



Friendships with the Women's Center By Arely Gutierrez Carmona

Creating new friendships can be difficult when joining a new school, especially when you don't know any students. When I visited Loyola, one of the first features that resonated with me was the gorgeous campus and the various groups of students with bright smiles on their faces. Friendships are one of the most important factors in falling in love with a school. I had the opportunity to meet individuals at Loyola before committing, and this really impacted my decision to attend Loyola. By being able to meet other students ahead of time, the committing process was a lot easier because I knew who would be my future classmates and friends.

“Creating friends as a commuter was difficult but the WC helped me create long lasting friendships.” - Yaretzi Reyes

The Transition to College

Time is an important factor when wanting to create friendships. However, as a first-year student, you don't have much time to find long-lasting friends. When first arriving at Loyola, I found it difficult to find my group of people. However, it's also normal not to find friends the moment you get to college. I discovered this my first few weeks into college: the first friends I created were not my type of people, yet as the school year progressed, so did my friendships. When I found my people, it felt easier for me to feel that Loyola was my home. I would be spending my next four years at Loyola, so creating friendships with the right people allowed me to be able to call Loyola my home.



The Women's Center

Many communities are provided by Loyola, and you can find one form of community at the Women's Center. The Women's Center offers many different DIY crafts and volunteering opportunities throughout the Baltimore community. The [Women's Center](#) allowed me to meet new people and create many friendships. I felt for the first time since arriving at the school that I had found my safe place where peers allowed me to be myself without feeling judged. All the different activities the Women's Center provided helped me meet new people. A time when the Women's Center provided the most service for individuals was after the elections, an upsetting time for some individuals. The Women's Center

provided facemasks and coloring books to help destress. This service gave us a safe space to feel vulnerable and share our worries. The act of service they provided helped us to become closer to one another as we shared their feelings.



Student Experience

Yaretzi Reyes, a first-year at Loyola, also attends activities hosted by the Women's Center and has created friendships through the services provided by the Women's Center. Yaretzi, as a commuter, found it difficult to create friendships when not living on campus. Yaretzi explains her first experience at the Women's Center was a safe and comfortable feeling. She says, "Being surrounded by different women is a great impact for all, at least for me. It brings together women of all races and cultures to feel safe, support each other as females, and create long-lasting friendships." With just one activity, Yaretzi made an unexpected friend who she now speaks to every day.: "The pumpkin painting was one of the first times I attended the Women's Center, and just with that one activity, I created four new friends who I now speak to every day." Loyola and the Women's Center opened the opportunity for Yaretzi to serve other individuals with their struggle to create new friendships as well: Yaretzi applied to be a Evergreen with the help of the Women's Center and now continues to help other students to create long lasting friendships.

***"My direct roommate and I bonded over their plant sale, which we now have plant children and we mother very well."
Jasline Hernandez***

Jasline Hernandez, another first-year at Loyola, is a member of the Women's Center and has attended since the first activity provided. The Women's Center was presented as eye-opening and had interesting opportunities of service to Jasline. The Women's Center "brought her and her roommates closer together through service, allowing them to engage with one another in a deeper way not provided with many other groups." The service assisted all women in supporting one another and helping with issues being dealt with outside of the Loyola campus. Jasline says, "The plant sale that they hosted brought me and my direct roommate Lily to bond and led to us caring for our plants daily." The Women's Center not only creates an impact the moment you attend but also creates a lasting impact that can give you an outside thing to care for, which can also better your state of mind and strengthen your friendships.

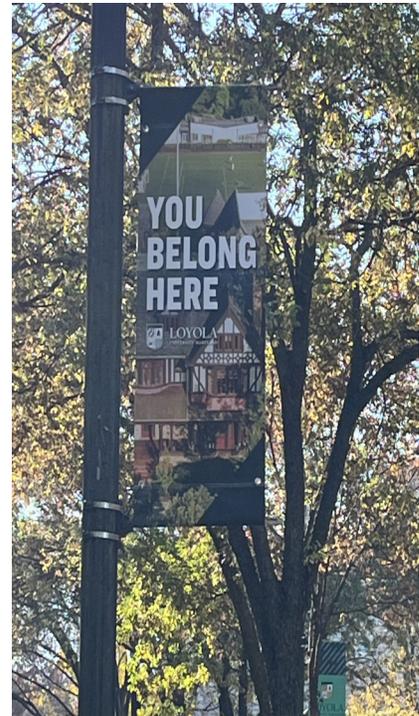


The Women's Center has helped form many friendships and enrich existing ones. While the Women's Center is not limited to helping or putting on events only for women, they are able to create spaces

and serve all women, no matter the differences in other parts of their identities, to feel safe.

Open to All

Gabrielle Kelly '28, a practice player on the club volleyball team, is also part of the Women's Center. Gabrielle started participating in the Women's Center service a few weeks after beginning school. Gabrielle, along with other friends, attended the Women's Center to meet other individuals apart from her volleyball team. The Women's Center, to Gabrielle, is "an open place for all races that will receive you with open arms no matter the color of your skin, which made me feel like I was safe." Gabrielle, a woman of color, found the Women's Center and its services to be open for all, which makes her feel like she could "stay there for hours and not feel uncomfortable." For her, the Women's Center services served her with the opportunity to meet new people and feel comfortable in a new environment.



Join Us!

Loyola and the Women's Center have a variety of services to provide for their students and multiple ways to get. The Women's Center and its services open opportunities for all individuals to create friendships and serve other individuals struggling to find their group of friends. Many other schools don't have the same variety of resources offered to students, or new students fear attending these events. Both Loyola and the Women's Center have created places for both new and existing students who want to attend to come and offer a safe place in order to build community. There is great encouragement for students to attend these service events to welcome more students. Through the removal of possible barriers that may prevent a student from attending a school event, either big or small, the Women's Center is able to make an inclusive space for all.

