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Weicker Center for Student Life
A TRANSFORMATIVE IMPACT

SPIRIT
OF **FRA**



Fall / Winter 2019



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A TRANSFORMATIVE IMPACT

The Weicker Center for Student Life opened in August 2019 and has made a transformative impact on our campus. Named in honor of legendary teacher and coach George Weicker, the Weicker Center has approximately 38,000 square feet and features a state-of-the-art dining hall for middle and upper school students, four dynamic classrooms, café and spirit store, a dance/yoga studio, new wrestling room, Heart to Heart classroom, and commons spaces for collaboration and fellowship outside of the classroom. Associate Head of School Prentice Stabler and Heart to Heart Director David Dawson reflect on the impact this building has already made on our campus. [▶](#)

The opening of the Weicker Center for Student Life this summer brought an incredible level of enthusiasm to the FRA campus. The beautiful exterior, plentiful natural light, plethora of community spaces, and name, which paid homage to one of FRA's great teachers and coaches, has had an immediate impact on our school.

Our goal in building the Weicker Center was to take the strengths of FRA – relational community, exceptional academics, and integrated spiritual and service life – and build upon those strengths. We wanted to create a place that reflects our school and enhances it. FRA provides extraordinary interactions between students and faculty as well as an excellent academic experience, and this space mirrors those interactions and the quality of the FRA academic experience.

After a semester living in the building, its impact continues to grow. From families gathering in the Weicker Commons to enjoy coffee while waiting for the end-of-afternoon dance classes to students studying in groups in the various study areas, people fill every part of the space from morning to evening.

A foundational belief during the Weicker Center's design was that if the building provided spaces to build community and gather in various ways, our community would continue to thrive. The realization of that dream is on display every day. Breakfast time each morning finds Bible studies, elementary school families, groups of middle and high school students, and faculty all coming together in one space to enjoy one another and build the bonds that make FRA special.

The academic spaces similarly reflect their goals. Students take their cues from the spaces they inhabit, and the modern, flexible



“The transformation is unbelievable. In life, food is really important. Sometimes we miss how important it is in culture to sit down and share food. Sharing meals was a big part of Jesus’ mission. We didn’t know what we were missing...the enjoyment of being together. The great thing about the Weicker Center is it highlights who we are. It doesn’t change who we are, but it instead reflects who we are.”

– JOHN PIERCE '89 –

UPPER SCHOOL RELIGIOUS STUDIES
AND BOYS BASKETBALL COACH



classroom spaces reflect the collaborative learning that we want students to engage in throughout the day. Our mission guides all that we do, and having the Center for Philanthropic Studies, Spiritual Life, and Diversity, Community, and Inclusion offices all at the center of the building ensures that these offices remain at the core of our school.

Another way the Weicker Center is connecting our community is through our dance program, the FRA School of Dance. Last year, we made the decision to partner with Nashville Dance Center as we looked to build a dance program that gives students the opportunity to learn and enhance their craft beginning in lower school and moving all the way through middle and upper school. Because of this collaboration and the intentional creation of a large, light-filled dance/yoga space in the Weicker Center, the program has already grown leaps and bounds.

Most afternoons, you can find the new studio full of tiny dancers twirling, leaping, and balancing as they learn coordination, flexibility, and how to control their movements. Middle and upper school students are able to choose dance as an elective, and we are excited to offer a dance team option for those who want to perform at athletic events.

“I think it is great for parents to see this great space because they come in and see that FRA is investing in this program, and they are willing and eager to see it grow. I’m looking forward to seeing how the lower school enrichment will translate as they move up into middle and high school,” said dance director Sarah Rigsby.

The Weicker Center has grown to the physical and figurative hub of the school in just a semester. I am excited to see its impact grow as the completion of the new fitness center



“This gathering place reflects the fact that campuses are changing. During Tymon’s (’19) college recruitment process, we visited many different college campus facilities for students. The Weicker Center looks just like what we saw at all the college campuses we visited. The learning environment is changing, reflecting the collaborative approach to education. The Weicker Center represents FRA saying, ‘We’re here for what’s next.’”

– DALE MITCHELL –
FRA PARENT