates that such communities lead to greater student success, and I am sure that with Dr. Noonan's leadership, this LLC will emerge as a model for other LLCs both at USFSP and elsewhere."

In addition, best practices indicate that most living/learning communities include a series of required events that underscores members' commitment to the group. Regardless of their concentration in biology, all BioLife students will tour the College of Marine Science; work with Noonan at the St. Petersburg Science Festival; and tour All Children's Hospital this semester.

"Our first indicator of success will be retention from fall to spring and the students' GPAs, says Noonan. "My hope is that a handful of students will stay until they graduate, and that some will serve as peer mentors for future BioLife members."