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Students bring love of figure skating to life at UCF

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From left to right, Caitlyn Hale freshman digital media major, Emilynn Williamson freshman biomedicine pre-medical major and Kailynn Dean senior interdisciplinary studies major warm up their legs using the bar to practice their spirals off-ice.

Courtesy of Aisha Alfahd

At just five years old, Aisha Alfahd, senior business management major, laced up her skates and hit the ice for the first time.

Growing up in Canada, Alfahd found a love for figure skating, and at 11 years old, she began to

compete on the ice.

After moving to Orlando and starting school at UCF, Alfahd stopped figure skating due to her busy life as a full-time college student, missing the sport she grew up doing.

It wasn't until last summer that Alfahd wanted to start figure skating again. She said she began researching figure skating clubs and saw that UCF didn't have one.

"I kept thinking about joining a figure skating club, but there never was one here," Alfahd said. "I was surprised UCF didn't have a figure skating club because it's such a big school; I just assumed they already had one here."

Alfahd began going through the paperwork process to start a figure skating club on campus officially. After finding a sponsor to support the club, it became a registered student organization in November as a recreational figure skating club at UCF.

While researching logos online, Alfahd came across a Reddit page of UCF students looking for a figure skating club. With the help of her friend Anjali Shah, senior integrated business major, Alfahd was able to find more students with the same love of figure skating as her.

Figure skating is a sport; however, Alfahd and Shah both agreed that they didn't want this club to become a sports club. Funding for a sports club requires more money than they have. Alfahd and Shah also said they wanted to avoid the enjoyment being taken away if they were to begin practicing and competing as a team.

With this mindset, they kept the club open to all skill levels, including those who have never ice skated before.

Shah said that she did not know how to figure skate, but with help from Alfahd, she has been able to learn and gain confidence on the ice.

"She wouldn't let me hold onto the wall anymore, not even for a second," Shah said.

As president and vice president of the figure skating club, Alfahd and Shah work together to create fun, unique experiences for members.

“We’re doing all the behind-the-scenes work, but seeing everything come to life and happen in front of you with the whole group, it’s a great feeling,” Alfahd said.

While finding other figure skating students hasn’t been difficult, Alfahd and Shah plan events, host socials and schedule practices for members to attend, but they open everything up to all UCF students.

Alfahd and Shah said they try their best to work with their members’ schedules but also work with ice skating rinks. This led them to the idea of hosting both on-ice and off-ice practices.

“At off-ice practice, I’m able to practice things I normally wouldn’t do,” Shah said. “I’m able to learn new moves and it gives me comfort then when trying it on the ice after.”

When the club has its on-ice practices, members of all levels practice together with coaches to learn new skills.

“When you’re practicing a jump on the ice, and you keep falling and falling, landing it for the first time is the best feeling in the world as a skater,” Alfahd said.

A unique event they have planned for this semester is hosting practice at a trampoline park. Alfahd said this type of practice will let them work on the height of their jumps, as well as their spins off-ice, before attempting to jump and spin on the ice.

Alfahd and Shah said they want everyone to feel welcomed and hope their members will not only be able to learn new skills together but also make new friendships with people who enjoy figure skating.

“It’s really peaceful for me just being on the ice, and I get to meet new friends,” Shah said.

The current version of this story correctly refers to figure skating by its correct title.