

South Carolina



Clafin University Student Activity and Community Center

Orangeburg, SC (2022)

Clafin University, South Carolina’s oldest Historically Black College and University (HBCU), resides in the heart of a severely distressed community that suffers from a 29 percent poverty rate and an unemployment rate that is 2.5 times the national average. As a non-metro “Persistent Poverty County,” Orangeburg County has received little investment in recent years. This disinvestment has resulted in a severe lack of access to many social goods and services.

In response, the University sought to spur economic development in the area while simultaneously preserving the integrity of Clafin’s academic success. The result was a new Student Activity and Community Center (SACC). Open to both students and community members alike, the SACC houses a community ballroom, meeting spaces, and the county’s only movie theater. Additionally, the center provides both a food court and a food pantry, which are integral since the community is located in a food desert.

NMTC Financing Brings Clafin University’s First New Building in Ten Years

While the community demonstrated a strong need for the project, Clafin University faced serious financial challenges that could have prevented its completion. Despite receiving several grants, the building’s \$26.7 million development cost required additional financing from loans. However, given the low rental income generated by the many free community services, the project had been denied by numerous conventional lenders. The project’s \$18.5 million in NMTC financing enabled Clafin University to attract adequate debt from PNC, and the favorable terms allowed Clafin to offer non-revenue generating community services unprecedented in the Orangeburg community.

SACC’s amenities are now available to all 2,000 Clafin students as well as an additional 3,000 community members, 75 percent of whom are low-income. To construct and operate the new 82,000 sq. ft. facility, the University hired a total of 275 workers. All permanent employees have access to additional job training to promote career advancement, which is housed on-site. To ensure diversity and inclusion while hiring, the University partnered with the local Chamber of Commerce, Minority Business Development Association, and Orangeburg-Calhoun Technical College to fill these positions. These employment and community benefits, many of which are a first in Orangeburg County, would not have been possible but for NMTC financing.

FINANCING

NMTC Financing: South Carolina Community Loan Fund, The Innovate Fund: \$18.5 million
Equity Investor: Wells Fargo
Total Project Cost: \$26.7 million

IMPACT

- 200 construction jobs
- 75 permanent jobs
- 2,000 students and 3,000 community members served annually

COMMUNITY

- Poverty Rate: 29%
- Unemployment Rate: 20.8%
- Persistent Poverty County
- Food Desert

“Clafin University, the oldest HBCU in the state of South Carolina, has determined that a Student Activity and Community Center within the heart of campus where the community and students meet generates the best opportunity to impact multiple areas of focus and furthers the University’s desire to blend the University and community together.”
-Tijana Hudson, Clafin University Vice President for Fiscal Affairs