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USF St. Petersburg Cuts Ribbon on Campus Welcome Center

By: Pam Bello, USF St. Petersburg Media Relations

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USF St. Petersburg is doing a lot of ‘welcoming’ these days. In the last few months, the university has welcomed 11 new administrators and 61 new faculty members -- and on Aug. 15 the university cut the ribbon on a new Campus Welcome Center just in time to welcome thousands of students who begin classes on Monday, Aug. 25.

In spite of the unseasonable downpours that plagued construction workers and landscapers, the dedicated crews worked diligently to ensure the ceremony was on schedule.

Amid a flurry of bells and whistles, a cherry-red convertible cruised down Fifth Avenue South to the corner of Second Street and the waiting crowd of USFSP employees, students and community members. Perched atop the back seat were Student Government President Sue Sietsma and St. Petersburg Area Chamber of Commerce Economic Development Coordinator Alvina Miller, the guests of honor at the ceremony.

They were greeted by USF St. Petersburg Vice President and CEO Karen A. White and other senior administrators, including former Interim Vice President and CEO Ralph Wilcox who originated the concept of a center to welcome visitors, provide maps, directions and information, and sell short-term parking passes. The VIPs ascended to the porch of the university’s historic Snell House, located next to the Welcome Center, where White called the new facility the “gateway from the City of St. Petersburg to the heart of USF St. Petersburg.”

Miller, representing the Chamber of Commerce, addressed the strong partnership between the downtown university, the Chamber and the city of St. Petersburg. Sietsma’s comments focused on the impact the facility would have on new and transitioning students who were unfamiliar with the greatly expanding campus. “This is one more step along a long and exciting path which USF St. Petersburg has embarked. This university has made great progress and wonderful things await the institution, its students, and the community it serves,” said Sietsma.

The facility, located on the corner of Fifth Avenue South and Second Street, provides a drive-through window as well as being a walk-in facility.