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Makerspace Fosters Community

Matt Parks , Staff Reporter

When the Jim and Janet Sinegal Center for Science and Innovation (Sinegal Center) was designed, there was an expectation that it would have places for all majors to work, create and come together. One of those spaces is the Billodue Makerspace, which provides students with a variety of activities, from 3D printing to glasswork.

Located on the first floor of the Sinegal Center, the Billodue Makerspace is open to students from 12 to 8 p.m. Monday through Friday. Introduction workshops are available for students to learn how to use the equipment provided in the space.

In order to safely work in the Makerspace, “badges” are earned based on completion of the program’s standard. All badges are required to use the space, with the first being “Welcome and Safety.” Using the space independently of supervision requires at least a Level One training badge in the specific area of interest. Level One training is completed in two phases: remotely on Canvas and through hands-on instruction in the Makerspace.

The Makerspace is focused on student experience and bringing together students of all backgrounds. Third-year Environmental Studies and Spanish double major Gabby Batinich, who is a student employee at the Makerspace, shared that the diversity of majors is reflected in the students that work there, and seeing how the space fosters collaboration is what makes it special.

“It’s been really cool to see students coming and using the space and opportunity to be creative in whatever medium that is for them,” Batinich said. “Students use this space for different school projects and it’s a space for everybody. I think [the staff] brings a mix of everything to this space, we have STEM, humanities, social science majors—there’s no one prototype. We have fun and we’re always looking to create new things—it’s always really good vibes here.”

While students are the teachers and lead projects in the space, it’s also an opportunity for them to learn from their own experiences. Second-year Creative Writing and Humanities major Sophia Modica revealed that since working at the Makerspace, she’s been exposed to new skills and experiences that are special since it’s hard to find access to these materials elsewhere. She noted how the Makerspace is a good way to meet new people, especially after returning to campus since the COVID-19 pandemic started.

“I really do love the community of this space,” Modica said. “The staff is a lot of different years so you get to meet people you wouldn’t necessarily meet outside the Makerspace. It’s a space for people to connect over common knowledge or to learn how to 3D print, or use a sewing machine and they come and take a workshop and eventually they come back on their own to use the space. I think it builds a space for people who don’t see themselves as creative to be creative.”



Adeline Ong

Embroidery machines at the Billodue Makerspace.

Being creative is a key component of the Makerspace and for some, it's a way to follow passions outside their majors. First-year Nursing student Sarah Fletcher, who now works at the Makerspace, initially came to check things out in between classes to explore creative endeavors she couldn't express through nursing. While she loves all that the space provides, it is sewing and embroidery that is particularly special for her. It connects her to loved ones she hasn't been able to see since the start of COVID-19.

"My grandma used to teach me when I was younger," Fletcher said. "I kind of forgot about it, but coming here has helped me slightly reconnect with them because I haven't been able to visit them in COVID-19 because they live in England and Japan, which is hard to visit. Whenever I do make something I send a picture and show it to them and that kind of feels like I'm spending time with them which is nice."

Sewing is a popular activity for students at the Makerspace. Second-year English major Gina Roseman uses the space to hem pants and appreciates that the space offers students the ability and equipment that would otherwise be too expensive to afford.

"These sewing machines are fairly good and are a very good tool for beginners to use," Roseman said. "I've only been here for a month and I'm learning really fast and the people who work here are really helpful and have good advice on projects."

Roseman explained that the environment and culture within the Makerspace is especially positive and encouraging.

"You can meet new people on campus and make friends with people who are into your interests as well," Roseman said. "I've met so many fun people just sitting around and chatting with someone next to you and being like, 'What are you working on?' and showing off your piece when you're done. It's a really welcoming space."

The staff of Billodue Makerspace invite all students to come and explore. It will be open for the remainder of the year, offering a place for students to relieve stress and be creative.