



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:** April 8, 2021

## **Saint Leo University Celebrates Grand Opening of Wellness Center**

*Newest campus facility boasts infinity pool with lakeside views, fitness floor, multipurpose gymnasium/event space, healthy café, cycling and yoga studios, health and counseling services, University Ministry offices, conference space and more*

**ST. LEO, FL** – Saint Leo University welcomed the community to its newest addition on Friday, April 8—a \$20 million, 59,500-square-foot Wellness Center, nestled on the banks of Lake Jovita.

“This is not just a university building,” said University President Jeffrey D. Senese. “It’s a beautiful beacon on a hill next to a beautiful lake. It is, I hope, a manifestation of our value of ‘community.’ It is truly a place where mind, body, and spirit are grown, cared for, and celebrated.”

Saint Leo’s Wellness Center creates an environment for holistic health and well-being that integrates student recreation, fitness, health services, counseling services, and campus ministry. Outdoor amenities include an infinity-edged recreational pool, resort style seating, a fire pit, and a barbecue area—all with a beautiful view of Lake Jovita. Inside, a two-court basketball gym/multipurpose area can be used for large scale events, providing seating for more than 300 for a plated dinner or 700 for a conference or lecture-style event.

The ground-breaking ceremony for the Wellness Center was held on February 6, 2020, and the hope was to open in Fall 2021. Despite the COVID-19 pandemic, construction continued on pace, but supply chain issues did cause delays. The opening was long-awaited by students, faculty, staff, alumni, and members of the surrounding community in St. Leo, Dade City, and San Antonio, FL.

Senese noted that the Saint Leo community is not only celebrating the addition of this long-desired amenity and the addition of a remarkable building to campus, but also that the university

has created an iconic building and landmark for Pasco County, the Tampa Bay region, and Florida.

“John Rohn [the late motivational speaker and entrepreneur] once said that ‘whatever good things we build end up building us,’” Senese said. “This building has already begun to transform this university.”

At the grand opening, Board of Trustees Chair John View welcomed everyone, as did Brother James Hallett, OSB, mayor pro tempore of the town of St. Leo, and Quiwanski Ramsey, Student Government Union president. Abbot Isaac Camacho, OSB, of the Benedictine Monks of Saint Leo Abbey and a university trustee, blessed the building, and Dr. Melanie Storms, senior vice president gave closing remarks. Storms oversaw construction of the facility.

View said the trustees began talking about a signature building several years ago as well as the need for more recreation and fitness space on campus. “The Bowman [Marion Bowman Activities Center] opened my senior year,” the 1972 Saint Leo alumnus said. “This will be a community gathering place for the greater Saint Leo community.”

Following a ribbon-cutting ceremony, a time capsule was installed, and those attending toured the facility and enjoyed refreshments.

Saint Leo University is the exclusive educational partner of the NFL’s Tampa Bay Buccaneers and offensive lineman Bucs offensive lineman Tristan Wirfs, as well as the team’s mascot, Captain Fear, were on hand to greet guests.

“This is a really impressive facility,” Wirfs said, as he posed for photos with those attending the grand opening.

Former trustee Brian Quinn said everyone had done an amazing job creating the Wellness Center. “It’s a great testament to the leadership of Saint Leo and the blessed journey we’re all on together,” he said.

“It makes you proud,” added alumnus Kevin Callahan, Class of 1975.

### **Wellness Center Amenities**

Area residents as well as the Saint Leo community may utilize the fitness center, café, locker rooms, pool, and fitness studios. Within the fitness center, residents may utilize all available equipment as well as book personal training sessions. “We anticipate offering a variety of fitness classes in the Mind, Body, Spirit Studio, Group X Studio, and Cycling Studio on an ongoing

basis as well,” said Kathleen Pantalone, executive director, Wellness Center Services and Events.

### **Grabbing A Bite**

For those who want a healthy breakfast, lunch, or snack, Café 36 in the Wellness Center is open to the public and serves flatbreads, salads, wraps, smoothies and more. Café 36 was named in honor of the 36 acres of land that the Wellness Center sits on, which was once owned by the Benedictine Sisters of Florida. A handcrafted bench made from one of the original camphor trees from the grounds is proudly displayed on the second floor of the Wellness Center.

### **Features of the Wellness Center**

- Three fitness studios (Cycling, Group X, and Mind, Body Spirit) offer dedicated space for a variety of classes including Zumba, yoga, tai chi, spin, and more.
- Spacious locker rooms and family change rooms offer showers, lockers, and dressing rooms and even a bathing suit spinner to make the transition from fitness to work even easier.
- Shaded bar seating poolside and a take-out window offer easy access to food options without leaving the pool deck.
- The Group X Studio is equipped with two Echelon Reflect Touchscreen Smart Fitness Mirrors to offer individual fitness workouts when classes are not in session.
- Dedicated stretching areas allow for warm-up and cool-down opportunities on the Fitness Floor.
- A mobile Wellness Center app allows for access to facility and fitness class schedules, important announcements, and membership information anytime and anywhere.

Area residents may also be interested in room/facility rentals for meetings, large events, or small celebrations through the Wellness Center Events Department. University officials anticipate offering facility rental space beginning this summer. Information about rental rates, availability, and associated services will be available through the Wellness Center Events Department after opening. Those interested may contact the events department at [wcevents@saintleo.edu](mailto:wcevents@saintleo.edu).

## **Facts & Figures**

**Architect:** S3 Design Inc., Braintree, MA

**Construction Firm:** Creative Contractors Inc., Clearwater, FL

**Project Management:** JLL, Tampa, FL

**Stories:** 3

**Site:** West side of campus, 33701 State Road 52, St. Leo, FL 33574

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*B-Roll video provided by Saint Leo University*

<https://filetransfer.io/data-package/DWzpSMj8#link>

*Photos cutlines/captions*

Photos provided by Saint Leo University

Photos may be downloaded here: [https://saintleo.mediavalet.com/galleries/753cbec5-54b8-42ba-9d7a-395cd33da32e\\_0b2be658-f017-4ff5-860d-8e5ec4b99b1a-ExternalUser](https://saintleo.mediavalet.com/galleries/753cbec5-54b8-42ba-9d7a-395cd33da32e_0b2be658-f017-4ff5-860d-8e5ec4b99b1a-ExternalUser)

*Saint Leo University's new Wellness Center boasts an infinity-edge pool that overlooks Lake Jovita as well as resort-style seating, access to the café, barbecue area, and fire pit.*

*Those looking for a workout on the stationary bikes also will have a gorgeous view of Lake Jovita.*

*Saint Leo University's new Wellness Center is open to the Saint Leo community as well as the public.*

*Kathleen Pantalone, executive director; Dr. Melanie Storms, senior vice president; Quiwanski Ramsey, Student Government Union president, Dr. Jeffrey Senese, university president; and John View, Saint Leo University Board of Trustees chair, cut the ribbon to officially open the Wellness Center.*

*Tristan Wirfs, offensive lineman for the Tampa Bay Buccaneers, talks with Saint Leo students.*

*Captain Fear, the Tampa Bay Buccaneers mascot, poses for photos at the grand opening.*

### **About Saint Leo University**

Saint Leo University is one of the largest Catholic universities in the nation, offering 62 degree programs to more than 15,800 students each year. Founded in 1889 by Benedictine monks and sisters, the private, nonprofit university is known for providing a values-based education to learners of all backgrounds and ages in the liberal arts tradition. Saint Leo is regionally accredited and offers a residential campus in the Tampa Bay region of Florida, 16 education centers in five states, and an online program for students anywhere. The university is home to more than 100,000 alumni. Learn more at [saintleo.edu](http://saintleo.edu).

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