

FGCU 360

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COME TOGETHER

Inclusion, diversity initiative takes shape

Hospital heroes battle pandemic | Creating good despite bad times
Alumnae reach out to Immokalee neighbors

FALL 2020

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Faculty, students and alumni reached out in diverse ways to help others during the spring and summer, using their talents to strike back at COVID-19.

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COURAGE AND COMPASSION

Yes, they trained to care for very sick people, but no one could foresee what stepping into the fray would be like when the coronavirus filled hospitals around the country. FGCU nurses were there to answer the call.

BY KEITH GIBSON

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STANDING TOGETHER FOR INCLUSION

Last spring, calls for racial justice echoed across the land. A multiracial group of FGCU students made their voices heard and administrators began to provide some answers.

BY KAREN FELDMAN


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MAN BEHIND THE LAND

Dr. Ben Hill Griffin, III, a third-generation citrus grower from Frostproof, played a pivotal role in establishing FGCU and helping it grow, right up until his passing in July.

BY KAREN FELDMAN





Fernando López Flores

PHOTO BY JAMES GRECO

DEPARTMENTS



SPOTLIGHT

Terumi Rafferty-Osaki, the director of FGCU's Office of Competitive Fellowships, is the driving force behind more than two dozen students who won prestigious fellowships and scholarships, including a Fulbright, in his first year on the job.



STUDENT SUCCESS

FGCU alumnus Andrew Townsend threw in his poker chips and bet on cats – homeless ones that needed adoption. He and his significant other, Amber Redfern, opened Cattysack Café in Estero this summer. The results: a big win for all those involved.



COMMUNITY

Three social work alumnae are helping their economically challenged community by distributing bandanas and food to combat the COVID-19 pandemic. They call themselves the Immokalee Grassroots Movement.



GIVING

Philanthropists David Lucas and Frank Daveler believe in FGCU and in entrepreneurship in particular, which is why both have been enthusiastic supporters of the university's School of Entrepreneurism.



ARTS

You'd think that music and theatre would require students and their professors to be face to face in the same room, but members of the Bower School of Music & the Arts have figured a work around using some innovative software.



SPORTS

Two decades ago, FGCU started its Athletics program with men's and women's golf and tennis teams and not much else. Today, there are 15 Division I teams that have garnered dozens of championships, national acclaim and student-athletes whose GPAs regularly exceed those of the general student body.



ALUMNI

Gaby Aguirre, '14
Ryan Scott, '16
Veronica Young, '14
David Shepard, '13

ON THE COVER:

SHUTTERSTOCK IMAGE

FIRST

SPOTLIGHT

Fellowships director helps students land life-changing opportunities

BY SETH SOFFIAN

GATHERED BY VIDEO conference one summer afternoon, a dozen FGCU students offered their support to psychology major Becky Rodriguez on the personal essay she was writing for her application for the prestigious Marshall Scholarship.

Terumi Rafferty-Osaki, director of FGCU's Office of Competitive Fellowships, encourages her, too, but he pushes Rodriguez to read more of the personal statement to the group even as she expresses her discomfort doing so.

"You're welcome," Rafferty-Osaki says before Rodriguez continues reading.

Such is the persistent, persuasive impact of Rafferty-Osaki, also affectionately called "crazy man" by his students for his tireless drive and motivation.

In his first year on campus, FGCU celebrated 24 winners and one alternate of prestigious external scholarships and fellowships, a significant increase from previous years.

Those awards include FGCU's first Fulbright recipient since 2016, its first two recipients of the Goldwater Scholarship and seven winners of Gilman or Gilman-McCain Scholarships.

Such results in some cases put FGCU among or beyond many of the nation's most tradition-rich universities.

"It's a hidden gem," Rafferty-Osaki said. He acknowledged FGCU surpassed even his own strong first impressions when he



Terumi Rafferty-Osaki

visited the student union a day before his interview last year, sipping coffee and quietly listening to students' discussions of weighty topics.

"I could tell there's a great amount of potential. They want to do great things and really want to make a difference," he said. "There are higher aspirations and dreams. That makes this job so much more fulfilling."

The creation of the OCF provided an

important service missing while FGCU's many growth needs took precedence in its formative years.

Rafferty-Osaki, a member of the National Association of Fellowship Advisors, said there are about 400 such offices at schools around the country.

"I've felt we had the student talent and faculty talent at FGCU," said Clay Motley, Honors College director and a key advocate for the OCF's addition,

“I could tell there’s a great amount of potential. They (the students) want to do great things and really want to make a difference. There are higher aspirations and dreams.”

TERUMI RAFFERTY-OSAKI,
DIRECTOR OF FGCU’S OFFICE OF COMPETITIVE FELLOWSHIPS

“but we didn’t have the system to help produce a strong pool of applicants. That’s what Terumi’s office is doing: creating that pipeline, connecting with students and faculty, raising awareness of these opportunities.”

Many of Rafferty-Osaki’s tasks his first year were largely promotional: meetings, emails and other outreach with students and faculty across campus. But as with any good coach, his most important role came in helping FGCU students believe in their ability to compete for and win prestigious honors.

“He’s a force,” said Carolyne Mesa (’19, Communication and Philosophy), slated to travel to Uzbekistan pending easing of COVID-19 travel restrictions, as FGCU’s first Fulbright recipient since 2016.

Mesa, who said the first application she submitted for the Fulbright the year prior to Rafferty-Osaki’s arrival was a far cry from her successful entry, likened the bulk of her meetings with him to “therapy.” She, too, struggled with what Rafferty-Osaki calls “imposter syndrome.”

“He was the first to recognize that and kind of shake me out of it and say, ‘Carolyne, you are beyond capable, and you are a real candidate for some of these awards,’” she said. “Fulbright fellows usually are from Yale or Harvard. When he said I could be on that stage, it was something I never dreamt I could do.”

Rafferty-Osaki stressed that the OCF, housed within the Honors College but open to all FGCU students, exists not just to win awards. The volume of work and personal reflection that goes into the application process benefits students regardless of the outcome.

“It’s a transferable skill,” said Rafferty-Osaki, who saw nearly half of the 75 students he worked with his first year come from outside the Honors College. “It takes a lot of courage to put yourself out there for any one of these.”



Becky Rodriguez, left, Terumi Rafferty-Osaki and Roxana Ruiz Rodriguez do some brainstorming on a walk through campus.

Critical in producing impactful personal statements, or “hero stories,” as he calls them, is the trust and rapport he develops with students.

“The first time I cried on campus was at Terumi’s office,” said economics major Roxana Ruiz Rodriguez, an Estero High School graduate and first-generation Cuban-American who won a Killam Fellowship. She is interested in pursuing constitutional law or economic policy.

“We were talking about something from my personal statement. I thought it was a way to list a long resume. He helped me understand it’s more of a story and really going into why you’re doing what you’re doing. It’s about being able to be vulnerable. I just want to help other students like me.”

Also an FGCU history professor, Rafferty-Osaki wrote his undergraduate thesis on baseball’s Negro Leagues and earned a master’s degree in Holocaust and genocide studies.

But his first lesson in making the world a better place – and helping students do the same – came from his adoptive mother, a public school social studies teacher for 33 years and the inspiration for the “Tiger mom” phrase he uses to describe his own approach with students.

“There are always going to be people in the world who are less fortunate, and it’s our responsibility to uplift everyone,” Rafferty-Osaki said. “You learn the idea that you really have to be the change you want to see in the world.”

Rafferty-Osaki already has plans to expand the reach of the OCF. He is developing a mentoring program, known as Project Narrative, to connect FGCU students with area high school students who might not otherwise have visible mentors in applying for college.

His office is adding a graduate assistant this year, with a coordinator position pending down the road.

“It’s really added to our ability to help FGCU students have those life-changing opportunities and experiences,” Motley said. “FGCU is the kind of place where these things are possible.” ■



The Mulligan Room gives cats and people plenty of get-acquainted space.

STUDENT SUCCESS

Cattyshack is a purr-fectly pawsome place

Alum's cafe serves coffee and confections with a cause: cat adoption

BY KAREN FELDMAN

AT MOST CAFÉS, proprietors' main concern is keeping up with demand for coffee, pastries and sandwiches.

At the Cattyshack Cat Café, however, the comestibles are holding out just fine. It's the cat supply that Andrew Townsend

('18, Business Management) and partner Amber Redfern struggle to keep in stock.

Herding cats takes on a whole new meaning at Lee County's first such café, where it's possible to enjoy refreshments, a meal or a snack without encountering one of its furry occupants, who have their own customized room. But, for most drawn

to this new hangout at Gulf Coast Town Center in south Fort Myers, the felines are the main attraction.

And that's how the owners like it. Sure, they are happy to see people come in to sample a Catspresso or Meowchiato, cat paw cookies or perhaps a glass of Cat's Paw wine (that's the brand name, not the

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ingredients, of course).

But the main attractions are the kittens and cats, a new batch of which arrive almost daily from Gulf Coast Humane Society, which has already given them medical screenings, spayed or neutered them, implanted their microchips and administered their vaccinations. In other words: They are ready to go should you fall in love and want to take one – or two – home with you that day. (Standard adoption rates, which range from \$15 to \$75 based on the cat's age, apply and go to Gulf Coast Humane Society.)

That happened 375 times in the first 4 months the café was open. That's an average of about 3 adoptions a day. Visitors can see the evidence on the wall near the entrance to the cat room: two wires displayed like necklaces bear the name tags

of the adopted cats.

What possessed Townsend and Redfern to launch a concept that had never been tried before in Lee County?

Townsend is a lifelong animal lover and was a fan of "The Price is Right" as a kid. Each night, he'd hear host Bob Barker end the show with the message "Help control the pet population." After spending some time playing poker for a living, he asked himself, "What good am I doing for the world? I wanted to give something back to the community."

His love of animals guided the pair to the cat café concept.

"It was a two-year journey," says Redfern, as she gazes contentedly around the cheerful and immaculate space.

(continued on page 8)

FGCU alum Andrew Townsend traded in his poker chips for cats.





(continued from page 7)

“We visited 20 cat cafes in six states” while conducting market research. They found that not all were the cat’s meow. Some didn’t look nice. Some didn’t smell so nice, either.

"We get the cats and kittens in the morning from Gulf Coast Humane Society," she says. "They must feel as if they are being dropped off at Disney World."

The couple – who are partners in life as well as business and who share their home with 17- and 18-year old cats, Sophie and Morris – wanted a place that was easy to keep clean and fun to visit. They settled on a golf theme, with a room that has hollowed-out golf bags perfect for cat naps, fake palm trees that the inhabitants love to climb, benches where humans and felines can settle for some serious petting and even a golf cart with sisal on the dash so the cats rub it, making it appear as if they are driving.

The Mulligan Room as it's called –

“Because a mulligan is a second chance in golf and these cats are getting their second chance at a good life,” says Redfern – is separated from the coffee bar with its own HVAC system so those with allergies can sit and sip coffee without having an allergic reaction. All surfaces can be – and are – disinfected, ensuring safety for the cats and visiting humans alike.

So, who benefits from a cat café? Just about everyone.

High on the list are overcrowded animal shelters, which are teeming with cats and kittens, especially during “kitten season,” typically spring and summer, when cats have loads of litters. In addition to Humane Society cats, the shelter brings in some from LaBelle and Clewiston, where there are many cats that need homes but fewer people to adopt them. They also take overflow from the Lee and Collier domestic animal services shelters.

“Because Cattysack is doing so many adoptions, we can take in more cats, help more shelters and save more lives,” says Jennifer Galloway, executive director of

ABOVE: The name tags of adopted cats are displayed on the wall.

ABOVE CENTER: Sydney Weisburgh holds the aptly named Ginger.

ABOVE RIGHT: General Manager Maureen McLaughlin finds concentrating tough with a feline spectator watching her.

Gulf Coast Humane Society. “They are definitely adopting out more than we realized they would. So we can move more cats through. And it makes you feel good to see the cats having fun and the people smiling.”

Other beneficiaries include people looking for new pets who have the chance to, uh, caternize with several in a tranquil, fun setting so they can gauge their potential pet's cattitude. Students, renters and tourists who cannot have pets where they are staying but need a fix of feline fun can reserve an hour in the Mulligan Room for \$15 to frolic with the residents. And another big winner is Lee County, which is estimated to have some 250,000 stray



and feral cats roaming its 785 square miles of land.

Count Morgan Gwinn among the new adopters who met her match at the Cattyslack. The Cape Coral resident, who works as a medical billing specialist, had made the rounds of the shelters one day in July searching in vain for the right female kitten.

"I went to Gulf Coast Humane Society and they said 'we just sent some to the Cattyslack.' I said, 'What's that?'"

They gave her the address and she headed straight to the café. And that's where she saw Saffron, a 10-week-old, 2-pound calico.

"I was just drawn to her," Gwinn says. "I picked her up and she fell asleep on my lap. I decided in 15 minutes that this was the cat I wanted."

"I've never been to a place like that. It's like cat heaven and the staff is incredible. They really care about the pets there. When I adopted Saffron and was walking out with her, everyone was clapping and cheering us on."

Two weeks after taking her kitten home, Gwinn had no adopter's remorse.

"She's amazing," Gwinn says. "She's the sweetest cat I've ever had or met. She doesn't scratch or bite and she snuggles and follows you around."

Townsend credits the Runway Program at FGCU's Frank and Ellen Daveler & Sandra Kauanui School of Entrepreneurship with helping him launch a Kickstarter campaign that raised \$20,000 from 230 people to get the café up and running. The program helps students and alumni hone and launch their business ideas.

A maximum of 10 people are permitted

ABOUT CATTYSHACK

- Cattyslack Cat Café, 9902 Gulf Coast Main St., Fort Myers; 239-237-2960
- Open 9 a.m.-7 p.m. Sunday-Thursday, 9 a.m.-9 p.m. Friday and Saturday
- Reservations can be made on its website, Cattyslackcafe.com

in the cat room at a time so they and the kitties can spend quality time together.

One Friday, Lisa Wilson and her daughters Molly, 15, and Kate, 11, spent a blissful hour communing with the cats. They can't have any at home because a family member has allergies, but they are happy to visit.

"It's so amazing," says Molly Wilson, who had gotten in some serious cat petting. "The cats are so happy. I usually have anxiety and here I feel stress-free. I love cats so much."

Her sister agrees. "It's such a nice environment," she says. "All the cats are so well taken care of, and the employees are so nice."

Lisa Wilson runs Chocolattes Coffee & Roasting in Fort Myers, which is where the cat café procures its coffee.

"This place is great for any age. It's going to be the next big thing in Gulf Coast Center," she predicts.

Judging by the demand for reservations and the number of cats being adopted, it appears that it already is. ■

WGPU

Bower School concerts heard far and wide in new collaboration with WGPU

BY DAYNA HARPSTER

THERE'S AT LEAST one silver lining to the COVID-19 pandemic: Concerts by exceptional students, faculty and visiting musicians found the only audience they could have during this public health crisis — online. Rather than just the people seated in the U. Tobe Recital Hall in the FGCU Bower School Music building, music lovers from all over the world could potentially get the score on the diverse offerings right here.

That's due to a new partnership between the Bower School of Music & the Arts and WGPU. Concerts by regional, national and international musicians in the school's Nisita Series, named for Estero residents and benefactors Maurizio and Laura Nisita, are recorded at FGCU and then presented as video on demand on the WGPU website (and the Bower School site as well).

WGPU will stream concerts shortly after the live performance (without an audience at this point). "This allows our editors to add graphics and do some minor editing prior to having the video closed captioned," said Amy Shumaker, WGPU's associate general manager for content. Virtual concertgoers then will be able to see and hear entire performances.

"This type of partnership between Bower and WGPU was long overdue," said Krzysztof Biernacki, director of Bower School of Music & the Arts. "It's something we both had in mind a long time. The pandemic just sped things up. When COVID hit in mid-March, it was time to give this a full consideration."

"We'll start with Nisita but also stream a Fjelstul Art Lecture, video recorded theater productions, as well as outstanding student recitals."

Biernacki has been the director of the BSMA for a year and increasing the school's



digital content on any possible platform was one of his goals from the outset.

Fortunately, plans to collaborate on concert presentation fell into place easily.

"First, we had to make sure that we are licensed to do this," Biernacki said. "It turns out WGPU is licensed for everything (we needed)." FGCU also is licensed through

the American Society of Composers, Authors and Publishers (ASCAP) and its European equivalent, SESAC (the Society of European Stage Authors and Composers) as well as Broadcast Music, Inc. (BMI). Those organizations protect composers' copyrights on any music composed since 1924, when today's version of copyright law went into effect.

"There's been a perfect combination of stimuli for all of this, and our colleagues at WGPU have been great about it," Biernacki said.

About this change, Biernacki was philosophical. "What the pandemic made us realize is that we became virtual citizens overnight." ■

HOW TO WATCH

Check fgcu.edu/bsma for the most up-to-date information on this collaboration.

To access the concerts, go to video.wgcu.org, where there is a special page for the performances.

NOW HEAR THIS

Here are concerts that have been recorded and are available for viewing as well as upcoming ones.

► **Kyle Szabo, violin, and Michael Baron, piano.** Violinist and conductor Kyle Szabo performed with pianist Michael Baron in a recital of classical and romantic repertoire. Szabo serves as Director of Orchestral Studies and Head of Strings at the Bower School of Music. He has appeared as a recitalist and chamber musician in venues across the country, and frequently gives presentations and clinics as a string pedagogue. Featured were solos and chamber music by Beethoven, Dvorak, Milhaud, Ysaye, Laitman and others. *Szabo and Baron performed Oct. 4.*

► **Arnold Rawls, tenor, and Michael Baron, piano.** Tenor Arnold Rawls possesses a unique combination of vocal and dramatic skills evident in performances from art song to opera. He has been hailed for his multiple performances at the Metropolitan Opera and other venues throughout the world. Baron collaborates with Rawls on important works of Beethoven, Schumann, Liszt, Verdi and Lee Hoiby. *The pair performed Oct. 13.*

► **Paul Votapek, clarinet, and Michael Baron, piano.** Votapek, principal clarinetist of the Naples Philharmonic Orchestra and instructor of clarinet at FGCU, performs a varied program of rarely heard music for clarinet and piano with pianist Michael Baron. The program includes virtuoso works by Mangani, Burgmuller, Gershwin, Muczynski, Hindemth, and others. *The concert took place Nov. 8.*

► **Thursday, Jan. 21 at 7:30 p.m.: Misook Yun, Ryu-Kyung Kim and Chansik Youn.** Drawing upon nearly 1,000 years of Korean cultural history and its spirit, an evening of Korean art songs will be presented by two Korean female vocalists, Misook Yun and Ryu-Kyung Kim. This lecture-concert program will blend not only their soaring soprano and mezzo voices but also beautiful Korean poetry and folk tunes with Western-influenced 20th and 21st-century musical compositions. FGCU alumnus Chansik Youn ('19, Music) will collaborate on the piano.

► **Sunday, Jan. 31 at 3 p.m.: Kevin Kenner, piano.** The year 1990 was a milestone for pianist Kevin Kenner, whose artistry was recognized throughout the world by three prestigious awards: the top prize at the International Chopin Competition in Warsaw, the International Terrence Judd Award in London, and third prize at the Tchaikovsky International Competition in Moscow. He has been praised as "one of the finest American pianists to come along in years." (Howard Reich, *Chicago Tribune*).

► **Friday, Feb. 5 at 7:30 p.m.: Kevin Chance & Eun-Hee Park, piano duo.** Kevin Chance, professor at the University of Alabama, and Eun-Hee Park, professor at the University of Montevallo, Alabama, present works for two pianos. This concert presents a special opportunity to hear two brilliant pianists performing on matching 9-foot grand Steinway concert pianos. The duo will perform important works of Sergei Rachmaninoff, Samuel Barber and Arvo Pärt. ■



Arnold Rawls



Kevin Kenner



Misook Yun

UPDATES:



GIVE TO KIDS

Once again, WGCU Public Media is taking the opportunity to contribute to the well-being of local children on Giving Tuesday, set this year for Dec. 1. The 24/7 PBS Kids Channel certainly provides what kids say they want: entertaining TV. But kids end up learning because the curriculum is fun and age-appropriate.

The goal this year is to raise \$18,000 for PBS Kids on this national day of individual philanthropy on Dec. 1. Go to wgcu.org/givingtuesday for more information.

GULF COAST BOOK CLUB

Local WGCU "All Things Considered" host Cary Barbor talks some fiction - and nonfiction - on the first Wednesday of each month on "Gulf Coast Life" at 1 p.m. on WGCU FM. She describes it as "intelligent, candid conversations with authors of all genres." Featured are two interviews in each 30-minute show, plus a little bit of publishing news.

Before joining the WGCU staff, Barbor was a producer on public radio's "Studio 360" and WNYC's "The Leonard Lopate Show." She also hosted a similar author interview show on Sirius XM's Martha Stewart Radio as well as a podcast titled "Books & Authors." ■



CAMPUS UPDATE

FGCU breaks ground on buildings for two new schools

BY KEITH GIBSON

EVEN THE 2020 HEALTH pandemic couldn't shut down progress at Florida Gulf Coast University.

Construction on two academic buildings to house FGCU's two newest schools has started and is progressing nicely. Tom Mayo, director of facilities planning, said "both projects are tracking on schedule, and we do not foresee a delay."

That means Lucas Hall, future home of the Frank and Ellen Daveler & Sandra Kauanui School of Entrepreneurship, should open for classes in August 2021. Meanwhile, the Integrated Watershed and Coastal Studies facility – known as Academic Building 9 – is scheduled to debut in January 2022 as home of The Water School.

First project up will be the \$9.75 million Lucas Hall, a three-story, 27,000-square-foot structure that will house a program rated by The Princeton Review as Florida's top school for undergraduate entrepreneurship studies. The hall – named for one of FGCU's top benefactors, prominent developer David Lucas, who served on the inaugural Board of Trustees and the FGCU Foundation Board of Directors – will include a Student Incubator, Maker Space, classrooms and offices. Besides the school, it will also house the Institute for Entrepreneurship, Small Business Development Center and the Regional Economic Research Institute.

"The school is focused on student success, and being a catalyst to grow the entrepreneurial economy in Southwest Florida through creating an entrepreneurial mindset throughout the university," said Sandra Kauanui, director of the School of Entrepreneurship, professor, and one of the school's honored namesakes.

The growth of the entrepreneurship school the past two years is the main impetus behind the push to give the



Architectural drawings of The Water School, above, and Lucas Hall, left.

program its own building, FGCU President Mike Martin said.

"The other is it's a chance for us to really highlight one of the most rapidly growing and impactful programs we have on campus," he said.

Another program fitting that description is The Water School, which Martin described as an "anchor and a significant part of who we are and continue to become."

"There's no more profound set of issues facing the future of this region than what we do on water," Martin said. "Therefore, a regional university ought to make sure it's a player in that."

Unlike Lucas Hall, which did not have a ceremonial groundbreaking due to the health crisis, the 117,000-square-foot, \$58-million AB9's symbolic shovel-turning attracted more than 200 people in November 2019.

"Everything that we do in art and music and hydrology and engineering and other (disciplines) involves water, so it cuts across the entire university and engages us all," Martin said.

In addition to 58,600 square feet of research lab space, the four-story structure will provide classrooms (23,400 square feet) and teaching labs (15,000 square feet) and will bring most of The Water School's core faculty under one roof.

"This building is an exciting new resource for the university," said Greg Tolley, executive director of The Water School and professor of marine science. "We want it to be a public space. There will be meeting rooms where we can invite people from local communities to come in and talk about issues of importance. We want people to think of this as being Southwest Florida's building as well."

Sponsorship opportunities are available for both buildings, including the naming rights for AB9. To learn how to become involved in these two innovative projects, contact Bill Rice, senior associate vice president for University Advancement, at (239) 590-1077 or brice@fgcu.edu. ■

BY THE NUMBERS

The impact of \$Scholarships

Scholarships make it possible for many students to realize the promise of higher education. FGCU awards scholarships on the basis of academic achievement, financial need, major of study, or other specifications set by donors. Here are some numbers relating to both FGCU Foundation and Office of Undergraduate Admissions scholarship awards at FGCU ■

4,274

Number of students who **applied**
for **FGCU Foundation scholarships**
in 2020-21



\$2,155

Average scholarship award in 2020-21

1,396

Number of students who have
thus far **received FGCU Foundation**
scholarships in 2020-21

44

Percentage of
FGCU students
who receive
merit-based
scholarships

(excluding state-sponsored
Florida Bright Futures)



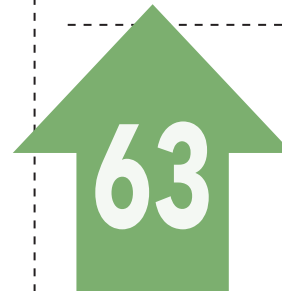
52

Percentage
of students
who graduate
from FGCU
with no debt



\$4.18 million

Total FGCU Foundation scholarship
funds awarded in 2019-20



Percent increase in the
amount of scholarship money
awarded by the FGCU
Foundation in 2019-20
(\$4.2 million) compared to
just four years earlier
(\$2.6 million in 2015-16)

38

Percentage of
students whose
financial needs
are not met

THE WAY WE WERE

Pianist Priscila Navarro plays Carnegie Hall in the 2013 prelude to ‘Dunk City’

BY KEITH GIBSON

MANY BELIEVE Florida Gulf Coast University first made its mark on a national stage when the 2013 Dunk City men’s basketball team captured the hearts of sports fans everywhere with a remarkable March Madness performance.

But that isn’t exactly true.

About two weeks before Sherwood Brown, Bernard Thompson, Brett Comer, Chase Fieler and the high-flying Eagles shocked No. 2-seeded Georgetown, then beat San Diego State two days later, to become the first No. 15 seed ever to make the NCAA Tournament’s Sweet Sixteen, another student already had raised our young university’s reputation to new heights.

On March 7, 2013, FGCU piano student Priscila Navarro (’15, music performance) showed the performing-arts world the potential of what was then the Bower School of Music (now Music & the Arts) on the concert stage at hallowed Carnegie Hall when she presented a solo recital. The appearance was the culmination of a triumphant series of state-, national- and international-competition wins that began in 2011 for Navarro, including the International Chopin Competition in Texas, which earned her the spotlight in New York City.

For the young Peruvian pianist with dual Canadian citizenship who would go on to graduate summa cum laude from the Bower School, life would never be the same.

“My Carnegie Hall recital debut was a milestone in my pianistic career,” said

Navarro, 26, reached by FGCU360 as she prepared for the pandemic-postponed Liszt International Competition in The Netherlands. It’s been rescheduled for November 16 through 22, and she is just one of 14 pianists worldwide to qualify.

“As a child growing up in a small province of Peru, becoming a pianist seemed a far-off dream for someone of my limited resources,” she said. “When I discovered classical music and entered the conservatory at age 9, I realized how difficult the path would be for me, and yet I decided to take the challenge. I was fortunate to have wonderful teachers who understood the importance of mentorship.

“When I entered FGCU at age 16, I could not have imagined that in only two years I would be fulfilling a dream of many young pianists,” Navarro said. “Performing a full recital at Carnegie Hall as part of a prize at an international competition is an important

achievement for a student from any musical institution. The fact that our music school was so young was only a further reason for pride and satisfaction in the work that the FGCU members had achieved. My triumph was shared with teachers, sponsors, supporters and friends, many of whom traveled to New York to encourage me.”

No supporter was greater than her mentor and still collaborator, Michael Baron, the Myra and Van Williams Distinguished Professor of Music and head of keyboard studies at FGCU.

“Priscila’s Carnegie Hall solo recital was very important to both Priscila and to the Bower School of Music,” Baron said. “We have had a huge amount of successes in our young life, but one of the difficulties of beginning a new school is getting your name out. We are all very proud of Priscila’s continuing successes since that time.”

Navarro’s continuing successes include a graduate degree from the Frost School of Music at the University of Miami, resident artistry with the South Beach Chamber Ensemble, and presenting solo recitals, major chamber works and a large selection of concerti with orchestras throughout the United States, Europe and South America. Those performances include appearances with Baron, who Navarro usually joins at FGCU’s U. Tobe Recital Hall every year as part of the Nisita Concert Series, and with whom she has some recording projects planned, although they have been delayed by the pandemic.

But all that subsequent glory in a classical-music career yet to reach its crescendo began with a memorable March 2013 concert in which Navarro set the stage for FGCU, handing out an early assist to the basketball thunder that would follow. As Baron put it:

“The combination of Priscila’s competition win that resulted in the Carnegie Hall recital and the Dunk City publicity happening at the same time made national news, which proved invaluable to show the world that we were developing a world-class school of music.” ■

ABOVE LEFT & RIGHT: Priscila Navarro plays at Carnegie Hall in New York City in 2013.







IN HIS OWN WORDS

Study reveals cell phones + driving add up to deadly combination on the roads

BY NICHOLAS WRIGHT, PH.D.

EACH DAY IN THE United States, more than 1,000 people are injured, and roughly 9 die, in motor vehicle accidents that involve inattentive drivers. A primary cause: cell phone use.

According to researchers, the average American sends and receives about 70 messages and clicks on their cell phone more than 2,600 times a day. Add up all the cell phones in use in the country and that totals

about 18 billion text messages per day.

Additional research finds that 56 percent of people make phone calls, 28 percent use social media applications and 12 percent read text messages or emails while driving. Therefore, the typical driver may be unaware of his or her surroundings and so may be slow to react to unexpected roadway conditions. This increases the risk of an accident and places the driver and others around him in danger. So, it is not surprising that distracted driving is one of

the leading causes of traffic injuries and fatalities in the United States, costing our economy about \$123 billion annually.

These statistics demonstrate that distracted driving is a serious public health concern that deserves everyone's immediate attention. In an effort to reduce these accidents and injuries, more than 20 states have passed comprehensive laws that prohibit the use of handheld devices for texting, dialing and emailing while operating a motor vehicle.

States that adopted handheld laws experienced a reduction in daily traffic fatalities by as much as 26 percent.

Under this policy, anyone caught using their cell phones while driving may face penalties that range from a fine to being charged with a crime. Some states, including Florida, have implemented less restrictive texting bans (no texting while driving), but may also have special provisions that govern cell phone use in school and construction zones. In general, policymakers believe that laws like these may reduce the number of fatalities caused by distracted drivers.

Do laws that restrict cell phone use while driving improve public safety and save lives? Ernest Dorilas, a Ph.D. candidate at Georgia State University, and I tackled this important policy issue by examining the extent to which these handheld restrictions reduced daily traffic fatalities in the United States.



Nicholas Wright

To answer the main question, we used data on the number of fatal motor vehicle accidents each day, and collected information for the states that have implemented this policy between 2000 and 2015. We analyzed this data using a method that compares the trends in fatal accidents before and after handheld

restrictions were enacted, enabling us to assess the policy's effectiveness in the short term while controlling for differences in driving behaviors on various weekdays, months and holidays.

We found convincing evidence that implementing this policy decreases the number of lives lost due to distracted driving each day. States that adopted handheld laws experienced a reduction in daily traffic fatalities by as much as 26 percent. The average state in our sample was able to save about 230 lives each year by adopting these rules. This result suggests that restricting handheld cell phone use may be effective in combatting the public health risks posed by distracted driving and would therefore improve public safety.

We are hopeful that this study will inform readers about the significant dangers of using cell phones while driving. We are equally hopeful that our results will provide meaningful insights that will inform the discussions around the effectiveness of handheld laws and serve as a useful resource for policymakers.

— *Nicholas Wright, Ph.D., is an assistant professor of economics in FGCU's Lutgert College of Business.*

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COMMUNITY

Graduates from Immokalee reach out to help their neighbors in need

BY DON MANLEY

COMMUNITY AND empowerment are words that pop up frequently when Maria Cardenas ('13, Social Work) discusses the Immokalee Grassroots Movement, the organization she founded with two other FGCU graduates.

The charitable group was created to help economically challenged Immokalee residents cope with the difficulties presented by the COVID-19 pandemic. Cardenas and fellow cofounders, Maria Sebastian ('20, Social Work) and Maria Plata ('15, Communication), all reside in the small, eastern Collier County farming town.

Immokalee Grassroots Movement grew out of Cardenas' concern that not enough was being done to provide residents with the knowledge and materials needed to fight the virus' spread. In late March, she reached out to Sebastian and Plata for ideas on how to fill that void.

"We saw that our community was lacking resources, lacking prevention information and ways to keep our community safe," she explained.

By early April, the threesome was ready for the group's first event: giving away 1,500 free bandanas to local farmworkers, many of them Hispanic or Haitian immigrants, to serve as anti-coronavirus, protective devices. The giveaway was funded through donations collected in the Immokalee area.

"We started with the farmworker bandana project because we knew that a lot of people in the field use them regularly, so it was something they're



Members of the Immokalee Grassroots Movement give out bandanas and show recipients how to use them.

comfortable with," said Cardenas, who works as an immigrant rights advocate. "Because of that, we knew that they would

be open to using a bandana as a way to prevent COVID."

Lessons she learned at FGCU about "cultural competence" – the ability to understand, communicate and effectively interact with

people across cultures – is reflected not just in the choice of what to provide recipients, but also in how the giveaway was conducted.

**IMMOKALEE
GRASSROOTS
MOVEMENT**



FOR MORE INFORMATION

Visit the group on Facebook at Immokalee Grassroots Movement.

A bus stop where farmworkers are picked up and dropped off, going to and from the fields, was chosen for the distribution site and the event was structured to ensure the recipients' peace of mind.

"We know that a lot of times there can be barriers to wanting to reach out to receive services, whether it's because someone's undocumented or they're afraid they'll be asked questions they don't want to answer or there are language issues," Cardenas said.

The project's success caused people to ask Cardenas for the organization's name. That led the three Marias to put their heads together on devising a name.

"Because we are a community initiative, we wanted it to be something that was empowering and the name of Immokalee to be part of it," she explained. "We view it as a movement because our community is rising up, so we wanted the word 'movement' in there."

Next up were two food giveaways in May to help offset a food insecurity problem, made worse by the pandemic, Cardenas said. The women again relied upon the Immokalee community for food donations.

The response exceeded expectations. They'd initially hoped to feed about 13 families but were able to feed about 50 instead.

Before deciding on the distributions, they surveyed residents to determine their most pressing unmet needs. Food was the most needed item. Cardenas said they used what they'd learned about conducting surveys in classes they had taken with Associate Professor Thomas Felke, chair of FGCU's Department of Social Work.

Organizing a sewing group to make cloth, anti-COVID masks is on the Immokalee Grassroots Movement's to-do list, as is educating residents on the importance of registering to vote and casting their ballot.

Felke knows Cardenas and Sebastian well from their time as students and from his extensive work in Immokalee on food insecurity, affordable housing and other issues.

"I think what you see in both of them is their passion to advocate for their hometown," he said. "I think that is the greatest part of what they're doing. They are people who were raised in Immokalee and went on to get degrees. In doing so, they never wavered from the fact that the reason they were doing it was because they wanted to go back home and help. I think that's the thing that they deserve a ton of credit for."

Cardenas said fulfilling such a vital role in her hometown is both humbling and empowering.

"We are creating that change, showing that we, too, can help one another," she said of the Immokalee Grassroots Movement. "It doesn't come very hard for me. It comes naturally. It's instinctive – we help our community." ■



TOP PHOTO: The organization staged a food drive in neighborhoods hit hard by COVID-19.

ABOVE: Maria Cardenas ('13, Social Work) helps make sure seniors are safe and have food.

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Student researcher
Grace Anderson makes
hand sanitizer in an
FGCU chemistry lab.

STORY ON NEXT PAGE ►

A SILVER LINING THAT SHINES GREEN & BLUE

How the FGCU community mobilized
to serve during lockdown

The coronavirus has affected everyone in one way or another. And the FGCU family certainly felt the impact in the form of online classes and commencements, canceled athletics events, a number of students, faculty and staff who came down with the virus as well as economic hardships.

But through it all, Eagles found ways to pick themselves up and create good out of a bad situation. Here are just a few of the ways FGCU students, faculty, staff and alumni did just that.

By **ANNIE HUBBELL** and **DREW STERWALD**





FLORIDA GULF COAST UNIVERSITY
CHEMISTRY CLUB



Eagles lend a hand making sanitizer for public safety

An FGCU chemistry professor's idea to make potent hand sanitizer in the chemistry research lab has yielded a winning formula for helping the community while inspiring students to put their knowledge and skills to work for the greater good.

Since March, Associate Professor Arsalan Mirjafari and three undergraduate research assistants turned ingredients donated by the chemistry lab into more than 21 gallons of hand sanitizer.

"Each of us has a responsibility to support our community - not just health workers - that's why we started this project," said Mirjafari.

Created with a World Health Organization formula, the FGCU-made hand sanitizer was distributed through the Physical Plant, as well as departments that interact with people or products the most, with any surplus being distributed to area hospitals.

For student volunteers Grace Anderson, Isabella Riha and David Siegel, the project serves as an opportunity not only to hone lab techniques, but to experience firsthand how their work as scientists can positively impact society.

"This whole project came about because we wanted to use our resources," said Anderson. "How do we do that? Well, we can help our community in a very effective, immediate way by making hand sanitizer." ■



Christopher Westley, dean of the Lutgert College of Business, announces RESTART SWFL initiative.

FGCU and RESTART SWFL work to restore consumer confidence

As COVID-19's impact continues to be felt on the economy, FGCU's Lutgert College of Business and Marieb College of Health & Human Services are helping local businesses along the path to recovery. The RESTART SWFL initiative is dedicated to helping businesses respond to the impact of the pandemic on their operations, workforce, vendors and customers. Since its launch in May, 55 pledges hang in

the doorways of area businesses ensuring they are ready for customers.

"We know that good health makes good business, so it makes sense for FGCU's Lutgert College of Business and Marieb College of Health & Human Services to unite to mobilize expertise and resources, along with those of our local partners, to help businesses," said Christopher Westley, dean of FGCU's Lutgert College. "Our intention is to create an environment in which consumers will feel more comfortable to re-enter the marketplace."

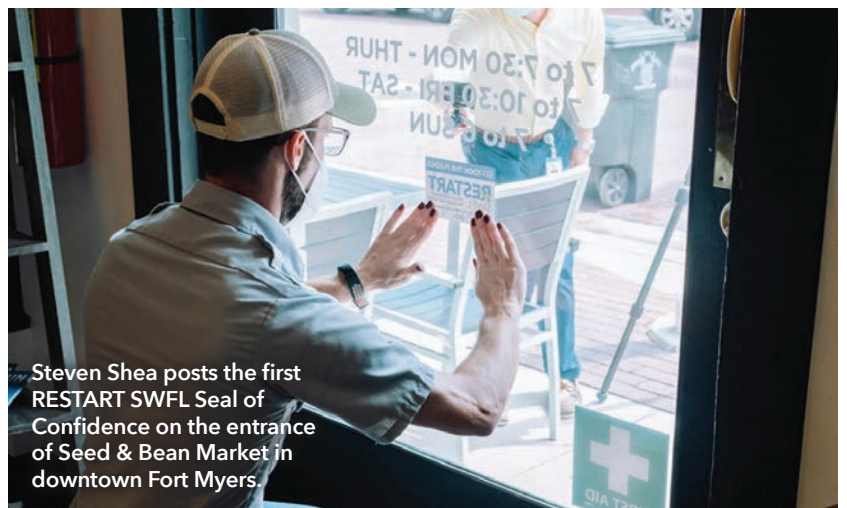
Along with the pledge, FGCU launched a series of free web-based



discussions led by experts from Lutgert and Marieb, as well as community leaders. These assisted businesses in complying with new standards in hygiene and best practices for business. The goal is to assure customers that establishments have sound systems in place to ensure their well-being and are providing fair value and service.

Ther two colleges partnered to combine efforts to benefit the public. Businesses are more likely to open safely by instituting health measures that can protect customers and employees.

Westley is looking toward the future with hope. “Things will get better,” he said. “We’re here to help this process along.” For details, visit fgcu.edu/Restart ■



Steven Shea posts the first RESTART SWFL Seal of Confidence on the entrance of Seed & Bean Market in downtown Fort Myers.

Piano student strikes a chord with Music to Breathe

Fernando López Flores couldn't return home to Bolivia this summer because of pandemic travel restrictions, but the FGCU junior found another way to reach South America.

Along with 13 other members of The Bolivian Chamber Music Society, the 26-year-old pianist performed cell-phone concerts via WhatsApp that brought melodic comfort to COVID-19 patients and their families and stressed healthcare workers in Bolivia. The around-the-clock music marathon, called *Musica Para Respirar 24/7* (Music to Breathe), debuted Aug. 10-17 and engaged almost 800 viewers in 355 concerts over about 8,000 total minutes, López Flores said. Sessions orchestrated via social media ranged from five minutes to two hours, with the players taking requests and chatting with listeners during 12-hour shifts.

"We wanted to find some way to support them," said López Flores, a native of Sucre, Bolivia. "Music to Breathe represents the fight that we are trying to win. What this virus takes away from you is the capacity to breathe – at a very intense level. We all 14 of us truly believe music has the power to heal the soul, mind and body. We really think what we do can make a difference."

As word of the project spread, additional musicians offered their services and requests for concerts poured in from neighboring South American countries. The monthly weeklong programs will continue at least through December, said López Flores, who studies under Professor Michael Baron with support from the Charles Lussenhop and Kayetta Slocum Scholarship and the Nisita Fund for Music Excellence.

"He's one of our best ambassadors of the school of music and a great representation of what FGCU is all about," said Bower School of Music Director Krzysztof Biernacki. "He's extremely well liked by everyone. He's one of those students who gets involved with anything."

In one of his more memorable Music to Breathe recitals, López Flores played Bach, Beethoven and traditional Bolivian music for a woman recovering from COVID-19. But from his practice room in FGCU's Music Building, the music major sensed he wasn't quite connecting. When he asked what she'd like to hear as a finale, she hesitated at first before suggesting the accomplished pianist play "Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star."

"She told me it was the only piece she had played on the piano when she was little and that was her nicest memory from childhood," López Flores said. "I played it for her, and she was so happy." ■



Fernando López Flores

ON THE
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LÓPEZ FLORES
PERFORM



FGCU engineers lead virtual summer camps despite pandemic

Despite COVID-19, spring and summer semester at FGCU successfully continued remotely. That's why no less than 10 summer camps also were successfully orchestrated from a distance by Campus Conference Programs.

One of those camps was the inaugural BEaM (Bootcamp for Engineering and Mathematics) program. It offered two, 10-day sessions throughout June by the U.A. Whitaker College of Engineering and the Department of Mathematics and helped 35 incoming freshmen develop the math proficiency and study skills they'll need in engineering and construction management coursework.

"We created a class in Canvas, and the professors either pre-recorded or conducted live lessons along with activities," said Julie Rose, outreach specialist for the engineering college.

"We boxed up all the supplies and shipped them to each student so they could engage in the activities from home. The students were then able to work on their skills with the support of a student mentor/tutor to improve their math skills before starting classes in the fall."



Julie Rose

The mentors – FGCU engineering students entering their senior year – met with program participants via Zoom. In addition to the lessons, students met with their department chairs, got a virtual tour of the engineering facilities and learned about resources on campus.

Rose says the results of this camp have been far beyond quantitative. The new freshmen are connecting on campus this fall, creating study groups and cultivating friendships.

"We are looking forward to this program being offered each summer to support incoming engineering freshmen. Hopefully next year it will be in person," Rose said. ■

Tech-savvy Eagle uses 3D printers to help shield healthcare heroes

Scott Presbrey spent part of his spring semester 3-D printing, assembling and donating facial shields while continuing his classes online in his Fort Myers home. For the FGCU bioengineering student, it is personal. He was inspired to step up production by family connections in healthcare.

“I have family who work on the front lines, and I know they were in desperate need,” he said.

Presbrey donated more than 700 face shields to Lee Health facilities across Lee County. But as supplies became more readily available, Presbrey shifted from shields to ear savers for masks. The strap is made to remove all the pressure of the elastic bands pulling



on your ears, so mask fatigue and ear pain are decreased.

For every purchase on his Etsy shop, Presbrey donates ear savers to healthcare workers. More than 500 have been donated so far.

“Using my skills and talents to develop a helpful tool for healthcare workers has been a fulfilling process,” he said. ■



Prof's dashboard provides healthy dose of COVID-19 info

Information on COVID-19 – helpful and otherwise – spreads at a pace that seems as rapid as the virus itself. Tom Felke, FGCU associate professor of social work, has the expertise and patience to cure this dilemma by organizing data into something that's easy to navigate, timely and accurate.

“I saw the state Department of Health dashboard and realized it's for the entire state of Florida,” he said. “I thought we could develop our own version using the same data but target it more to Southwest Florida.”

The result: The Southwest Florida COVID-19 Information & Resources Dashboard. It uses up-to-date information from the Florida Department of Health in an easy-to-navigate format so

users can pick a county and find out such things as the number of cases, testing sites and resource agencies.

“We're trying to put everything in one place so people can comprehend what's going on when there is so much uncertainty right now,” said Felke.

The dashboard continues to be updated as Felke knows COVID-19 is far from over. Resources are also being added as services change, and distributed to those who need it most.

“We want to be able to provide information to individuals that they can trust, count on and understand is accurate up to the point that we have it,” Felke said. Access it at fgcu.edu/mariecollege/socialwork/covid-dashboard ■

Community Counseling Center stays in touch through telecounseling

Sessions at the Community Counseling Center (CCC) at FGCU are now remote, but the focus is on keeping people connected. As the COVID-19 pandemic continues, the CCC recognizes the need for mental health counseling. The center is accepting new clients for telecounseling sessions to help them navigate challenges from the comfort of their homes.

"This is an opportunity for us to talk and come up with ways to make sure we are connecting with others,"

said CCC Director Alise Bartley.



Alise Bartley

are back at the CCC this fall, and are continuing to conduct virtual sessions with clients.

Counselors saw their last clients in person at the CCC March 14. Within two days, sessions began online. Students

"It is beautiful to see the synergy and how they are working together," said Bartley. "They are making certain they are physically distant, safe with their masks and wiping everything down."

The CCC conducted a study comparing client experience in face-to-face sessions versus virtual. They found clients got better at the same rate. As the pandemic continues, Bartley hopes those struggling will feel comfortable asking for help.

"Many of us haven't had to struggle with mental and emotional disorders," said Bartley. "Because of the vast changes we have had to make in our lives, people are really struggling with depression and anxiety, and it's ok." For details, visit fgcu.edu/communitycounseling ■



Alex Voss

FGCU grad's distillery lifting spirits by producing hand sanitizer instead of rum

Hundreds of distilleries and breweries across the country, including one FGCU alumnus-owned company based in Southwest Florida, converted production from rum to antiviral liquid. Alex Voss ('08, Marketing) and his brother, Ben Voss, own Alligator Bay Distillers in Punta Gorda, focused on mixing sanitizer this spring that could help stop the spread of coronavirus.

"We are using the formula approved by the FDA and created by the World Health Organization," Alex Voss explained. "The formula includes the alcohol at no less than 91 percent concentration with an added mixture of glycerin, hydrogen peroxide and reverse-osmosis water. The bottled sanitizer is 80 percent concentration."

In three months Alligator Bay donated 5,000 gallons of hand sanitizer to first responders, hospitals and assisted living homes throughout Southwest Florida. The remainder is being bottled and sold at the Marion Avenue distillery by the gallon and 4-ounce bottle. ■



A blurred photograph of a hospital room. In the foreground, a patient is lying in a bed, partially covered by a blue blanket. In the background, there is medical equipment, including a monitor and a stand. The overall scene is out of focus, emphasizing the text overlay.

FGCU NURSES

bravely battle pandemic on the front lines

BY KEITH GIBSON

Florida Gulf Coast University stepped up to meet the challenges created by the COVID-19 crisis in many ways, from reinventing how it educates students and conducts daily operations on and off campus, to serving as a community beacon for providing timely information on digital and media platforms relating to health, economic and social impact.

But of all those Eagles who served when called, none were more critical than those toiling in the trenches: FGCU School of Nursing graduates and faculty from the Marieb College of Health & Human Services fighting an invisible enemy in the intensive care units of hospitals throughout the country, tending to the victims of a worldwide war we never saw coming. They are heroes who didn't get into healthcare with that intention, but like most heroes, they are ordinary people who became extraordinary when fate called.

*FGCU360 reached out to some of these healthcare heroes, even as they continued the fight. What they saw, learned, overcame and became through it all ranges from educational to emotional, from triumphant to tragic. Following are excerpts of their experiences; their full stories are available on the **FGCU360.com** website as well. They describe what the impact of COVID-19 really looks like ... in flesh and blood.*

SHERRI PARMAR

A 27-year-old alum from Los Angeles who moved to Fort Myers in 2007, Parmar began attending FGCU three years later and, after earning a Bachelor of Science in Nursing at FGCU in 2015, has continued her career in Southwest Florida as Lee Health's Clinical Practice Council chair for nurses. She worked bedside in Gulf Coast Medical Center's COVID-19 Unit.

What she has seen: My team and I have gone through blood, sweat and tears. Patients who are dying have family who are unable to be there because they are stuck out of state. I had a COVID-19-positive patient dying from non-COVID-19-related problems who just wanted to be left alone ... not even talk to his family. Talking to the family and letting them know that was difficult.

I had situations where dying patients were able to FaceTime with their family before they passed. I had situations where patients had to be emergently intubated and only had seconds to hear their loved ones' voices. It is always hard to be with my patients at the end of life. But doing whatever I can for them – whether it's holding their hand, speaking with them even if they can't respond, speaking with the family, praying with them – their facial expressions, their body language tell me a lot, and I know that all the hardship was worth it, to see them pass away as peacefully as they can.

What she has learned: Our hospital team's support for each other both mentally and physically has been amazing. It has reflected on our patient care in a positive light, and to have exceptional patient care is to have an exceptional family unit of staff.

I expose myself to my dying COVID-19 patients longer because it's the right thing to do, the human thing to do. No matter what, I am a nurse first, and my calling is to be with my patient through the good and the bad – to hold their hand, to cry with them, to laugh with them, to pray with them, to motivate them, and to find peace with them.

I truly think we have the best community in the nation. To see our community unite



SHERRI PARMAR

and help each other in any way possible – whether it is making masks, donating food, or cheering the front-liners on – we can’t ever thank you enough. You all have made us sigh with relief, breathe a little easier, become braver, feel supported, made us cry happy tears. I am so thankful to be a part of an amazing community.

I owe so much to my FGCU experience in helping shape who I am. I had tough experiences throughout nursing school, and even with all of that, I learned to be positive and to focus on the fact that I am training to be where I want to be the rest of my life – in the service of others. Caring and compassion come with me personally but were strengthened at FGCU. Moments like seeing a dying man say thank you, a grown man cry happy tears that he’s going home, a hand to hold and grasp so tight, a family who understands what’s going on because of your explanations ... moments like these mean the world to me.

KELLY GOEBEL

This spring, Kelly Goebel was supposed to spend four days in Austin, Texas.

An assistant professor in the School of Nursing at FGCU for two years and an active acute-care nurse practitioner, Goebel was among just 30 nursing faculty nationally picked to participate in the American Association of Colleges of Nursing-Apple Digital Innovation Bootcamp: From Content to Action.

She was to spend April 24-27 in the Lone Star State learning how to leverage technology to enhance learning in the classroom, laboratory, online and in-hospital settings in what the AACN calls a “unique immersion experience.”

But COVID-19 changed Goebel’s plans. Instead of networking in Texas, she spent her spring doing the noblest work a nurse can do these days: treating coronavirus victims.

For Goebel – who earned her undergraduate degree at St. Joseph’s College of Nursing, her master’s at Loyola University in Chicago and completed her doctoral studies at the University of South



Florida – that work is in critical care at Naples Community Hospital.

What she has seen: When a patient is diagnosed, family members are not permitted to be at the bedside. That’s difficult as many of our critically ill patients have life-threatening conditions and could really use the support of their family and friends.

I don’t think anyone was prepared for how the social disruption would affect critical illness and end-of-life experiences. It certainly isn’t easy for the patient and their family, but neither is it for the nurses providing care. Nurses are used to doing so much more to help families cope with patients who are acutely ill. It’s frustrating, but at the same time, I think

“

“We are especially proud of our FGCU Nursing alumni who are working on the frontlines of the COVID-19 response. We know they have outstanding skills and are emerging as leaders in nursing. We admire the resilience, initiative, dedication and fearlessness that set them apart in practice. On behalf of the FGCU School of Nursing faculty, staff and students, I would like to say thank you for your spirit and exceptional nursing care.”

Anne Nolan, PhD, RN, FACN

Conner Professor in Nursing,
Director, School of Nursing, Marieb College of Health & Human Services

COURTESY PHOTOS

we feel honored to be in this position.

We are also very thankful for the generosity of the local community. It has been unparalleled. It's nice to know they are thinking of us and appreciate what we are doing.

What she has learned: One positive thing is the collaboration between all members of the multidisciplinary team. Everyone – and I mean everyone – has come together and worked very hard at adapting to this shift in practice. We modify our management strategies for COVID-19 as the evidence dictates, creating constant change. It demonstrates how we come together as a profession to provide the best patient care.

Nurses have the ability to be flexible and adaptable to almost any situation. Thirty years of experience as a nurse have taught me that you can always depend on your academic and clinical nursing colleagues for support.

My experiences at FGCU have helped me approach my role in this pandemic from both clinical and academic perspectives. Our faculty have been so supportive of each other and worked very hard at providing a seamless transition to remote learning for our students. It's nice to be able to link my clinical experiences to what is taught in the classroom, but even nicer to be surrounded by faculty, staff and leadership who truly care about students. It is an unprecedented time, but I think we at FGCU have done the best we can in demonstrating the important role that nursing plays in times like these.

MARYLEE MARRE

Marylee Marre has seen the COVID-19 pandemic at its absolute worst.

A Boca Raton resident who earned her Bachelor of Science in Nursing at FGCU in 2013 after transferring from Florida State University, then went on to earn a master's from Maryville University in St. Louis to become a Family Nurse Practitioner, Marre worked for NYC Health + Hospitals system in New York

City – epicenter for the coronavirus outbreak in the U.S. at the outset.

Marre was originally hired as a nurse practitioner to work with an emergency relief team, but the system was desperate for critical-care nurses – one of her specialties – so Marre went into COVID-19 ICUs at two NYC H+H hospitals. She also got a taste of COVID-19 herself, testing positive and becoming symptomatic, but recovered.

What she has seen: There isn't enough time to cope with the emotional trauma of it all. You have to constantly push that heartbreak aside for the moment to do the job at hand. That was what I did for each shift I worked, night in and night out. And at that time, that's all I could do.

I worked four cardiac arrests in a matter of 2½ hours, running out of lifesaving supplies because there was not enough time to restock the crash carts

between codes. I witnessed death after death. I saw patients alone and dying alone. I did my best to make them feel loved and cared for and not alone, but I don't know if that was enough.

We were doing everything we possibly could to keep these patients alive. All you can do is keep doing what you're doing and pray to God that it is enough ... even though you know it won't be. That internal battle, that conversation that you have day in and day out, is the hardest conversation I have had to have with myself.

It was truly a war zone. I have never seen anything like it.

What she has learned: It was rewarding to see everyone coming together in unity and working cohesively as a team. There were nurses stepping up to the plate to take care of critical patients when they did not have the critical-care background, but knew we



Marylee Marre, center and inset, with coworkers.

were so desperately in need of more nurses that they were willing to learn and jump in to help us.

There needs to be anticipation of something like this occurring again, and there should always be enough personal protective equipment stocked or easily accessible, made in the U.S. Also, we need hospitals sharing treatment plans, from local to those in other parts of the world.

FGCU stressed the components of what makes a successful nurse, including how to critically think, hands-on skills, compassion, and experience that would later be gained through work. In this time of crisis, the balance of these things helped me to provide the best care possible.

SHELBY MILLER

Imagine that you are a 23-year-old woman only months into your nursing career. You thought you knew what you signed up for when you chose that career path in healthcare, but as things have transpired at the outset of your journey, it turns out you really had no idea.

Or as Shelby Miller, who earned her Bachelor of Science in Nursing at Florida Gulf Coast University in 2019, put it, “I never thought in my first year of nursing I would be a part of history, working in the heart of a pandemic.”

In Miller’s case, “the heart” is Tampa, where the Rochester, N.Y., native is part of the team in Tampa General Hospital’s COVID-19 intensive care unit. Although Tampa General – rated one of the top hospitals not only in Florida but nationally – serves a 12-county region, most of its patient traffic comes from Hillsborough and Pinellas counties.

What she has seen: The toughest aspect of working in the COVID ICU is the unknown, with the patients and the disease itself. In the beginning, many people were not thinking COVID was as bad as it really was.

Another concern we all had was how we were going to protect ourselves. On the news, we saw stories about so many nurses



and other healthcare workers not having proper personal protective equipment and putting their lives at risk to save others. Thankfully, I have had all the proper PPE (personal protective equipment) to protect myself.

I also have seen several patients go home after being terribly ill from COVID. Our

first patient who was diagnosed went home a few weeks after being in our unit. I do not think a single nurse will ever forget him and his remarkable recovery.

What she has learned: My co-workers and I have developed such great teamwork. Before COVID happened, our unit was always team driven. Yet, especially during

this time, none of us have ever felt like we were in this alone.

I hope people will continue practicing proper hand hygiene. Also, try to keep yourself as healthy as you possibly can. It seems those who suffer from comorbidities (the simultaneous presence of two chronic diseases or conditions in a patient) were being hit the hardest by COVID.

FGCU was a great school to attend. I believe I was able to start out in an ICU as a brand new nurse because of the great education I received. One valuable lesson was to expect the unexpected, and always try to be one step ahead. In these tough times, every healthcare worker has no idea what they are going to walk into on their next shift, but has to walk in with their head high, take care of their patients, and hope they heal and go home to their loved ones.

IMKE CASEY

Imke Casey is grateful that FGCU leadership allowed her to take temporary leave from her faculty position to answer the COVID-19 crisis call as a critical-care provider.

On the other hand, you can be sure that New York Presbyterian Queens Hospital was even more grateful to get the talent and leadership skills of Casey, assistant professor in the School of Nursing since 2019 and owner of a diverse resume of education, experience and certification, most significantly as a Doctor of Nursing Practice and Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetist.

"I appreciate administrative leadership's ability to be innovative and think outside the box during a crisis," said Casey, who thanks Marieb College Dean and Professor Ann Cary, School of Nursing Director and Professor Anne Nolan and Interim Provost James Llorens for making her mission of mercy possible.

Born in Celle, Germany, and, when not in Southwest Florida teaching students in the graduate-level Nurse Anesthesiology Program, residing in Clermont, Florida, Casey also is on staff at TeamHealth



Imke Casey, right and inset, with coworker Doreen Farley

Oak Hill Hospital in Spring Hill as a CRNA. She describes her role as a university professor as the "second phase" of her nursing career – specifically, as an "educator and nurse informaticist" – the first phase concentrating on being an "expert clinician" in nurse anesthesia.

To be sure, Casey had to bring the knowledge she has gleaned and shared in both phases of her career to this latest

VISIT [FGCU360.COM](https://www.fgcu360.com)

Read Marylee Marre's emotional open letter to her fellow nurses, "Inside the Mind of a Frontline Nurse/Nurse Practitioner."

challenge, which took place during most of the month of April as a Disaster Relief CRNA.

What she has seen: Providing rapid response and emergency anesthesia services in a medical system that is overwhelmed with critically ill patients. An insufficient availability of personal protective equipment – N95 masks, disposable hooded overalls and face shields in particular – and being potentially exposed to the virus. Working with unsophisticated ventilators from the federal stockpile versus in-house, contemporary ventilators.

On the human side, being at the brink of emotional and physical exhaustion after a 12-hour shift. Using FaceTime and WhatsApp as the only means for families to express their encouragement and hope to their loved one. In many cases, families had to express their love and final goodbyes via these video-messaging platforms.

It was amazing to see how healthcare workers from across the U.S., in all specialties, came together to fill the medical personnel shortage during the peak of the crisis.

What she has learned: I feel that we need to re-evaluate and potentially expand the scope of nurse anesthesia practice. While I have a strong background in emergency-, critical-care and rapid-response services (my prior Navy Reserve combat casualty-care training and solo anesthesia positions in rural America), the majority of CRNAs usually do not develop these skills, since the Council of Accreditation does not require nurse anesthesia students to rotate through the critical-care area, nor the emergency room.

I have been in contact with the CEO of the American Association of Nurse Anesthetists, Dr. Randall Moore, who also feels that this topic should be addressed by the AANA during a COVID-19 After Action Review. The goal would be to discuss the current nurse anesthesia scope of practice with educators and the Council of Accreditation related to needed emergency and critical-care services skills and training. ■



Student leader Cedric Dunham



Diverse

THE ROAD TO **INCLUSION**

FGCU looks both inward and beyond its boundaries
to make university community harmoniously diverse

By KAREN FELDMAN

The pain and outrage ignited earlier this year by the deaths of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor and Ahmaud Arbery resonated far beyond Minneapolis, Louisville and Brunswick, Georgia. They even touched the usually tranquil Florida Gulf Coast University campus.

The Black Lives Matter movement energized a multiracial group of FGCU students who, like people across the nation, felt motivated to make their voices heard. On June 11, they marched from Miromar Outlets to the campus holding signs bearing messages such as “Respect existence or expect resistance.”

Cedric Dunham, a senior integrated studies major, Student Government director of student opportunity and president of the FGCU chapter of National Pan-Hellenic Council, was among those inspired to march and present a list of demands to the university’s administration on that steamy, summer day.

“Across the country, these types of things are still happening,” Dunham said in explaining why the students spoke out. “In our community things were happening. People are being discriminated against. We needed to address it with the school. We don’t want to be on a campus where we feel unsafe or don’t feel valued.”

He said one of the primary issues was “we feel like minorities – specifically Black people – aren’t celebrated. We don’t feel valued. The entire campus observes PRIDE Week and Hispanic History Month, but there’s never anything special for Black History Month. This year, on the 57th anniversary of MLK’s March on Washington, we rang the bells (on the Cohen Student Union).”

One month after the demonstration, FGCU President Mike Martin issued the following statement in an email to the university community:

“A fundamental value of FGCU is an unambiguous commitment to diversity,



equity and inclusion and a firm resolve to address racism, bigotry and intolerance on our campus and beyond. Recent events across the nation have reminded us yet again that we must exhibit our values through action.”

He outlined ways in which the university would work to improve its efforts at equity, diversity and inclusion. Chief among those was the creation of

people like Gunter and Thornhill to handle such problems, but, he added, “the overrepresented majority of the world is responsible to fix this and hold everybody accountable. It comes down on old white guys like me to take some responsibility and make things happen.”

What follows is a look at some of the steps being taken to expand inclusiveness and diversity on campus.

experience of Black members of FGCU. Christopher Blakely, the interim assistant vice president of campus life, dean of students and director of Multicultural & Leadership Development, added association president to his roles.

He’s looking forward to advancing diversity on campus. One way he hopes to do that is by teaming up with Thornhill.

“Ted and I have talked about



the Center for Critical Race and Ethnic Studies, which would study issues of race, racial discrimination, bias and inequality under the leadership of Ted Thornhill, an associate professor of sociology.

Martin, an NAACP member for 40 years, said that work toward improved diversity and inclusion isn’t new at FGCU.

“We’ve been at this for quite a while,” he said, “although maybe it’s not as obvious as it should be. Precious (Gunter, director of Equity & Compliance and Title IX coordinator) has been carrying out training on implicit racism and inclusion. We’ve had a very controversial, but appropriate, course on white racism taught by Ted Thornhill.”

He added that too often we rely on

LEFT & TOP: FGCU students march to bring attention to racial inequities.

INCREASING FACULTY/STAFF OF COLOR

Minorities make up about 21 percent of the faculty and staff and about 34 percent of students. There’s broad consensus FGCU needs to attract more staff and faculty of color.

“Sometimes you feel more comfortable going to someone who looks like you, you relate better,” Dunham said. “We need more minority psychologists. Not everybody understands your internal struggle if they don’t have the same background as you.”

One Black therapist has been hired and the university is seeking to hire another.

The Black Faculty and Staff Association held its official launch in September. Its aim is to influence university policies while enhancing the welfare and improving the

collaboration,” Blakely said, “guiding students for more research, having an anti-racism conference, a speaker series and research that will help move our purpose forward to being more socially just and inclusive.”

Provost Jim Llorens and Assistant Provost Tony Barringer have been exploring ways to attract faculty of color for some time. The student demonstration simply reinforced their resolve.

Previously serving as chancellor at Southern University and A&M College in Baton Rouge, a historically Black university with a student body that was 90 percent to 95 percent African American, Llorens is convinced diversity is critically important.

“We recognized at Southern that diversity adds to the overall experience,

to the knowledge and ability of students to understand the world we live in, the makeup of the world and the need to understand all people,” he said. “We made a conscious effort to expand our recruitment efforts and reach out to those communities underrepresented at Southern.”

Barringer said it takes a multifaceted approach to attract faculty of color.

“Once you get individuals here, you have to make them want to stay,” he said. “Make sure the (recruitment) ads are inviting, that they get the feeling that you are committed to diversity. Search committees need to be trained properly. We need to move away from traditional searches and do more talent acquisition – identify someone in our areas of specialty. There are waivers we can use to make it happen.”

CENTER FOR CRITICAL RACE AND ETHNIC STUDIES

The new Center for Critical Race and Ethnic Studies will signal that FGCU is serious

about diversity, equity and inclusion as well.

Thornhill had been thinking about creating it for a while but the pandemic delayed his plans. The deaths of Floyd, Taylor and Arbery and the resulting demonstrations around the country, including those in Southwest Florida, brought new urgency. Then he watched the students march.

“They spoke about their grievances, their experiences, sadness and frustration,” he said. “It was raw and powerful and painful. Afterwards there was no mistake that the students were demanding FGCU become an institution that more closely embodied its commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion.”

“It’s not unique to

FGCU,” he said. “Nearly all institutions of higher education have some degree of separation between their professed values and how they operate.”

Martin and Llorens quickly signed on.

“We readily agreed that the center would be an excellent addition to the academic structure of the university and our ability to address race and ethnic issues from a research standpoint,” Llorens said. “Dr. Thornhill, in a relatively short time period, has established a national and worldwide reputation with his research and through the center and its FGCU affiliate faculty, that research can be expanded.”

Thornhill envisions the center and its faculty affiliates – he’s named 9 so far – will be involved in research and other initiatives that deal with “racism and antiracism, power, identity, marginalization, culture and immigration,” he said.

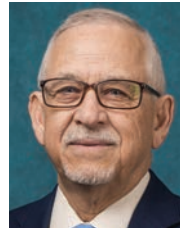
The center, on the fourth floor of the Wilson G. Bradshaw Library, is still in the formative stages, but he envisions roles for students and the community.

INCREASING CONSCIOUSNESS

Precious Gunter’s job is to ensure that discrimination, harassment and bias have no place on campus, although, she said, “it’s everyone’s job.”

Her office runs a certificate program for inclusion and diversity. Faculty, staff and students earn certificates by taking six or more courses on topics such as bias, uncovering racism, microaggression, environmental racism, voter suppression, dating and domestic

Ted Thornhill plans to explore issues of racism, identity and more through his new center.



Jim Llorens



violence and gender issues.

Gunter said there were 456 graduates of the program last year, the program's fifth year, and 124 events are planned for this year, despite COVID-19.

She hopes heightened sensitivity to these issues is building throughout the university. "We have to make sure we are living up to it," she said. "Are supervisors holding employees accountable during their annual evaluations?"

There are efforts underway to weave it more broadly into the curriculum and she hopes the new Center for Critical Race and Ethnic Studies will help raise the level of awareness and understanding as well.

"Sometimes people feel it's being shoved down their throats, but it's the right thing to do," she said.

ELSEWHERE AROUND CAMPUS

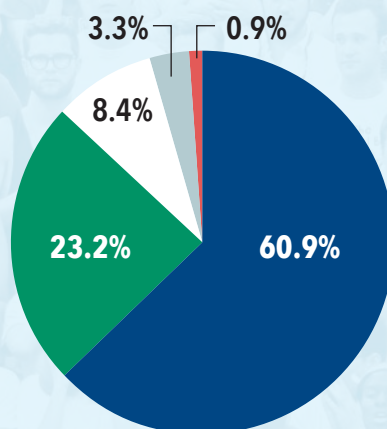
ATHLETICS: In a division with 260 student-athletes from 32 counties and about as many states, there are many differences in language and culture. Athletics Director Ken Kavanagh appointed Jeremy Boreland to the post of FGCU athletics chief diversity & inclusion officer in addition to his job as assistant athletics director for business development.

"Jeremy has done a phenomenal job in taking a leadership role for us focusing on diversity and inclusion initiatives," Kavanagh said. He added that Boreland has helped forge strong relationships among Athletics staff and the student-athletes and hopes it will have long-lasting positive effects.

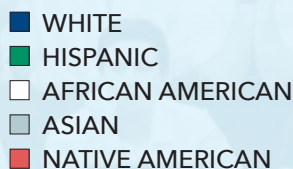
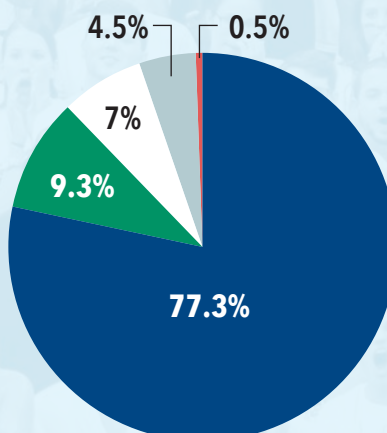
Coaches and assistant coaches of color have held town hall meetings with student-athletes that led to an initiative called Eagles Against Injustice. The group has come up with a T-shirt featuring the Eagles Against Injustice logo and a call for social justice on the back. The \$10 sales price will go toward The Sustaining Flight Fund, which benefits student-athletes by offsetting revenue lost from the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

BREAKDOWN BY ETHNICITY AT FGCU

STUDENTS FALL 2020



FULL-TIME FACULTY & STAFF FALL 2019



SOURCE: FLORIDA BOARD OF GOVERNORS

STUDENT GOVERNMENT: Following the student demonstration, Student Government formed a Minority Outreach Committee, composed of members from all three branches of the government, and held a lengthy meeting at which students voiced their views on diversity and inclusion.

"It was one of our longest meetings," said Danarria Stone, a junior economics major and Senate pro-tempore, "but it was good because the students came to say how they were feeling. It was not all negative but they talked about what they wanted to see – more Black faculty and staff on campus, more representation on campus."

She said committee members met with various departments on campus and have been encouraged by the mostly positive responses they've received.

"I'm feeling optimistic and hopeful," she said. "The most important thing is that the conversation has been started."

ALUMNI: After determining that many alumni of color don't feel part of their alma mater, Kim Wallace, director of Alumni Relations, enlisted the help of former Student Government president and current Alumni Association board member Jalisia White to help create a multicultural alumni network.



Kim Wallace

"I think it will engage an audience who never felt engaged," Wallace said. "I want all of our alums to feel a part of their university."

From his perspective as a student, Dunham sees progress. "The school's doing an OK job so far addressing things," he says. He adds that he looks for continued improvement.

All of these efforts will take time, Llorens said. "It doesn't happen overnight. It has to be built into the culture of the university. We have a strong core of faculty members, department chairs and deans who are committed to this."

Although Llorens retires at the end of the year, he is optimistic that people and programs are now in place to make that happen.

"Once it's understood that it's critical for the university, I'm very confident that there are individuals that are going to be here to see this as an integral part of the university going forward," he said.

Barringer agreed. "It's going to take all hands on deck in order for this to work." ■



A DRIVING FORCE



His name and his benevolence are indelibly etched into the history of Florida Gulf Coast University and the hearts of those who helped found it. And every one of the more than 38,000 students who have attended classes here know the name Ben Hill Griffin, III, if not the generous soul who played such a pivotal role in making FGCU what it is today. **BY KAREN FELDMAN**



FGCU FILE PHOTOS

FROM THE founding of the university until his passing on July 25 in Frostproof, Florida, he was deeply involved with FGCU, which is immediately clear to anyone who visits.

"I've always liked that everyone coming to our campus comes in from Ben Hill Griffin Parkway," said Susan Evans, FGCU vice president and chief of staff who worked with him from the university's earliest days. "It's fitting for the man who paved the way for FGCU."

And pave the way he did. The third-generation citrus grower, cattle rancher and successful businessman gave the land to the state on which FGCU is built.

In a 2007 video produced for the university's 10th anniversary, Griffin recalled, "We looked at all of our properties and said 'What is the best that we could offer the state? Let's give them the lake and the additional acreage they need and that's how we came up with the 760 acres that we gifted to the state.'"

Roy McTarnaghan, FGCU's founding president, said, "Ben Hill was very anxious to leave his mark on education as his father (Ben Hill Griffin, Jr.) was so supportive of the University of Florida. He kept putting in more of his resources — money for endowed chairs, money for land use planning after the site was accepted. Working with Ben Hill Griffin and (his colleague and fellow FGCU benefactor) Bernie Lester were very exciting times."

When the fledgling school began an athletics program with just a modest gym, he donated \$5 million to help construct what became Alico Arena.

"We could never have achieved this level of success without that gift to Alico Arena," said Stanley "Butch" Perchan, a development officer who helped bring in that gift and still raises money for

PREVIOUS PAGE: Ben Hill Griffin, III seated third from left of the podium, at the ground breaking for the new university in 1995. FGCU's first president, Roy McTarnagahn is speaking,



Athletics. "It really set the tone for other people who wanted to be involved here."

Griffin funded three eminent scholars in the Lutgert College of Business and countless scholarships, including what is believed to be the only football scholarship the school has (given in the spirit of encouraging the university to start a football team, something he steadfastly lobbied for throughout the years).

He gave generously of his time as well, serving on the FGCU Foundation, where he was a Foundation Fellow at the time of his death. In appreciation of his generosity and support, the university awarded him a Doctorate of Humane Letters in 2002, the first such honorary degree bestowed by FGCU.

"In the 30 years I've known Ben Hill, he has received well-deserved public recognition for his generosity and accomplishments, but he also quietly helped many people behind the scenes," Evans said.

W. Bernard Lester, who worked alongside Griffin and his father for many years at Alico, Inc. and who is also a longtime FGCU benefactor and Foundation Fellow, confirmed that much of the good the Griffins did occurred without fanfare.

"They enjoyed sharing what they had been able to accumulate with other people, particularly with people who needed help," he said. "If the Griffins hadn't come along, times would have been tough for many

ABOVE: Griffin Hall, a primary classroom building, was named in his honor.

RIGHT: Ben Hill Griffin, III at the President's Celebration gala benefit with student-athletes the year the men's basketball team won an ESPY award for "Best Upset" in 2013.

individuals and groups."

But it was FGCU to which Griffin gave his greatest support, starting with the land and the arena, and continuing until just shortly before his death when he contributed to a scholarship fund the FGCU Foundation Board of Directors started for students who have been economically affected by the coronavirus pandemic, according to Kitty Green, vice president for Advancement and executive director of the FGCU Foundation.

"It feels like the end of an era," she said.

President Mike Martin called Griffin "a longstanding friend. He was kind, loyal and always supportive."

That friendship began in 1997, when Martin was about to start work as vice president of the Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (IFAS) at the University of Florida.

Martin said he was told to go introduce himself to Griffin in his suite at halftime during a football game in Gainesville. He recalls knocking on the door, Griffin opening it, and introducing himself as the new vice president of IFAS.

"He didn't say a thing for what felt like 10 minutes," Martin said. "Then he said 'You weren't my first choice.' I said, 'My wife said the same thing.' He laughed and we struck up a friendship."

Two decades later, when FGCU was searching for its fourth president, Griffin called Martin. "I hope you will consider being in the hunt," Martin recalls him saying. "I appreciated that."

And, while Griffin stayed on the sidelines during the search process, once Martin was selected, he received a call from his longtime friend.

Griffin said, "I understand you will be the next president. I want you to start a football team."

Although that didn't happen, they were able to start something else that was important to him: an agribusiness program in the Lutgert College of Business.

Martin likens Griffin to other great men who "stepped up and created higher education institutions, men like Thomas Jefferson who started the University of Virginia, and John Pillsbury who started the University of Minnesota.

"It took people with a certain amount of vision, knowing it would not begin to have payoffs until long after they were gone," Martin said. "It takes a special vision to say, 'I'm going to start something.' He got a chance to see how far this place had come and appreciated that there would be many more successes after he was gone. That's the definition of a visionary."

Lester spent a great deal of time with Griffin through the years, particularly the 18 years during which they worked together at Alico, Inc.

"To him the objective was to get things done and that was my attitude, too," he said. "Ben Hill achieved a lot but at the same time he shared a lot."

Griffin's nephew, Baxter Troutman, told the *Lakeland Ledger* that "Ben Hill had a big bark, but he had an even bigger heart."

Lester agreed. "The bark was because he expected people to do their job. Every now and then there had to be a bark. But there was much more coming from his heart."

Butch Perchan recalled that the late

William C. Merwin, FGCU's second president, "used to say there were a number of angels that put FGCU together and Ben Hill Griffin is certainly on top of the angel list."

According to Evans, "As of Ben Hill's passing, we've awarded 42,700 FGCU degrees with generations more to come. What a legacy for Ben Hill's vision for a university in Southwest Florida and what he knew it would mean for students and their families."

In addition, he established scholarships at numerous other colleges and universities, and supported churches in Frostproof, the Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts and other organizations.

Griffin was born March 3, 1942, in Lake Wales to Ben Hill Griffin, Jr. and L. Frances Griffin. A lifetime resident of Frostproof, he began working in the citrus nursery at age 9, according to his biography in the Citrus Hall of Fame. He attended Frostproof High School, where he was voted president of his class each year.

His father gave him 100 shares of Alico Inc. stock when he graduated. By 2004, he owned 50 percent of the company of which he became president and chairman of the board. During that time, the

company's assets hit an all-time high of \$176.9 million.

He attended the University of Florida and earned his AA at Central Florida Community College. He worked his way up in the family business, eventually earning the title of president and COO of Ben Hill Griffin, Inc.

He was past chairman of the board and CEO of Alico, Inc. (1989-2004) and Orange-Co., Inc. (1991-1999).

His professional accolades include induction into the Florida Citrus Hall of Fame, the Florida Agriculture Hall of Fame, and the Frostproof High School Hall of Fame. He served on a wealth of boards, including the Florida Council of 100, Florida Legal Foundation, Inc., Florida Citrus Showcase Hall of Fame Selection Committee, Citrus Associates of the New York Cotton Exchange and many more.

He was preceded in death by his parents and his son, Brett Thomas Griffin. He is survived by his children, Kathryn "Kitty" Griffin Rogers (John L), Ben Hill Griffin, IV (Pia) and Candace "Candy" Griffin Denton (Andy); 12 grandchildren; one great granddaughter; and four sisters, their spouses and children. ■



GIVING

The Lucas legacy: Stepping up and filling a need, time and again

BY DREW STERWALD

BY THE TIME HE WAS a teenager, David Lucas' strong work ethic and drive to earn money had set him on a path that would lead to a business empire in Southwest Florida real estate development. As a 10-year-old, he sold eggs door to door in his Pittsburgh neighborhood. He delivered newspapers, sold Christmas cards and shoveled snow.

"I was always working when I was a kid, trying to make money," Lucas says.

That scrappy entrepreneurial spirit stayed with him throughout his life and fuels his desire to inspire the same zeal in others through his philanthropic efforts. His latest gift to Florida Gulf Coast University, a \$4 million challenge that spurred other pledges to collectively match his, will empower FGCU to groom generations of students who aspire to be entrepreneurs like him. To honor his generosity, the new building he made possible will be named for him.

The three-story, 27,000-square-foot building on FGCU's main campus will house the fast-growing Daveler & Kauanui School of Entrepreneurship as well as the Small Business Development Center and FGCU's Regional Economic Research Institute, all of which engage in community partnerships that benefit economic development.

"Entrepreneurship is what drives this country," Lucas says. "It creates jobs. Small companies make a big difference."

As do longtime investors like David and Linda Lucas, who are among the university's earliest and strongest supporters, with gifts and pledges in excess of \$8 million since

1996. Their legacy includes a \$2 million gift to establish the David and Linda Lucas Center for Master Planned Community Development and Finance Endowed Fund and another \$2 million for The Lucas Center for Faculty Development Endowed Fund.

"David Lucas' impact is really all over the place," says Kitty Green, vice president for University Advancement and executive director of the FGCU Foundation.

"Any time there was a real need, and he thought he could play a role in fixing that need, he would step up."

And in stepping up, Lucas demonstrated belief in the institution, its mission and its progress. As with the many other community causes he has supported – including the Southwest Florida Community Foundation, United Way and Canterbury School, to name a few – Lucas has led by example, sharing his time and expertise as well as his fortune.

More than a dozen diverse businesses, schools and charitable organizations have benefited from his hands-on dedication in the three-plus decades he has lived in Southwest Florida. Adding up his simultaneous terms as chairman, president or executive committee member of multiple organizations – 31 years with the United Way, 25 years Westminster Presbyterian, etc.

– results in a cumulative 141 years of service.

Lucas has supported these and other institutions with \$78.5 million so far, often as challenge pledges that inspire others to give and double his pledges and gifts. And he willingly asks

others for money; he has raised more than \$30 million in direct solicitations for organizations including United Way.

"The thing that I would like to be remembered for is the fact that I have been associated with many organizations, charitable and business alike, that have had a positive impact in the community," Lucas says.

That legacy will be celebrated and preserved in perpetuity at FGCU.

"David Lucas was an early investor in FGCU, and he continues to make investments that propel this university on its continual journey to excellence," says FGCU President Mike Martin. "Along with the significant financial support David has provided, his involvement with FGCU sends the message highly successful people are betting on our success."

Lucas' involvement started well before FGCU was FGCU. In 1991, six years before the inaugural class stepped on campus, he helped tee off the first annual fundraiser for the then-unnamed university; The Founder's Cup golf tournament has raised about \$2 million



Linda and David Lucas



There are three kinds of people in this world – those who make things happen, those who watch things happen and those who wonder what happened? We want to be in that first category, making things happen.”



DAVID LUCAS, PHILANTHROPIST AND ENTREPRENEUR

for scholarships since then. He served on the university's founding Board of Trustees and continues to play an active role with the FGCU Foundation.

“You’ve got to find a place where you can make a difference – that’s what makes your life significant,” he explains, invoking one of his favorite sayings: “There are three kinds of people in this world – those who make things happen, those who watch things happen and those who wonder what happened?” We want to be in that first category, making things happen.”

Lucas has few peers when it comes to supporting initiatives that improve opportunities for FGCU students and faculty. Both benefit from the Lucas Center for Faculty Development, established with his gift in 2014. The center supports activities that help faculty members grow as teachers, which promotes FGCU's primary mission of providing the highest quality education to prepare students for success. It's a ripple effect, according to Lucas Center Director Bill Reynolds.

“Faculty who participate in Lucas Center programs consistently report that their teaching and their relationships with students are enhanced which, in turn, contributes to more effective teaching and learning, as well as overall student success,” Reynolds says. “David Lucas had the foresight to recognize that a young university would benefit from a teaching and learning center

devoted to faculty and student success.”

He saw a need for faculty development programs, and he stepped up – just as he did 10 years earlier with the endowed fund that supports The Lucas Institute for Real Estate Development & Finance. The institute was designed to meet a demand for high-quality degree programs that prepare students for the challenges of the highly competitive real estate development industry – one of the most powerful economic forces in Southwest Florida.

“When I think of Mr. Lucas’ impact on FGCU, I think about it from the student perspective,” says Shelton Weeks, Lucas Institute director and department chair of Economics & Finance. “The

number of students I’ve been able to work with personally and that we’ve been able to give experiences to, the number of community groups we’ve brought to campus to expose our students to opportunities and career paths in real estate, would not have been possible without his support.”

The Lucas legacy extends well beyond the boundaries of

FGCU’s campus, Weeks adds. Across the Southwest Florida real estate industry are countless alumni who have risen to leadership roles thanks to FGCU programs supported

by Lucas. It’s a fitting tribute to a visionary pioneer in advocating sustainable development as head of The Bonita Bay Group. Lucas assumed leadership of the family real estate development business in

1984 after the death of his father-in law, David Shakarian, founder and chairman of General Nutrition Corp.

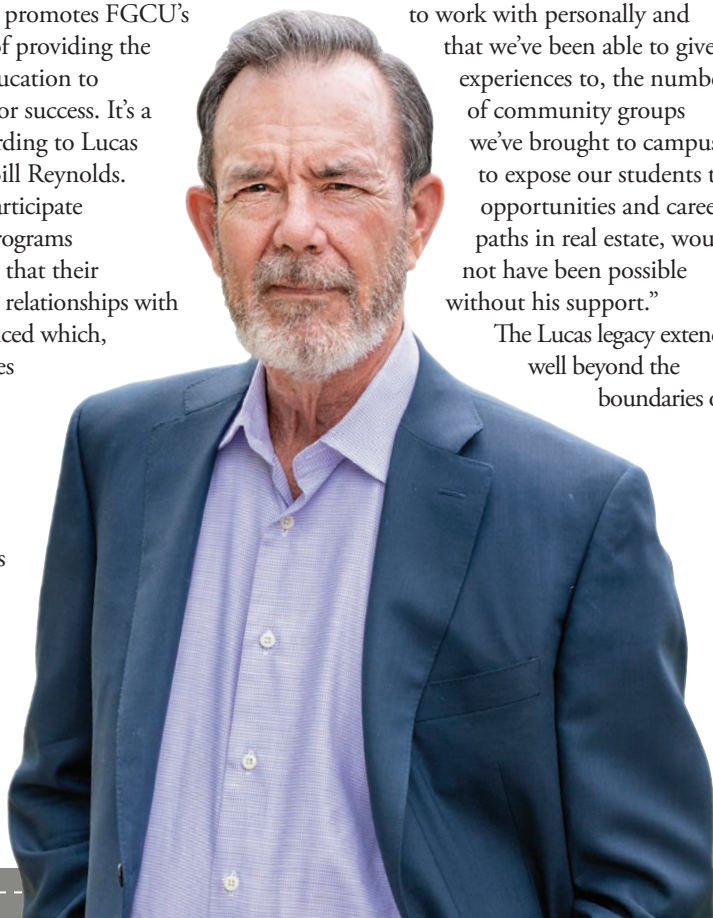
It was at The Bonita Bay Group where Kitty Green first got to know Lucas after she was hired in 1991. He saw a need to encourage philanthropy among his employees, and encouraged others to follow suit.

“He really taught all of us in the company about what it means to give because it is the right thing to do – not because of what you get in return,” Green recalls. “David has led by example throughout this community, and much of it has been done anonymously.”

And he’s done it the right way, stepping up to give when and where it can do the most good. In his own words: “Do your givin’ while you’re livin’, so you’re knowin’ where it’s goin’.”

At 73, Lucas is well on his way to achieving his goal of giving away \$100 million, which he expects to achieve in three years. Battling Parkinson’s disease for more than 20 years has been his biggest challenge in life, he says. His proudest accomplishment, though? His part in FGCU’s founding, growth and development.

“What I learned in the development business was do it right and do the right thing,” he says. “That’s what (FGCU) does – it does the right thing and produces the right kind of people. I’ve been honored to be part of it.” ■



Daveler gift fuels entrepreneurship school for continued rapid expansion

\$4 million donation funds facilities and programs

BY DREW STERWALD

AS A LIFELONG entrepreneur and innovator, Naples philanthropist Frank Daveler knows a good idea when he sees it.

In his 101-plus years, he and his late wife, Ellen, launched and sold more than a dozen companies in aerospace, engineering and manufacturing.

Daveler is, to many minds, the epitome of an entrepreneur, so his decision to invest in FGCU's entrepreneurship program from its beginnings reflects a strong belief in its potential for success. A large part of that is due to the leadership of another career entrepreneur who has nurtured the program's rapid growth, Sandra Kauanui.

That's why when Daveler recently made a \$4 million pledge to the School of Entrepreneurship he insisted on acknowledging its director, who has become a close friend. In recognition of his generosity and their close partnership, the school has been named the Frank and Ellen Daveler and Sandra Kauanui School of Entrepreneurship.

"He started making donations for seed funding for our program when we really had nothing," Kauanui says. "He has always been very supportive of our students and alumni through scholarships and mentorship. This was something he says he had when he graduated from college. He really cares about what he's doing. It's not about ego."

Like his groundbreaking innovation that helped pilots take flight at high speeds more safely, Daveler's support of FGCU has given wings to ambitious entrepreneurs with high-flying ambitions. What started as an entrepreneurship minor has grown into a major. Kauanui used the success as a springboard to create the

FGCU Runway Program, a free business incubator for students.

Now, the School of Entrepreneurship is home to one of the fastest-growing majors on campus.

And FGCU was just named 29th in the country for undergraduate entrepreneurship studies, according to The Princeton Review and Entrepreneur magazine. More than 400 businesses have been started by FGCU students and alumni since August 2016, a tribute to Kauanui and the school's success as well as a boost to economic growth.

"She's doing a beautiful job," says Daveler, who still enjoys mixing with students, listening to their ideas and sharing his business wisdom. A quote on his business card says, "Results are obtained by exploiting opportunities, not by solving problems." Words he has lived by.

"An entrepreneur has to be capable of taking charge," Daveler tells students. "To do that, you must know every part of the business you're involved in and how to improve it. You have to look for new and better ways of doing things. You have to hire people who are capable and make sure they are on the right track."

One of those eagerly absorbing Daveler's knowledge was Jakub Adamowicz, a 2019 graduate and part of the original Runway Program class, who founded RoomDig, an app that helps college students find housing and roommates. He says he was able to avoid many pitfalls of starting a business because of what he learned at FGCU, and he was able to move ahead faster. The School of Entrepreneurship is helping put the university on the map within the technology industry, he says.

"It all started with Mr. Daveler and Dr. Kauanui – none of this would be possible without them," Adamowicz says. "They're not doing it for themselves. All they've



Frank and Ellen Daveler launched and sold more than a dozen companies in aerospace, engineering and manufacturing.



ABOVE: Sandra Kauanui, director of the School of Entrepreneurship, works one-on-one with her aspiring entrepreneurs.

RIGHT: FGCU senior Jakub Adamowicz founded RoomDig, which developed an app that helps college students find the housing and roommates that best fit them.

done is all for the students. They really taught me to look beyond myself. A lot of people go into business to accumulate wealth, but what they've taught me about investing in future generations and giving back to people that don't have access to resources has been life transforming. Because of them I plan to stay here and keep growing my tech company."

John Ciocca, a junior interdisciplinary entrepreneurship studies major, finds inspiration in Daveler's commitment to doing business with purpose. Ciocca founded a social network called youBelong for people with special needs,



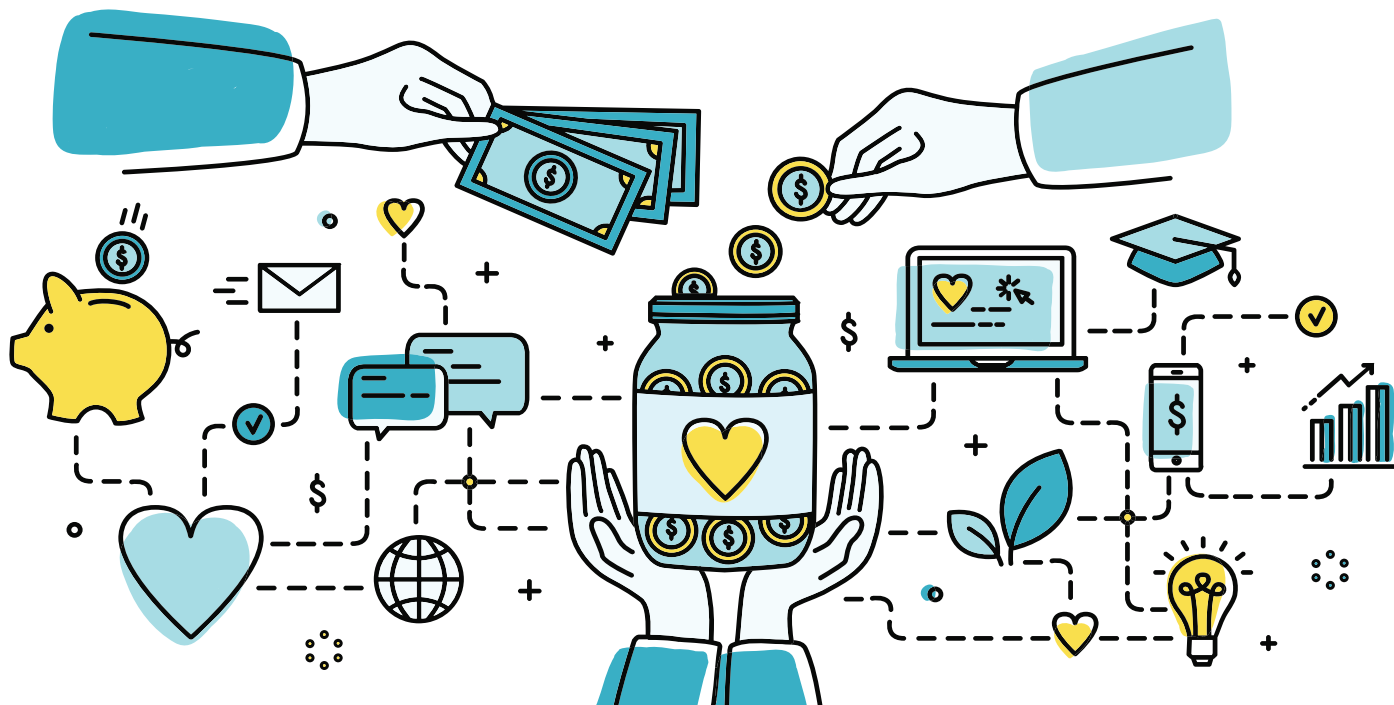
inspired by a brother who has Down syndrome.

"It's really cool to be in the room with Mr. Daveler and listen to his stories," Ciocca says. "He has always been about being passionate about having a mission in life, being able to make a difference."

There's no question Daveler has made a lasting difference at FGCU, as the school that now bears his name continues to grow in enrollment, reputation and presence on campus. His latest gift will help fund programming and facilities, including a space in the school for alumni entrepreneurs.

In the meantime, Kauanui looks ahead to the school eventually offering graduate programs and becoming a college.

"This brings the school to a whole new level," she says. "One of our goals, Frank's and mine, was to build something to last, to benefit students for generations. Making this gift and naming this school builds something to last." ■



University's fortunes experience turbulence but emerge with best fundraising year yet

BY KAREN FELDMAN

NO ONE WILL DISPUTE that the 2019-2020 fiscal year was a volatile one, starting off with optimism and high hopes and ending with the pandemic and its ensuing economic instability. Like all institutions and most individuals, Florida Gulf Coast University saw its fortunes swing in pendulum fashion as well but, when it was all over, the university emerged with an endowment that had grown over the year, greater assets and a banner year when it came to gifts from generous donors.

"The highlight of the year was the community's excitement over the entrepreneurship building," said Kitty Green, vice president for Advancement and executive director of the FGCU Foundation. "It really pushed us over the top. We were really lucky to have such incredible support."

Six principal gifts – those of \$1 million or more – represented 40 percent of the

total. Deferred gifts accounted for a third, while endowed gifts comprised \$2 million and \$4.1 million was designated for scholarships.

Those major gifts enabled construction to commence ahead of schedule on the building that will house the Daveler/Kauanui School of Entrepreneurship, bringing the burgeoning program back to campus from its base at the Emergent Technologies Institute a few miles northeast on Alico Road.

In the fiscal year, which ran from July 1, 2019, through June 30, 2020, the FGCU Foundation raised \$31.2 million, exceeding its annual goal by 25 percent and besting last year's results by 29 percent.

Of that, gifts to Athletics totaled \$4.9 million and those to WGCU Public Media came to \$4.7 million.

In addition, 83 percent of the FGCU Foundation Board directors made gifts to FGCU, many as part of a drive to help students who were experiencing financial

need due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

While the amount of money donated last year was greater, so, too, is the need as students continue to struggle to pay for school as families grapple with unemployment and student jobs aren't as plentiful as they once were.

"Now that the entrepreneurship building is funded, in the coming year, the president's priorities are keeping costs to students low, an increased focus on scholarships and continuing to strengthen our faculty," Green said. "We are hoping for some eminent scholars funding in various areas."

"These are our primary focuses for this year knowing it's probably going to be a challenging year given all our human services needs." ■

HOW YOU CAN HELP

For more information on ways to donate, visit fgcu.edu/advancement.

An immigrant's legacy

David Wang championed for Immokalee's children through his FGCU philanthropy

BY KEITH GIBSON

DAVID I.J. WANG, once a top executive for the world's largest paper and pulp producer, never forgot his roots as a Chinese immigrant.

That's why when he retired, he became passionate about helping underserved populations, a philanthropic mission he fulfilled, in part, by funding Florida Gulf Coast University scholarships for first-generation students from Immokalee. He also supported the FGCU Food Pantry from its inception.

Wang, a former vice president and director at International Paper Co. who later became senior partner in Atlas Holdings private equity investment firm, died Feb. 28 in his Naples home at age 87. He is survived by his wife and partner in philanthropy, Cecile Liston Wang.

Besides their previous support for FGCU scholarships, the Wangs pledged \$1.5 million in deferred gifts – \$1 million in David's name and \$500,000 in Cecile's. Cecile chose FGCU's Bower School of Music & the Arts as the permanent home of David's extensive music library. The David Wang Music Collection was donated to the Bower School of Music's Ensemble Library in September.

Born in Beijing, China, David Wang emigrated with his family after World War II and earned degrees in engineering from George Washington University and Georgia Tech. Besides his business achievements, he served as a trustee of the Robert F. Kennedy Center for Justice & Human Rights



Cecile and David Wang (below) were among the original supporters of the FGCU Food Pantry.

and the Southern Poverty Law Center.

That laid groundwork for the Wangs' establishment of scholarship funds at FGCU as an extension of their commitment to the Coalition of Immokalee Workers, an organization devoted to improving wages and working conditions for farmworkers while combating human trafficking and gender-based violence in the workplace.

At FGCU, the Wangs gifted more than \$200,000 to create the Cecile Liston Wang Endowed Scholarship Fund in 1999. In 2012, they donated \$500,000 to create The Immokalee Fund for first-generation students.

"I decided a couple years back that instead of parceling out philanthropy in small slices, I would focus on some potential big-impact projects, one of which is

the establishment of The Immokalee Fund," Wang said in an interview with FGCU360 in 2016, after he spontaneously donated \$50,000 at FGCU's President's Gala.

The Wangs became more closely tied to FGCU when they developed a friendship with former FGCU

President Wilson G. Bradshaw and his wife, Jo Anna.

"It was a very special honor for Jo Anna and me to know David and Cecile," said Bradshaw, who served as president from 2007 to 2017. "We will always remember the gleam in his and Cecile's eyes at the annual FGCU Foundation Scholarship Luncheon, where they relished the opportunity to sit and converse with students who benefitted from their scholarships."

The Wangs' scholarships have helped fund higher-education dreams for more than 160 students and counting.

"Every year the university sends me a packet about the recipients, and in it are letters from the applicants about their vision of his or her role in society," Wang said in 2016. "What impresses me most about these notes written by the students themselves is that they put heavy focus on public service."

It's a value by which he lived his life. "Be successful in business," he said, "but don't turn your back on your societal obligations."

David Wang never did. "The impact on the lives touched by David and Cecile will be felt for generations to come," Bradshaw said. "May he rest in the peace he deserves." ■





Logan Wallick and John Strom

Younger alumni choosing to support FGCU through planned gifts

BY KAREN BOOTH

PAYING IT FORWARD isn't only a catch phrase for a philanthropic gesture, it's a way of life for the many who believe in its power to change lives.

Planned giving is a way in which those wishing to share their good fortune can pay it forward. Typically associated with retirees who may be finetuning their wills and bequests, this form of giving is gaining traction with younger people, too, including FGCU alumni who aren't planning to retire for quite a while. They can designate in their wills that a cash amount, life insurance policy or retirement account be turned over to the university.

Logan Wallick ('09, Business, '10, MBA)

and Linda Guerrine ('05, Management, '08, MBA) are among those planning ahead by making planned gifts to FGCU.

"Planned gifts can be advantageous for younger alums because it allows them to establish a commitment now that does not require an immediate cash gift," said Angela Kunkle, director of development. "Many younger alums are busy building careers and families, acquiring their own

wealth and making their mark on the world. Creating a deferred commitment allows them to show their Eagle pride and receive recognition for their pledge without the financial hardship that may come from giving a cash gift today."

Wallick, manager of human resource operations for Gartner, has been an active alum in several ways, attending FGCU sporting events, speaking with students in HR management classes, participating in job fairs, taking part in alumni events.

In 2018, he was named a Soaring Eagle by the FGCU Alumni Association, an award recognizing young alumni for outstanding achievement or service in their careers and/or community service. He was also recognized as one of Gulfshore Business

MAKE A PLANNED GIFT

For information, contact Bill Rice, senior associate vice president University Advancement, (239) 590-1077 or brice@fgcu.edu

magazine's "40 Under 40," a select group of young professionals who demonstrate both professional success and are active in community service. He also is a member of FGCU's Legacy Society, which "recognizes the generous visionaries who have chosen to remember FGCU in their estate plans."

In explaining his decision to support FGCU through planned giving, Wallick said, "FGCU is an exciting member of the Southwest Florida community, constantly in the news. As residents, my husband, John (Strom), and I are proud to be members of this community. And I, as an FGCU alum, couldn't be more pleased that John and I have decided to name the university in our estate plan."

Wallick is young and in mid-career, as are most alumni of the 23-year-old institution. Yet Wallick's instinct to give was strong. "John and I learned of planned giving as an option through Angela Kunkle."

Kunkle said, "The question is 'What is one of the ways young alumni can be philanthropic?' Paying an annual gift, if they can, is an option. Planned giving is another option – a way to give back some time in the future, yet not disrupt their financing in the present."

Philanthropy is personal and given that 50 percent of FGCU graduates remain in Southwest Florida, Wallick and Strom felt that including the university in their estate plan would positively impact their community in the future.

Linda Guerrine was a development officer in FGCU's Advancement division after earning her bachelor's degree and while working on her MBA. Today, she is director of development for University of Maryland's Robert H. Smith School of Business and remains passionate about supporting FGCU. Guerrine had no hesitation in naming FGCU as beneficiary of her IRA.

"My hope is I live a long life and that I have done well for myself," she said. "Then

the impact of my legacy gift will impact many more students and be incredibly transformative."

Guerrine's culture of giving started early in her life. "My mother passed when I was just 9 years old. She was incredibly important to me, and I loved her dearly," she said. "Losing her was the most awful thing that ever happened to me, and I have never forgotten the generosity of the many people who rallied around to help me cope and thrive."



Linda Guerrine with a picture of her mother, to whom she pays tribute with an FGCU scholarship and a planned gift.

In 2008, Guerrine, along with friends and family, created the Diana Nerestant Memorial Scholarship Fund in honor of her mom, and she contributes to her scholarship annually.

"When it comes to giving, whether it be time, treasure or talent, it's important to get involved with the institution," said Guerrine. "Find an area that is compelling

to you and ask how you might help. For me, the scholarships I received in high school allowed me to pursue my dream of attending college."

Then in high school, Guerrine received a scholarship from Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc., a sisterhood of predominantly African American, college-educated women. "I wanted to be like these wonderful women who awarded thousands of scholarships to women they didn't know, giving them a chance in life. I

was passionate about becoming a member of this sorority of successful women supporting the African American community, especially important in these days of COVID-19 and ongoing racial injustice."

However, FGCU didn't have a chapter. In 2004, Guerrine and seven other young women established an official charter at FGCU. She became its first president and solidified her resolve to provide future generations of students with scholarship support.

Guerrine's decision to support the university was simple. "FGCU helped me become who I am today," she said.

"Philanthropy, in many ways, is a partnership," John Strom said. "I don't think enough people know about gifting money in a will. Could we afford to write a \$100 gift? Yes. But if more people were exposed to the planned giving option, the university might even be better served for future generations of students."

"The planned giving option was for us a good life decision," Wallick said.

Speaking of her fellow alumni who may or may not know the planned giving options, Guerrine said, "The size of your gift doesn't matter. Every gift is a big gift."

The key, she said, is consistency. "Over time, consistent giving allows the university to plan what it needs to do to provide an excellent experience now and in the future. The idea is to do what you can every year and think about how to help in the future." ■



Caitlin Rosolen spends her days surrounded by artwork.

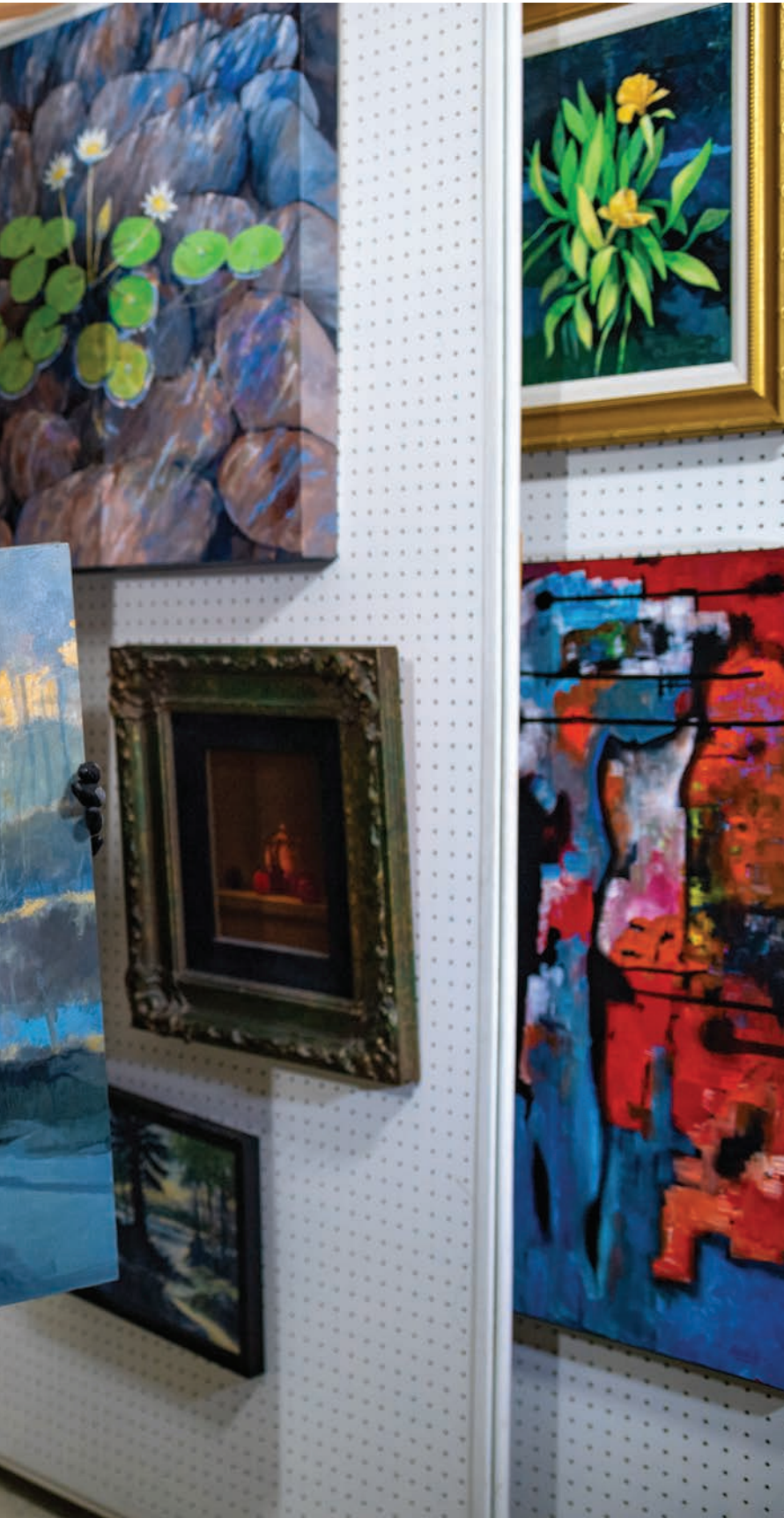


PHOTO BY JAMES GRECO

Art collection meant for touching, teaching students

BY NINA BARBERO, '16

MUSEUMS TYPICALLY request that patrons refrain from touching the art on display, but as FGCU's Art Collections Manager, Caitlin Rosolen is responsible for doing exactly that.

Rosolen ('17, Art) gets up close and personal with the more than 3,000 pieces in the university's Permanent and Donor and Stewardship Collections to document works for both the university and its digital collection, DigitalFGCU.

"I am head-over-heels in love with my job," Rosolen says. "My workday is leagues above anybody's best day – I'm surrounded by artwork all day."

Rosolen splits her time during the week between working on campus and working offsite at the Buckingham Complex in eastern Lee County where FGCU stores most of its artwork. The university has been collecting pieces and accepting art donations for more than 20 years, and it's Rosolen's responsibility to make sure those pieces are both properly cared for and properly documented.

That documentation includes recording donor and artist information, photographing each piece and noting its dimensions, assigning it what is called an "accession number" so the university can quickly identify and find it, and importing that information into DigitalFGCU, where anyone with internet access can discover and enjoy the piece. (Visit fgcu.edu/digitalcollection)

"Typically, if you look at any institution, what they display is usually only about 3 percent of what they actually have in the collection," Rosolen says. Because a lot of the pieces FGCU has are unframed prints, she says displaying them all at once would take a lot of funding. But displaying them all at once is not the goal.

"It's not so much about quantity of pieces we're displaying," she says, "but really showcasing the individual donors we have ... and then of course, we want the walls to be covered with art."

Rosolen works with FGCU's Gallery Director John Loscuito and Melissa VandeBurgt, who is its head of archives, special collections, and digital

Caitlin Rosolen, '17, keeps track of the university's donated artwork.



“Besides the Baker Museum, there is not another institution in the area that has rotating exhibitions from their permanent collection on display. We are a resource for the students and community to see works of art by world-class artists.”

JOHN LOSCUITO, FGCU'S GALLERY DIRECTOR

initiatives, to manage and display the collections on campus.

Students and staff across FGCU's campus interact with artwork throughout their days, thanks to sculptures that are on display outdoors, and pieces in the Wasmer Art Gallery, ArtLab, the Wilson G. Bradshaw Library, and small collections in each building.

Since she began her role in 2018, Rosolen

has helped put together exhibits on campus, such as the selection of Florida landscape paintings housed in the Student and Community Counseling Center. Those were created by the late FGCU professor and well-known local artist Carl E. Schwartz and donated by his widow, Celeste Borah.

While much of her job is dedicated to handling FGCU's existing pieces,

Rosolen is also involved in the donor process. Donors reach out to specific departments throughout the year when they have a piece they'd like to donate, or to collectionscommittee@fgcu.edu for the University Collections Committee to review and determine which department the item might be the best fit for. If departments decide to accept a piece, they'll have the donors fill out an Electronic Deed of Gift and Acknowledgement of In-Kind Received form for processing.

Donors are made aware that the university might not be able to keep the work forever. In case a work will one day be sold in a public sale, they can select a specific fund for those proceeds to go to, so their gift can continue to benefit the university in the way they intended.

“This collection is all thanks to the donors and the support of the community,” says Loscuito of the university's growing body of artwork. One



thing Loscuito says he considers when accepting pieces for his department is how they'll serve students on campus, such as the educational value of a particular piece for what students are studying in FGCU's art studios or in other departments.

"Everything we do is to serve their education," he says. "It really is their collection."

Rosolen anticipates that the collection might see an increase in donations during the pandemic.

"The way I see it is that everybody is stuck at home," she says with a laugh. "Maybe they're looking at the same artwork and thinking, 'You know what? I don't want to look at this anymore. Let me see if the university will take it,' and that'd be great for us."

Rosolen says the university's art donors tend to be older art collectors who have had time to accumulate their own large collections. "As FGCU gets older, I'd imagine the alumni will have collected artwork and will donate to their alma mater."

One long-term goal Rosolen has for the university is to build a state-of-the-art storage facility on campus.

For Loscuito, that end goal would also make an on-campus museum a possibility.

"Besides the Baker Museum, there is not another institution in the area that has rotating exhibitions from their permanent collection on display," he says. "We are a resource for the students and community to see works of art by world-class artists."

Rosolen says she hopes the art on campus can have a positive impact on the students and faculty, even if it's just to "bring them relief after a stressful day."

"Many of the students haven't necessarily been able to go to locations that have art that is important and significant throughout humanity. It's important that we have a collection of art on campus so that they're able to walk through the halls or go into their classrooms and experience the art," she says. "Whether they realize it or not, it's influencing them. I think it's just one of those things they become accustomed to seeing, and it shows them a different perspective." ■

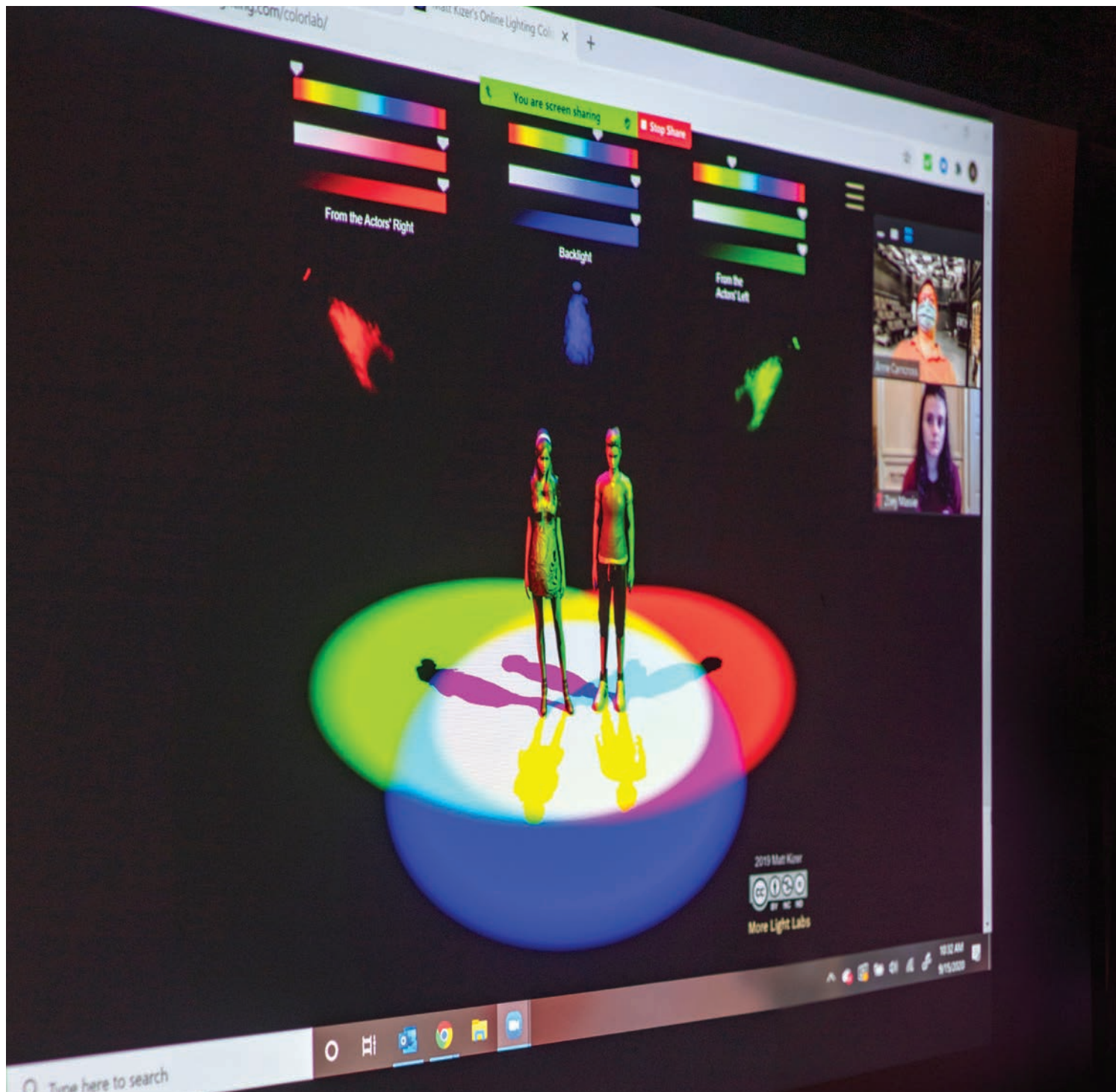
HOW TO DONATE ART

For details about how to support the FGCU Art Collections, contact Dolly Farrell, senior director of development, at dofarrell@fgcu.edu or (239) 590-7638.



The Student and Community Counseling Center showcases works by artist Carl E. Schwartz.

ARTS



“

“I wanted to make sure that no matter what circumstances my students were presented, they would have access to learning – whether that was an in-person class or an online stay-at-home option.”

”

FGCU PROFESSOR ANNE CARNCROSS

READY! SET! LOG IN!

**Innovative software solutions
are boosting virtual instruction
for the creative arts**

BY ARTIS HENDERSON



Professor Anne Carncross
uses lighting software to
teach in a socially distanced
classroom and online.

PHOTO BY JAMES GRECO



FROM HIS CLASSROOM within the Bower School of Music & the Arts, instructor John Phillips positions the marching band on the field. He sets up the snare drums and the

bass drums then adds a cymbals player before moving on to the woodwinds.

When he has the design just right, he adds uniforms with the click of a button. With another click, he animates the band. They step into motion, moving across the football field on his computer screen. Phillips is training the next generation of band directors, and many of his students will go on to lead marching bands across the country. This semester, he's using an innovative software program called

Pyware that allows his students to build elaborate marching band models in the classroom or at home. It's just one recent example of how Florida Gulf Coast University is meeting the needs of our ever-changing world.

FGCU faculty are tackling the challenges of the post-pandemic classroom head-on. They're turning to innovative software programs to enhance the in-person classroom experience and, if classes return to virtual learning, they're prepared to deliver an exceptional education experience online.

"This program makes learning accessible to students off-campus," Phillips says. "We were able to secure the license for class members to use on their personal computers. In the interest of

TOP: Professor Barry Cavin is also finding unexpected upsides to using software learning programs.

RIGHT: Instructor Mary Seal uses virtual learning software to teach piano classes.

student safety and security, the course is being delivered online initially."

In a perfect world, students would collaborate with local high school bands in a hands-on practicum experience. But in COVID times, less exposure is better.

Mary Seal, another Bower School instructor, has seen the benefits of virtual learning software in her piano classes for music majors. The Bower School now uses the eNovativePiano program, which helps students develop strong

**“It’s working for my classes in a positive way,
even for the performance classes.”**

PROFESSOR BARRY CAVIN, ON TEACHING THEATER DIRECTING CLASSES ONLINE

pianistic techniques. The eNovativePiano system is similar to buying a textbook, only instead of purchasing a book, students buy a subscription for the semester. The subscription includes tutorials that help students apply the many elements required for piano – hand placement, fingering, phrasing, articulation, negotiating the sharps and flats and hitting accurate notes. Students can practice wherever they have access to a piano, whether that’s at home, in their dorm room or in the FGCU keyboard lab (provided they are socially distanced). Students record a video of themselves playing the tutorial and send it to their professor. She’s able to review it and provide feedback, looking for the same criteria she looks for in her in-person sessions.

So far, her students have had little trouble adapting to the eNovativePiano software. “Most students seem fine with me explaining why we’re doing everything this way at this time,” she says. “They’re submitting their video assignments weekly.”

In his theater directing classes at the Bower School, Professor Barry Cavin is also finding unexpected upsides to using software learning programs. He’s currently designing his courses using Canvas, an online learning management system. Though he used Canvas as a supplement to face-to-face classes in the past, the move to online-only classes this summer encouraged him to create his own fully online Canvas course for the first time. “It’s working for my classes in a positive way, even for the performance classes,” he says.

For his directing students, Cavin has created an inventive virtual adaptation of the traditional process. He has students build a scale model of a set and place miniature actors inside. The students then take a photo. For the next moment in the scene, the

students rearrange the actors inside the model and take another photo. When they have completed the scene, they assemble the photos and send them to Cavin for critique. “You end up with this stop-motion animation for stage movement and blocking,” Cavin says. “I can see how effectively they’re using the space and how their characters are relating visually.”

The exercise helps students slow down and examine their choices, he says, and it creates a more deliberate approach to staging. “The hybrid structure carved out a space for my students to submit work in a way that was unconventional but surprisingly useful.”

FGCU senior Madeleine Anderson participated in Cavin’s stop-motion

blocking assignment. The theater major created her own to-scale model of a set for Sam Shepard’s “Fool for Love” and used Lego figures for the actors. “I thought it was a great experience,” Anderson says. “I really took it one step at a time, line by line, and blocked out what I wanted.”

In her lighting and sound design classes, Professor Anne Carncross has also seen online learning tools expand opportunities for understanding. “I wanted to make sure that no matter what circumstances my students were presented, they would have access to learning – whether that was an in-person class or an online stay-at-home option.”

She’s using the dance lighting, gobo lab, color lab and cue builder programs under the Matt Kizer: Scenic and Lighting Design software umbrella. The programs mimic the lighting used in the school’s theater and teach her students about color theory, dance lighting and working with gobos (thin metal stencils placed over theater lights to create shadow effects like moonlight filtering through leaves). “Students can go in and play with all of these elements, just as if they were allowed to do it in the theater space,” Carncross says. The program is browser-based, which means students don’t need to download anything on their computers. It’s accessible for both PCs and Macs. “It’s very important to me that all students have easy access,” Carncross says.

Like her fellow creative arts professors at the Bower School, Carncross believes the software-based learning opportunities will ultimately benefit students more than classroom instruction alone. “We can get to so much more than if we were only in the classroom laboratory,” she says. “And we can do it faster.” ■



SPORTS



Eagle athletics at 20

Teams excel in their sports as well as academics

BY SETH SOFFIAN

THE TALES FROM the early years of FGCU Athletics are so widely known they can almost tell themselves: *swamp land clogged with thickets of invasive melaleuca trees, alligators as big as airboats, a pioneer spirit, no recruiting budget, great camaraderie, a refusal to lose...*

Twenty years since the first ball was struck in an official Eagles capacity, what remains as fresh as the day they arrived is the awe at how much has been accomplished in so short a time.

“Some days you really have to sit back and say wow,” FGCU Director of Athletics Ken Kavanagh says of a program that began in 2000-01 with four sports – men’s and women’s golf and tennis – before growing to a 15-team, NCAA Division-I program widely lauded for its many on- and off-field successes. “There have been some really special people.”

In a department where praise is broadly

HONOR ROLL

A list of some banner achievements only hints at FGCU’s many great measurables:

- ▶ The famed Dunk City men’s basketball team that reached the Sweet 16 in the NCAA March Madness in 2013
- ▶ World Series champion Chris Sale and four other Eagles reaching the major leagues
- ▶ FGCU alums reaching the NBA, WNBA and MLS
- ▶ All seven of FGCU’s primary team sports notching at least one NCAA tournament win
- ▶ Top-25 rankings at least once in seven seasons
- ▶ Four ASUN all-sports titles and 82 regular- and postseason conference titles
- ▶ Multiple Olympic swimmers and one in beach volleyball – Brooke (Youngquist) Sweat.

shared and notions of character and integrity go far beyond lip service, the credit always starts in the beginning, with great vision and devotion.

It was founding university President Roy McTarnaghan’s desire for all students to accumulate service-learning hours that has long been such an important piece of FGCU Athletics’ close connection with the community, Kavanagh said.

It was second FGCU President William C. Merwin’s vision for an elite D-II program that he thought would someday grow to D-I that helped enable so rapid an ascension.

There’s eternal indebtedness to boosters past, present and future, starting with late school benefactor Ben Hill Griffin, III, who died in July at age 78. His \$5 million gift turned what would have been a modest gym into the prized Alico Arena, opened in 2002.

Recent years have seen critical, seven-figure donations from multiple donors, including FGCU baseball alum and MLB star Chris Sale, to continue expanding facilities never



“Without this community, I don’t think we’d be anywhere near the level we’re at now.”

STANLEY “BUTCH” PERCHAN, LEAD FUNDRAISING OFFICER, RETIRED



intended to host a midsize D-I juggernaut.

But all also point back to the day-one devotion of area backers, such as the late Duane Swanson, for whom FGCU’s baseball stadium is named, and Harvey Youngquist, responsible for calling in countless favors to help turn that reptile-infested swamp into premier facilities.

“He called everybody under the sun, anybody that had a trucking business or fill (dirt),” said Stanley “Butch” Perchan, who retired in 2014 as FGCU’s long-time lead fundraising officer for athletics but who still supports that role through the FGCU Foundation.

“He told them, ‘These boys ain’t got no money. They need your help.’ It was hundreds of thousands of hours. And he put it together – saved us so much money.”

With no alumni of which to speak, FGCU then – and to some extent still today – has depended on Southwest Floridians who attended college elsewhere to adopt the Eagles as their own.

“Without this community,” Perchan said, “I don’t think we’d be anywhere near the level we’re at now.”

“I don’t know if there’s another school that’s won more conference titles in all sports than we have over the same time,” said Eagles baseball coach Dave Tollett, one of four program founding coaches still with FGCU. “We’re good in everything.”

From Year One through today, though, it’s the endless immeasurable contributions that arguably have been the strongest storyline in FGCU Athletics.

That includes FGCU founding coaches and staff sometimes working two jobs – and sleeping in their cars and showering at rest stops on recruiting trips – while funding was found.

“Carl recognized we were hungry,” FGCU founding softball coach Dave Deiros said of Carl McAloose, the school’s first full-time athletic director. “We were

going to work hard and do whatever it took to grow this program.”

Working closely together from portable trailers that fed now-famed tales of intense staff competition, the founding coaches had great success selling unheralded recruits on the idea of building a program from scratch.

“We recruited the right kids,” said Tollett, using the term “hungry” as well to describe the overlooked high school gems he helped polish. “We won 35 games our first year with no scholarships. Second year we had one and we won 37.”



LEFT: Alico Arena today
ABOVE: Alico Arena in 2001

After immense success in five D-II seasons, including women’s basketball reaching the D-II national championship game, the Eagles never wavered after an unexpectedly early move to D-I, which required a four-year transitional period from 2007-2011.

Kavanagh, who succeeded McAloose two years into the transition, came in emphasizing what he saw as the program’s commitment to academics, community engagement and a sense of ownership and responsibility for all parties, student-athletes included.

“Ken sets a high standard,” said FGCU senior associate athletics director Kathy Peterson, who joined the athletics staff in 2003 after working in the FGCU registrar’s office before the campus was open in 1997.

“He is a big proponent of student-athlete welfare,” said Peterson, pointing

to exit interviews for departing student-athletes, the student-athlete advisory council she oversees and more.

“Ken really wants to know what we’re doing well, and what we can improve on. We want candid feedback, and we genuinely take into account what student-athletes have to say. I think the empowerment part is critical because they do have so many responsibilities.”

The Eagles take great pride in being able to win in academics, too. And they’re competitive in that area as well, naturally.

“(FGCU student-athletes) should take pride in the 22 straight semesters that we’ve had a grade point average that’s exceeded the undergraduate student body,” said Kavanagh, pointing to all 15 FGCU teams having GPAs above 3.0 in the spring of 2020.

Twenty years since they first began competing, the Eagles still are winning in a fashion that benefactors say showcases Southwest Florida in the greatest light – and returns every penny, and then some, on their investments.

“That was the promise from day one, Perchan said. Whatever we were doing, it had to benefit the five-county area (of Lee, Collier, Charlotte, Glades and Hendry counties), and we get rave reviews from that still today.”

It’s all so lofty, stakeholders wonder how much FGCU will achieve in the next two decades.

“If you would have asked me 20 years ago to make predictions, I would have been wrong about all of them probably,” said program founding FGCU women’s basketball coach Karl Smesko, the ASUN Coach of the Year 10 times in 14 years in the league.

“I would have underestimated greatly. When I think about the next 20 years, (FGCU) is going to have even higher levels of success. I think we’re going to have multiple sports make deep runs into the NCAA tournament. Wouldn’t it be great if I was under-predicting again?” ■

ALUMNI

CLASS OF 2014

Pandemic pushes elections team to check new boxes

BY NINA BARBERO, '16

COVID-19 HAS FORCED almost all businesses to change their processes, from small restaurants offering delivery for the first time to large companies allowing employees to work from home. Changes have even taken place in the one industry the eyes of the nation have focused on for months but especially so in November – elections.

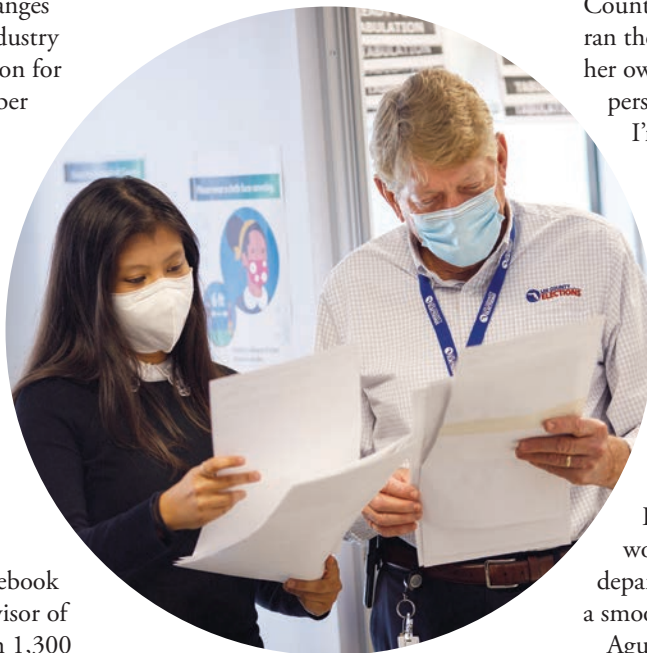
FGCU alumna Gaby Aguirre ('14, Communication) was at the heart of the action as the Lee County Elections Office rolled with the changes brought on by COVID-19, shifting its focus from traditional in-person events, voter registration and interviews with reporters to social media, videos and Zoom meetings.

In June, for example, Aguirre and Communications Department Director Vicki Collins hosted a Facebook Live Q&A with Lee County Supervisor of Elections Tommy Doyle. More than 1,300 people had watched the video by mid-August.

"I am glad I started in an off-year, because an election year has so many layers to it," says Aguirre with a laugh. She started her current role in 2019.

Aguirre is a Washington, D.C.-area native who moved to Florida with family prior to her senior year of high school. She

had been working at a Southwest Florida retirement community for six years when she took a part-time job with the Lee County Elections Office on its Vote-by-Mail Board in 2016.



Gaby Aguirre with Tommy Doyle,
Lee County's Supervisor of Elections

The Vote-by-Mail Board is a temporary group that assembles a few weeks before the election to process mail-in ballots as they come in, and it was there that Aguirre met Vicki Collins.

She worked again in 2018, and Collins asked Aguirre to join her department as an intern and eventually as a full-time employee.

"She's a wonderful asset to our office," says Collins, who has worked at the Lee County Elections Office for 21 years and ran the Communications Department on her own. "She's become my right-hand person in a short amount of time and I'm very grateful to have her on my team, especially this year."

The Communications Department's main responsibility is to share election information with Lee County voters. This includes educating voters about anything from registration deadlines to how to find accurate candidate information. The staff also answers media questions and clarifies numbers, creates ads in English and Spanish to recruit poll workers, and collaborates with other departments to register voters and ensure a smooth election process.

Aguirre says her department has encouraged voters to use mail-in ballots this year because of COVID-19. The elections office prepared for a 70 percent vote-by-mail turnout in November, and close to a 90 percent overall voter turnout — including vote-by-mail, early voting and voting in-person on Election Day.

"Fifty-one percent of Lee County active registered voters voted by mail in

“

It can be a high-stress environment because you're thinking about all these other things that have to, like glue, come together to have a successful election. It's going to be an historic year.

”

GABY AGUIRRE, '14, COMMUNICATION
LEE COUNTY ELECTIONS EMPLOYEE



the last general election,” Aguirre said, “so voting by mail is definitely a popular and preferred method of voting in Lee County.”

That preference only increased during the pandemic. For much of June, Aguirre says, the Lee County Elections Office received nearly 1,000 requests every weekday for mail-in ballots for the general election.

In November, Aguirre would find herself leading one of the Vote-By-Mail Board groups that she was a member of in 2016. It was her first general election in her new role.

Aguirre says the elections process reminds her of systems theory, which she studied at FGCU. “Every part of the system has to work well and there needs to be a leader leading every part of it — that’s a perfect example of how elections work. We have the Communications Department, we have IT, we have the Poll Worker Department, all these components, and everybody has to be on their A-game for it to work well.”

Aguirre anticipated that in the lead-up to the general election, she and Collins would work long hours, including weekends.

“It can be a high-stress environment because you’re thinking about all these other things that have to, like glue, come together to have a successful election,” Aguirre says. “It’s going to be an historic year.”

Collins says that stress comes, in part, from the attention Florida receives during general elections. “It’s not just local media that we deal with,” she says. “The eye of the world is always on Florida because we’re an important swing state. When it’s a major election year, especially a presidential year, everything we do is scrutinized. It’s a lot of pressure to work under.” ■



CLASS OF 2016

Engineering grad plans site for entrepreneurship building

BY LORI FERGUSON

RYAN SCOTT ('16, civil engineering) recently completed the civil plans for FGCU's new Lucas Hall, which will house the Daveler/Kauanui School of Entrepreneurship, and he is pumped. As the engineer of record for the civil plans, Scott was responsible for assembling construction plans that detailed everything for the overall site, from the parking lot to the fire, drainage, drinking water and sewer lines. "In other words, I need to make sure the site functions properly once it's built," he explains.

This accomplishment would be a point of pride under any circumstances, but particularly so because Scott is the first FGCU graduate to have his name on the plans of a university building. He has been heavily involved in the development of the university's new academic building that will house The Water School as well.

Construction is underway on both structures.

Scott's journey to this point has been more than a decade in the making. He began working on his first project at FGCU in 2007 after joining Johnson Engineering – a civil engineering firm headquartered in Fort Myers – in 2005 as a designer fresh out of ITT Technical Institute in Canton, MI. Since then, he has worked on at least 14 projects at FGCU.

While gratifying, Scott's path hasn't been easy – or linear. He was laid off from Johnson during the economic downturn in 2009 but knew at that point that he wanted to pursue a career in civil engineering. So, in 2010 he enrolled at FGCU and began working fulltime toward a bachelor's degree.

Entering college as an undergraduate at age 27 was challenging on several

fronts, Scott says. For one, he had a vastly different perspective on the program than his 18-year-old classmates. "I already had work experience in the field, and I was still working fulltime while going to school, first at a waste treatment plant and then starting again in 2013 back at Johnson Engineering, so school wasn't about socializing and partying for me; I was focused entirely on learning."

Scott also faced the challenge of balancing the theoretical knowledge he was gaining from coursework with the practical knowledge he was applying daily in the field. The two didn't always mesh, he found. "Oftentimes, there was an interesting disconnect between what was being taught in the classroom and the skills I knew we needed at our firm," he says.

But FGCU professors were willing to engage his alternate perspective. "I really enjoyed my classes with my environmental engineering Associate Professor (Simeon) Komisar. He was open-minded and interested in hearing what I had to say about my real-world experiences," he says. "It helped my learning process to debate topics, and I think it offered other students a different perspective on the information being presented."

Scott cites former Associate Professor Kristoph-Dietrich Kinzli (who taught civil and environmental engineering) as another important influence. "He taught my water resource class and he was one of the best teachers I had at FGCU."

While Scott is happy he put in the effort, he concedes that earning a bachelor's degree while working fulltime was difficult; the journey took six years and several groups of classmates beat him to the finish line. Nevertheless, he believes the end justified the means. "It's been a really long road and a lot of hard work, but it's also been a good experience." ■



PHOTO BY BRIAN TIETZ

CLASS OF 2011, 2014

Charismatic assistant principal is student advocate even in pandemic

BY NINA BARBERO, '16

VERONICA YOUNG IS celebrating her eleventh year in education and second as an assistant principal at Lehigh Senior High School. Her message to students: “Education is your way out,” although she’s having to deliver that message from more of a distance these days.

Young, who focuses on student behavior in her role, says she finds more and more students who don’t understand how critical it is to graduate.

“The biggest challenge is being able to reach every student,” she says.

Since the COVID-19 pandemic, that’s been an even greater challenge at the Title I school, where only 800 of the 2,300 students attend classes in person.

With so many on Lee Home Connect (remote connection to their regular classes), it’s that much harder to keep everyone focused.

One of her main jobs: “Getting them to be present, to understand that it’s no different (than being in school). There’s still a dress code and they have to be actively present from 7:05 to 1:35,” she said.

For students who are at the school, there’s making sure they are wearing their masks, properly spacing themselves when going from class to class and not hugging or touching one another.

“Discipline issues aren’t bad,” Young said. “Most are coming from home. We have some Zoom bombing – kids popping into a class they aren’t really in – then disappearing. It’s not easy to track down the student. We have to track the IP address, find the student. Some students think they can log in then log off. That’s skipping class. Or get on and not turn on the camera. That’s considered absent.”

So, there’s a lot of contact with parents about what’s happening, because many are at work and not aware of what’s going on at home.

The process, “is an adjustment,” but one she is equipped to handle.

Young didn’t always intend to work in education.

“I fell into education as an undergrad,” Young says. “Originally I majored in computer information systems, however I found that sitting at a computer and typing was not something I could do for long periods

of time. My mom was an educator for many years, and education was something she pushed me toward.”

Young’s mother taught elementary school then spent 30 years as a social worker for the Lee County School District. Her grandmother and namesake – the late Veronica Shoemaker – was a driving force behind desegregating Lee County Schools in 1970. Shoemaker is well known as the first African American member of the Fort Myers City Council in 1982, and her florist shop near the street named after her is now run by Young’s parents.

“My mom and dad and grandmother got me into education and pulled me through,” Young says. “They were trailblazers.”

Young received her bachelor’s degree in Business Education from Florida A&M University, then returned to her hometown of Fort Myers to earn two master’s degrees from Florida Gulf Coast University – one in Reading in 2011 and one in Educational Leadership in 2014.

Ordinarily, in her role as an assistant principal, Young spends her days talking with students and visiting classrooms to be available for them.

These days, it’s more one on one.

“A lot may have gone through trauma, mental health issues when they were at home,” she said. “We’re loving on our kids at a distance, seeing how COVID-19 has impacted them, being there for them emotionally, mentally, in all the ways we can.”

Davina Perez, student services secretary at Lehigh Senior High School, works closely with Young and says the students react well to her outgoing personality.

“They always assume that because she’s an assistant principal she’s not going to listen to them,” Perez says, “but she comes out from behind her desk and lets them vent and actually listens. She gives everybody the benefit of the doubt.”

One hope Young has for her role is to successfully recruit additional diverse teachers for Lehigh Senior High School.

“I think one of the hardest things right now in this area is being able to hire not only teachers, but minority teachers,” she says. “My school predominantly has Hispanic and black students. A lot of kids don’t have teachers they can identify with. I’m the only Black administrator at my school.” ■

PHOTO BY BRIAN TIETZ







CLASS OF 2013

Alum blends love of nature with his growing Hawaiian clothing line

BY DON MANLEY

DAVID SHEPARD HAS interwoven passions for the natural world, the visual arts and Hawaii into a colorful clothing line featuring self-drawn renderings of the island chain's native plants.

The Fort Myers native and FGCU grad ('13, Biology) is the creative engine powering Honolulu-based David Shepard Hawaii. (Some may also know him as the son of Joe Shepard, former FGCU vice president for administrative services.) The company sells men's and women's, custom-made, aloha shirts and floral-print tote bags, and now, washable cotton COVID-19 protective masks.

The masks have been featured in a recent *New York Times* story on the Smithsonian Institution's search for pandemic artifacts.

Shepard's route to becoming a fashion designer and clothier was indeed circuitous.

Honolulu became home after FGCU. He received a master's degree in horticultural science from the University of Hawaii in 2015. Next came 12 months of horticulture internships split between the National

Tropical Botanical Garden on Kauai and on Molokai for the National Park Service, and a summer teaching English at a Buddhist monastery in Myanmar. After returning to Hawaii, Shepard worked as a National Park Service horticultural technician and then as an assistant horticulturist at Lyon Arboretum in Honolulu.

He left that post in June to focus full-time on David Shepard Hawaii, which he'd launched just eight months earlier.

"It was a tough decision, but it was a lot trying to handle both of them," he said. "I wanted to invest all of myself into this. Right now, I'm focused a lot more on masks. The demand is still growing and it's helping to broaden my reach so that

ABOVE: A selection of shirt designs and masks from FGCU alumnus David Shepard's clothing line.

RIGHT: Shepard in Coral Hapuu Ilima Aloha Shirt.



more people know about my brand. This pandemic won't last forever and when it's over I want to be able to continue growing and to have done the legwork of setting up the business' foundation."

Making art has been a lifelong interest for Shepard, who minored in drawing at FGCU. After the move to Hawaii, that pursuit initially fell by the wayside, but he resumed drawing while on Molokai, the island's flora serving as his focal point.

"I was inspired by some of the artists on the island who were also starting to do fabric design and clothing. I started thinking about how I could spread the message of the conservation work we were doing to a broader audience through art and design work."

Those ruminations continued during Shepard's time in Myanmar. While there, he decided to dive into shirt making upon returning to Hawaii. So he mastered pattern making using graphic design software and learned how to sew, and when he arrived in Honolulu, Shepard began work on creating his business.

Sales began last October and the first full line of shirts and bags was set to launch this spring. Shepard hoped to make a splash at art fairs and festivals on Hawaii and elsewhere, but those events fell victim to the pandemic.

As he pondered his next move, a seamstress suggested making masks, an idea he resisted until the state's governor mandated they be worn in public settings.

"That's when I thought, 'OK, there's definitely going to be a demand, it's probably going to carry on for a while,'" he said. With that, he switched over to mask production and one week after they hit the market, a reporter contacted him about being featured in the May *New York Times* story. That led to additional press coverage.

"The whole combination of those factors led to masks being my biggest seller," said Shepard. "All that helped get the word out and launch the masks." ■

WHERE TO BUY

For more information about David Shepard Hawaii fashions, visit davidshophawaii.com.



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