



FGCU 360

FGCU360.COM

REFLECTIONS:

Looking ahead
and behind

**Food Forest turns 10 | What makes Greek life great
Alumna's business caters to canines**

FALL 2021

CONTENTS

VOLUME 15 / NUMBER 1

FEATURES

24

SHAPE OF THINGS TO COME

FGCU gains important resources sure to influence its future with the opening of Lucas Hall, home of the Daveler & Kauanui School of Entrepreneurship, and Academic Building 9, The Water School's new digs.

BY DREW STERWALD

32

PRESIDENTIAL PERSPECTIVE

Neither hurricanes nor COVID-19 nor budget cuts could stop this intrepid leader from forging a successful path for the university during his tenure. Mike Martin, FGCU's fourth president, discusses his time in office.

BY KYLE MCCURRY

38

A WINK AND A NOD

Freshly minted journalists typically land their first jobs at small markets in places like North Dakota or Montana. But some talented FGCU graduates are reporting to work in a familiar – and much larger – market: Fort Myers-Naples.

BY KYLE MCCURRY

ON THE COVER:

"Colorway," a glass and resin wall installation by Farrah Alkhadra, '21.

PHOTO BY JAMES GRECO





FOOD FOREST TURNS 10

PHOTO BY JAMES GRECO

DEPARTMENTS

8 COMMUNITY

Two bioengineering alumni as well as current students helped a Cape Coral company develop a device that installs easily in ceilings and kills COVID-19 with ultraviolet light.

20 ARTS

Art major Farrah Alkhadra, '21, found that immersing herself in English and poetry courses helped spark her artistic visions. Her work as a gallery assistant enhanced her creativity as well.



44 SPORTS

With lots of players returning for an extra year of eligibility following the COVID-19 upheaval last year, and an expanded ASUN division, FGCU's men's and women's basketball teams are expecting some lively competition this season.

54 ALUMNI

Now that there are more than 38,000 Eagle alumni spanning the country, the FGCU Alumni Association has spread its wings, forming 20 chapters coast to coast, providing networks for alumni to socialize and connect.

56 GIVING

Laurie Holquist's ties to FGCU span two decades, during which she has served on the FGCU Foundation Board, the Lutgert College of Business Advisory Council and earned her EMBA. Those connections led her to name the university in her estate plan.

FIRST



COLLECTIVE WE

FGCU's Food Forest rooted in passion and service

BY KATY HENNIG

AFTER A DECADE OF dedication and discovery, the Food Forest is flourishing. Designed by Erica Klopff ('12, Environmental Studies) as a senior thesis project, the garden began to take shape in 2011. Years of commitment and service-learning hours have grown the space into a sustainable campus treasure.

"It was always intended to sustain future generations of students," Klopff said. "The focus was innovative irrigation techniques and to create a microclimate with wind breaks, primarily with bamboo, to thermoregulate plants protected by the canopy."

The serene space, carved out by



Erica Klopff

fruit trees and edible plants.

"We saw the opportunity early on for consistency and worked with campus leadership and Student Government to fund and establish a service-learning coordinator position to guide the growing methods," said Jessica Drummond ('14,

students, faculty, staff and community, is built upon a patch of gravel on the southwest corner of campus. Nestled near the Sugden Welcome Center, it has blossomed into a lush garden of sustainable



Jessica Drummond

Environmental Studies). Now working at the Everglades Wonder Gardens implementing ideas from the Food Forest, Drummond has maintained close ties with FGCU, returning in 2020 to

earn a master's degree in Environmental Science. "Like most of us over the years, I fundamentally love that place. I'm so proud of the longevity."

Marco Acosta dug in as Food Forest manager after graduating in fall 2020 with a bachelor's degree in Integrated Studies

“

**It was always intended to sustain
future generations of students.”**

ERICA KLOPF, '12, FOOD FOREST DESIGNER

”

and a minor in Agribusiness, along with a permaculture certification. Spending time at the forest while studying here, Acosta has brought significant engineering knowledge with him along with a strong understanding of the complexities of plants.

Standing in his favorite section under the black sapote tree, Acosta describes the forest as a powerful recruitment tool. “Prospective students see this space on their tours, and they are inspired to attend FGCU to be a part of this,” he said. “With permaculture, we’re planting for 20 years from now.”

Permaculture, or the emphasis on long-term, perennial planting, ensures continued harvests with minimal effort. “The practices put in place at the Food Forest aim to create a more sustainable

RIGHT: Marco Acosta discovered the Food Forest as a student and now manages it.

BOTTOM: In June 2011, students prepare layers of compost, mulch and topsoil and build berms for raised garden beds that would eventually become the Food Forest.



ON THE
WEB
FGCU360.com
SEE MORE
PHOTOS





and forward-thinking approach to how communities grow food,” Acosta said. “When I got here, I quickly learned that it’s a special type of place, a place that takes care of its own and acts like an incubator for those who are botanically and ecologically minded.”

Many of the Food Forest alumni maintain a close network and have branched out in innovative ways to begin creative careers in agriculture.

Food forester Arlo Simonds (’17, Interdisciplinary Studies) started the Pine Manor Community Garden in a food-insecure area of Fort Myers, educating and helping families grow vegetables.

“We have all passed the torch to those that come after us, continuing the rich cycle of growth,” Simonds said. “We’re all connected, generations of students that have benefited greatly from the work we’ve done at the forest. We stay in touch with each other and especially the incoming new people, to help acclimate and introduce them to the plants.”

In Bonita Springs, Cecelia Morales (’17, Elementary Education) opens the gate to the wooden bridge traversing Oak Creek, revealing the way to lush greenery, fruit trees and tropical gardens at the historic Shangri-La Springs Resort.

“This is the garden – we’re completely

organic – even more than certified organic, we work beyond that for regenerative gardening incorporating people, plants and earth,” she said.

Morales, garden manager at the historic landmark resort, describes the seasonality of the greenery while snapping bits of leaves to smell or taste. “This is sweet Thai basil, this is Cuban basil, great for adding to pizza,” Morales said. “Over here, these flowers are Turk’s cap, similar to hibiscus – they taste amazing in salads.”

Morales credits her time as a service-learning coordinator at the FGCU Food Forest for broadening her perspective of plants as a profession. She briefly taught elementary school after graduation, but realized her energy was best recharged when she was outdoors and in her element.

“I’ve always loved plants, but learning

the intricacies of how to propagate, what is edible and how to approach organic pest control all sprouted at the FGCU Food Forest,” Morales said.

Amanda Adams (’12, Environmental Studies) continues to share her love for permaculture throughout the community. “I’m so proud of how far the Food Forest has come,” she said. After spending time working at the Shangri-La Springs garden, she recently started a small business, Seed and Stone Jewelry.

“I design and sell jewelry inspired by traditional mala beads used for meditation in Hinduism and Buddhism,” Adams said. “I incorporate my love for plants by including seeds and wood beads in the jewelry, along with semi-precious stones. The entire process of creating the Food Forest reinforced my awe and respect for plants,” Adams said. “Plants and permaculture bring people together. They brought all of the passionate Food Forest founders together, they brought an overwhelming number of volunteers and community members to us, and they continue to shape many of our lives and careers.”

Service-learning opportunities bring new FGCU students to the forest daily to maintain and harvest the garden, providing enriching experiences that often lead to more volunteerism. “Looking back over the decade, we could not have imagined it would grow to be this successful,” Klopff said. “All of the relationships and careers that have grown out of that place, it’s incredible to see.” ■



TOP: Arlo Simonds’ Food Forest experience inspired him to establish a community garden in Fort Myers.

RIGHT: Cecelia Morales manages the gardens at Shangri-La Springs Resort.

FGCU360

FGCU360.COM

Editor

Karen Feldman
 kfeldman@fgcu.edu

Art Director

Dave Anderson
 daanderson@fgcu.edu

Assistant Editor

Katy Hennig
 khennig@fgcu.edu

Contributing Writers

**Karen Booth, Dayna Harpster,
 Annie Hubbell, Corey Lewis, Don Manley,
 Kyle McCurry, Sam Palmisano, Seth Soffian,
 Drew Sterwald, Tyler Watkins, Rick Weber**

Photographers

**Julia Bonavita, James Greco, Katy Hennig,
 Patrick Meredith, Brian Tietz,
 Maximilian Trullenque, Brad Young**

Graphic Designer

Maria Perez

Digital Communications Director

Jeff Garner
 jgarner@fgcu.edu

Digital Communications Editor

Drew Sterwald
 asterwald@fgcu.edu

Videographers

Tim Clark, Dale Ward

Class Notes (online)

Gail Bradley
 gbradley@fgcu.edu

Production/Circulation Manager

Joann Haley
 jhaley@fgcu.edu

President

Michael V. Martin

Publisher

Katherine Green

Associate Publisher

Deborah Wiltout

GET IN TOUCH:

FGCU360 Magazine (239) 590-1081

Email: kfeldman@fgcu.edu

Website: fgcu360.com

For individuals seeking FGCU360 Magazine in an alternative format, contact the Office of Adaptive Services at (239) 590-7956. If hearing or speech impaired, contact FGCU using Florida Relay at 711 (TTY, VCO, HCO, ASCII or STS).

FGCU360 Magazine is published by FGCU's University Marketing and Communications Department, Division of University Advancement.

Send address changes to:

bcornell@fgcu.edu or FGCU360 Magazine,
 University Marketing and Communications, FGCU,
 10501 FGCU Blvd. S, Fort Myers, FL 33965-6565.

JOIN THE CONVERSATION on social media
 and find out what's happening at FGCU.

#FGCU, #WINGSUP, #WEAREFGCU

ALUMNI AWARDS SET FOR VIRTUAL DEC. 2 EVENT

Join the Alumni Association and other FGCU supporters for the Virtual Alumni Awards ceremony, set for 6 p.m. Thursday, Dec. 2 at FGCUAlumniAwards.com. All nominees for the Alumni of Distinction and Soaring Eagle awards will be honored and the winners for each category will be announced.

The Alumni of Distinction is the most prestigious award the association bestows upon a graduate. It honors alumni who have upheld the tradition of excellence through their personal accomplishment, professional achievement and/or humanitarian service.

Soaring Eagle Awards recognize one alumnus or alumna from each college and the School of Entrepreneurship who are within 10 years of graduation and have excelled in their careers or volunteer lives.

FORMER EAGLE BRANDON GOODWIN SIGNS WITH KNICKS



**Brandon
Goodwin**

Brandon Goodwin, a standout on the boards during the 2016-18 seasons, signed with the NBA's New York Knicks in October. Previously, he played for the Atlanta Hawks, the Denver Nuggets and Memphis Grizzlies.

A transfer from the University of Central Florida, Goodwin was named the 2018 ASUN Player of the Year, leading the team to an ASUN regular-season title and a bid to the National Invitational Tournament. "Brandon was the best player in the Atlantic Sun both of his seasons," said FGCU head coach

Michael Fly, who was the program's top assistant at the time and the one who originally scouted him.

LOOKING FOR CLASS NOTES?

Read them online or submit yours –
fgcu360.com/class-notes

ON THE
WEB
 FGCU360.com

Find more than what's on these pages, including
 stories, videos and more at **fgcu360.com**





COMMUNITY

Bioengineering alums, students help develop device to kill COVID-19 using ultraviolet light

BY ANNIE HUBBELL

FOR WELL OVER A year, the pandemic made people more attentive to their sniffles and coughs, or they would actively avoid those who might be standing too close for comfort. A new device developed in Southwest Florida and tested at Florida Gulf Coast University is helping alleviate some of that angst by cleaning germs from the air we breathe.

When the pandemic began, leaders at Cape Coral-based Energy Harness Corp. were eager to get back in the office and tackle

potential solutions to fight COVID-19. So they took their expertise in lighting and applied it to a new concept that could help the community. The result is the Active Airflow UV-C Fixture, designed to eliminate airborne pathogens like COVID-19.

“We knew LED light fixtures. We have built thousands of them, and we have a background in ultraviolet light,” said Peter Lehrer, Energy Harness senior vice president. “So we put those two together, and by the end of April 2020, we designed a fixture that would operate inside a classroom, office space or waiting room. It

can operate while people are in the room.”

The Active Airflow UV-C Fixture is installed into a ceiling grid, generally found in schools or offices. The device circulates air in the room, and when it passes through the UV-C light chamber, the pathogens are killed and clean air is then released back into the room.

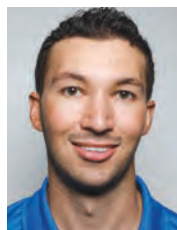
So how do we know the technology works? Enter FGCU.

FGCU bioengineering alumnus Nicolas Metro is one of Energy Harness’ newest hires. After graduating in spring 2020, Metro started work mid-pandemic as a

Lorenzo Battista (left) and Nicholas Metro check out an Active Airflow UV-C fixture at Energy Harness Corp.

products engineer and dove into the fixture development. He knew the lab in FGCU's U.A. Whitaker College of Engineering would be the right place to test this new technology.

"I thought, 'What better way to prove the efficacy of this product than to use the technology at FGCU?'" Metro said. "We did send it off to third-party certifiable labs, but that takes a lot of time in a world where things are changing rapidly. We needed results quickly, and FGCU was there to help us in the beginning stage."



Lorenzo Battista



Nicholas Metro

As a research lab overseas tested the device on live SARS-CoV-2, Chris Geiger, associate professor and chair of the Department of Bioengineering, assembled a team of undergraduate students to verify the UV technology. With Metro's help, they began experiments to determine whether or not UV light would kill types of surface-level bacteria, like E. coli, or prevent them from growing.

"This is what we should be doing. As a regional comprehensive institution, the opportunity to engage the community in meaningful activities, whether that's research or internships, not only benefits the community partners, but also our students," Geiger said. "That's really The FGCU Effect in action."

Students worked through the summer, reading literature and researching ultraviolet light and its impact on pathogens. In the fall, testing began on the first prototype. Now they have helped prove the fixture is 99.99% effective at killing COVID-19.

"It was cool to work on something that was actually going to affect the community," said Samantha Bellomo, a

senior majoring in bioengineering and one of the undergraduate students working on the project. "Being a student, a lot of it is reading books and doing projects, but it's easier to understand the processes when you're able to get hands-on experience."

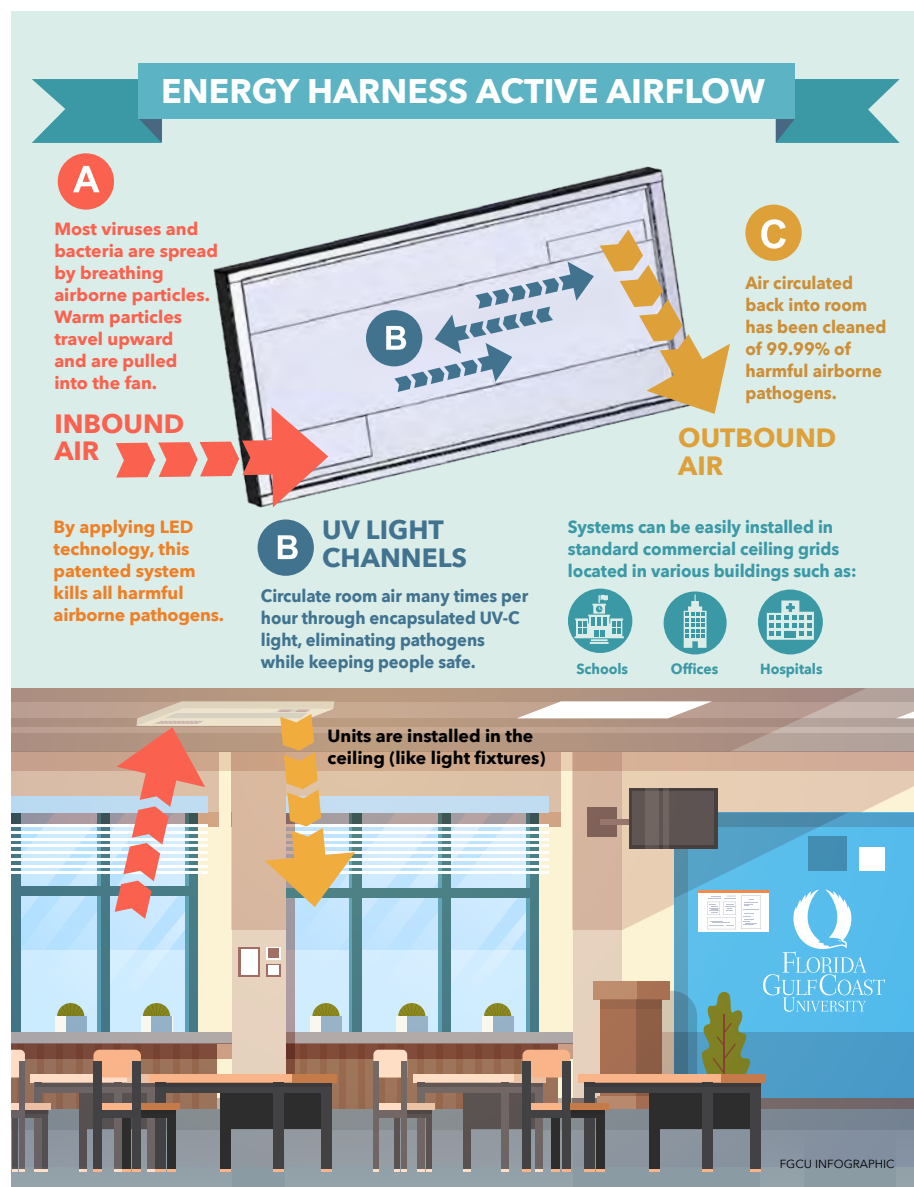
The Active Airflow UV-C Fixture is now on the market. Another Energy Harness team member in charge of getting the fixture into the marketplace and installed in as many ceilings as possible is recent FGCU bioengineering graduate Lorenzo Battista. He joined Energy Harness after graduating in December 2020.

"The students have just as much of an impact. They can say that they tested

a device that keeps people safe," said Battista. "It's cool to bring it all together."

The two grads are proud to have hit the ground running in their careers, and they credit part of that success to their time at FGCU. They want engineering students to realize the versatility of their degree and how their skills can be an asset in solving pressing issues.

"It will be nice to offer students insight into what they may not know about this area. That (employers) are looking for bright minds to come and work on the next big thing," said Metro. "I'd love to be at an FGCU career fair with my colleagues, getting the next generation excited about what's possible." ■





WGCU

Protecting democracy, expanding coverage top goals for public media

BY COREY LEWIS, WGCU GENERAL MANAGER

Humanity: Compassionate, sympathetic, or generous behavior or disposition; the quality or state of being human.

For brief periods throughout U.S. history, humanity is tested, civility is on the decline, and democracy is at risk. This is corrected by inspired and informed people who are set into action to debate, challenge and correct these problems. Unfortunately, their work is rarely complete, and the focus of injustice shifts to other cultures, geographies, leaders and socioeconomic groups.

WGCU has served for decades as a remedy when there is a decline in civility. And we continue to do this by providing the news and context that enable listeners and viewers to interpret it.

Our audience in Southwest Florida is nearly evenly divided among Republicans, Democrats and independents, liberals and conservatives. This is one of the things that excited me about coming here: WGCU's stations are among those with the highest market shares of any PBS or NPR station in the country. We achieve this in a community that is among the most

politically and culturally diverse.

Our balanced audience is evidence of our balanced content. WGCU is the convener in our community, empowering the audience to celebrate our common ground and our differences. It is through this experience that civility and humanity thrive, or when they are suffering, can be repaired.

We're at a turning point

But what brought WGCU to this successful point in history cannot carry us into the future. Our mix of national, international

and modest but mighty local coverage has made us a destination for thought leadership and thoughtful people. We must augment national programs with more locally originated content so that we are more than a common national distribution platform, and without sacrificing one of our biggest strengths: Bringing audiences voices from around the globe.

Many commercial media companies have business and content models that create an echo chamber serving one political leaning, or a narrowcasting of interests and lifestyles. The danger in either case is an uninformed public that hyper-focuses and does not rise to the greater public good.

As Southwest Florida's source for NPR and PBS – and as a nonprofit entity – the greater public good is always important to us.

**“As Southwest Florida’s source for
NPR and PBS – and as a nonprofit entity –
the greater public good
is always important to us.”**

COREY LEWIS, WGCU GENERAL MANAGER

The road ahead

We must significantly increase our original content if we want to continue to be the one-stop destination for local, national and international news and culture. At the same time, we can develop deep content areas using local experts on global issues such as the environment and healthy aging, and investigative reporting to cover both served and underserved communities.

More local voices and stories from our station are critical to serving local audiences in areas where newspapers are falling off.

How will we do this? Currently the fundraising staff and resources are among the smallest in the country for stations of our size and audience impact. An initial investment here will fund more reporters than if we invested straight into journalism projects. Before coming to WGCU, I consulted analysts in the

public and private sectors to assess how much we could potentially increase our revenue. By measuring the size of our audience against current revenue, we determined that WGCU could double our funding. This is a model of sustainability to serve our community.

Democracy Watch

We are strengthening our partnership with the FGCU journalism program, building a collaborative investigative reporting platform, which also will support the journalism program's Democracy Watch initiative.

Three Democracy Watch student fellows selected from a government reporting class will be mentored by a WGCU senior editor and a senior

reporter, who will help the students elevate their work to the high standards of NPR and PBS.

The journalism program and WGCU have a commitment of nearly \$500,000 from donors and from the university to create learning space at WGCU for journalism students and to staff the investigative unit. We're seeking significant funds from the community to grow the independent investigative unit and Democracy Watch and to build the newsroom of the future.

We all strive for the same things, for connectedness and to be inherently good. Humanity occasionally stumbles, and then we recover. Public media – WGCU – can give people the context and information to help people to be who they inherently are now and for our collective future. ■

– Corey Lewis assumed the position of general manager of WGCU in May upon the retirement of Rick Johnson.

NEW GENERAL MANAGER ADJUSTS TO SOUTHWEST FLORIDA JOB, LIFESTYLE

The fact that new WGCU General Manager Corey Lewis is an adaptable sort was obvious from day one. Although long past his bachelor's degree days at the University of Massachusetts Amherst – and also his master's days at Boston University – he moved into the FGCU residence halls. Since he started the job here in mid-May and his family was finishing the school year and other commitments in Boston – where he was station manager for NPR station WBUR – he was on his own for the coming weeks.

What passes for spring here turned to sweltering summer, and although he admitted missing skiing on the weekends, he was more than content to walk like a Floridian and embrace his passion for cycling and kayaking.

More than adapting, he has already begun to make his mark. He opened up new jobs to bolster the development and underwriting crews at WGCU, with Lewis' goal of funding expansion of the news team.

His wife, Kathleen, and their sons are now in residence. Kathleen Lewis is getting the family settled at home and seeing how she can make a difference in Southwest Florida. Son Zach, 14, is determined to help take the Gulf Coast High School varsity boys' lacrosse team to a district championship, and son Max has transferred from a university in the Northeast to FGCU.

Asked to list the top things he's adapted to in the shift nearly 1,500 miles south, Lewis replied:

1. A better sunscreen
2. A bigger hat
3. The loss of my treasured tie collection (it's just too hot)
4. A loss of clam chowdha
5. A basement, attic and backyaaad
6. An upgrade to the GPS of my 8-year-old car since all of my meetings in the community look like they are held in the woods.

– Dayna Harpster

HE'LL SNARE YOU WITH HIS
INFECTIOUS WIT!

WATCH OUT
FOR THE

GUNNELS
WASP!



SPOTLIGHT

Wasp-loving professor gets unique gift from inspired former student

BY KAREN FELDMAN

IF SOMEONE NAMED A wasp after you, you might consider it stinging commentary on their feelings about you.

But when Billy Gunnels found out that a former student had done just that, he was thrilled.

“As a wildlife biologist, I cannot imagine a higher honor,” said the associate professor and director of the FGCU Office of Scholarly Innovation and Undergraduate Research.



Billy Gunnels

“This may not mean much to others, but it was simply the coolest thing anyone could have done for me. Seriously, it still gives me shivers.”

Gunnels was drinking coffee and checking emails early on the morning of Sept. 9 – his 50th birthday – when he opened one from a former student, Zach Lahey ('10, Environmental Studies and Biology).

“I am writing you to let you know that I intend to name a new species of parasitic wasp in your honor: *Phoenoteleia gunnelsi*, based on a single female specimen from Indonesia,” Lahey wrote.

It was, Gunnels said, the perfect gift for a wasp-loving animal behaviorist.

“I love wasps for a host of reasons,” he said. “They show some of the most creative life histories. The Cuban paper wasp, for example, can live in solitary conditions or as part of groups where they cooperate. Their larvae also feed the adults. The adults capture prey then feed it to the maggots. The maggots presumably digest then regurgitate a liquid diet the adults consume because the adults can't eat solid food so they use the offspring as partial digestion tools.”

Other wasps, such as parasitoids, help

control populations of unwanted insects, such as beetles that plague orange groves, without the use of pesticides.

Pretty fascinating, huh?

Well, it is to a biology professor who has been known to have his students act out bee behavior on the university's Great Lawn, wax lyrical about Amazonian snakes and study the mating behavior of giraffes.

Animals – large and small, those with wings, scales or fur – are endlessly fascinating to him and afford him no end of research projects that he shares with his students.

Wasps, however, are among his favorites.

It's a passion that Lahey shares. Currently working on his doctoral degree at The Ohio State University, he said he's been interested in all sorts of animals since he was young, but it was through a job that Gunnels helped him secure that he came upon his first parasitic wasp.

He and Gunnels connected when he was an undergraduate taking an animal behavior class.

“I talked to him after class and told him how cool the class was,” Lahey recalled. “We struck up a rapport and that led to him advising my senior project about arthropods on sabal palms on the FGCU campus.”

That led to Lahey landing a job with the University of

Florida's nearby research center where he “realized students were getting their master's doing what I'm doing. I credit him with getting the ball rolling on things. He instilled in me what it's like to do science.”

So, when Lahey discovered this wasp – one of many stored in the department's collection awaiting further study – he thought “typically in this field you name a species after someone to honor them in appreciation.”

The wasp – a female and the only one of her kind identified so far – has a long protruding horn on its mesosoma (the middle part of the body), which houses the wasp's ovipositor, the organ through which it lays eggs. Parasitic wasps lay eggs in the bodies of other species, such as grasshoppers. The eggs hatch on the host and then consume it. Just think of the movie “Alien,” but in miniature.

“It's like a horror story. Insects provide the greatest story lines,” Gunnels said.

Lahey does research on parasitic wasps from all over the world.

“People collect animals in one place. If they know what it is, they pin it. If not, they send it to a biological museum,” he said.

Insects often find their way to the museum at The Ohio State University. Researchers like Lahey then examine them and try to determine if they are members of a known species or if they might be one that's not yet been identified, like *Phoenoteleia gunnelsi*. Lahey is the lead author of an article on the wasp that will appear in a special issue of the *Journal of Hymenoptera Research* this fall.

Gunnels couldn't be happier about his former student's success or the fact that a rare wasp now bears his name.

“Turning 50 is supposed to be a dark day,” he said. “There are only so many living things on the planet. For someone to think that my work deserves that memory, I couldn't have been more honored or humbled.” ■



A newly identified species of parasitic wasp, *Phoenoteleia gunnelsi*, named in honor of FGCU associate professor Billy Gunnels.

STUDENT SUCCESS

This organic treat business is strictly for the dogs

Alum entrepreneur crafting wholesome canine goodies

STORY AND PHOTOS BY KAREN FELDMAN

DOG LOVER VERONICA Fortunato was scrutinizing the labels of dog treats at the supermarket, and she didn't like what she saw.

"I was going through the list of ingredients on the packages and didn't recognize a lot of them," Fortunato said. "There were so many additives that were bad for them. Some are banned in other countries. Why are we feeding these things to our dogs?"

Wanting to provide the best possible diet for Blue, her boyfriend's 5-year-old pit bull-Labrador mix, Fortunato decided she would make her own healthy treats devoid of additives and mystery ingredients. So, she scoured Pinterest for healthy recipes for dog treats. From this simple desire, a company was born – the aptly named The Best Dog Gone Treats.

"Baking and dogs. I combined my two favorite things," said Fortunato, who graduated in May with a degree in resort and hospitality management and a minor in professional sales as well as a burgeoning business she operates from the cozy confines of her home kitchen.

Fortunato knew she'd need additional training in how to launch a business and create a business plan. She found her way to the Runway Program in the Daveler & Kauanui School of Entrepreneurship, which turned out to be just what she needed. The program is a free business incubator open to students and alumni. It offers them access to shared workspace, equipment and mentoring from faculty, staff and community startup coaches.

Instructor Annie Stout was Fortunato's main mentor and has nothing but praise for her.

"She jumped in with both feet," Stout says. "She did all the testing and validation and the uncomfortable work without a complaint. Because of her resort and hospitality background, she

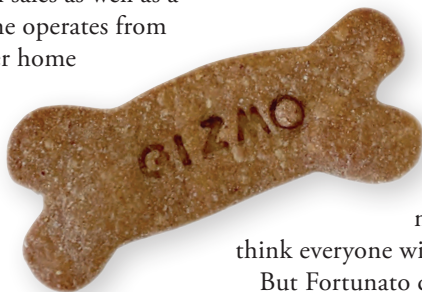
other healthy ingredients into the mix.

"There's so much a dog can eat," she said. "Having human-grade food is so good for them. To get their vitamins through food is the best way."

Stout was impressed. "She hadn't had (entrepreneurship) classes and had to learn everything within a semester," she

"Because of her resort and hospitality background, she knew how to cost things out, but she needed to make cookies and test the product. Most people want to just make it, price it and think everyone will come to their door."

ANNIE STOUT, INSTRUCTOR AT THE DAVALER & KAUANUI SCHOOL OF ENTREPRENEURSHIP



knew how to cost things out, but she needed to make cookies and test the product. Most people want to just make it, price it and

think everyone will come to their door."

But Fortunato did everything Stout suggested to her, bringing in samples, getting feedback from people and, of course, dogs.

She tested them out on her parents' picky shih tzu, who doesn't typically like treats, and on her aunt and uncle's equally selective dogs. In both cases, the pups were pleased. Now she's thinking about ways to work some vegetables, berries and

said. "She would meet with every one of us. We are all resources. It was a great experience to work with her."

When it came time to pitch her business concept to potential "angels" – the people who would provide the initial funding to help her launch her business – she first had to submit a YouTube video, which served as the pitch that would normally be done in person but could not be this time because of the COVID-19 pandemic. That's when she discussed her projections, survey results and marketing plan. That qualified her for the next round a few weeks later, when she faced the judges during a Zoom call.

"The panel fired a lot of questions at me," she said. "It was really stressful."



Veronica Fortunato and Blue.

Fortunato obviously handled herself well because she received the \$4,500 in startup funds that she requested and she was ready to go.

The Best Dog Gone Treats opened for business October 2020 just a couple of months after Fortunato began her senior year at FGCU.

Beyond what she learned in classes and from the mentors, Stout said Fortunato was a great networker, so she did an excellent job of setting up her website and spreading the word about her new business on Instagram and elsewhere. She sold her product at farmers markets for a while during the winter but stopped during the dog days of summer.

Meanwhile, she's busily baking organic peanut butter and banana biscuits, organic peanut butter and pumpkin biscuits as well as organic banana peanut butter pupsicles (in paw or biscuit shapes). Biscuits come in Mason jars and are priced from \$10, depending on the order size, while the pupsicles are 50 cents to \$1 each. And the bonus: For \$2, consumers can have their dogs' names stamped into the biscuits for that personalized touch.

Fortunato doesn't have her own dog at the moment, but Blue spends a lot of time at her place, dutifully taste testing the products for her.

"He definitely knows the sound of the Mason jars opening," she says, reaching into a jar for a biscuit as the 60-pound lap dog's ears stand up expectantly. She hands him a peanut butter and banana biscuit, of which he makes short work.

Fortunato is currently training to become a dog groomer, with hopes of eventually starting a mobile grooming and dog bakery business, an ideal way to ensure that her grooming customers develop a taste for her services. She also hopes to establish a monthly subscription service so people can have boxes delivered on a regular basis. ■

BEGGING FOR MORE?

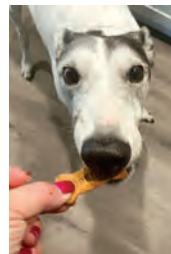
To order Fortunato's products, visit thebestdoggonetreats.com or check it out on Instagram at [@TheBestDogGoneTreat](https://www.instagram.com/TheBestDogGoneTreat)

REACTIONS FROM THE CRITICS

Sure, you'd expect the dog who loves Fortunato to also love her biscuits. But what about canines who don't know her? We thought this would be a good way to ensure a more objective assessment of their quality. So, we enlisted a quartet of four-leggers who, while not exactly picky, have not met Fortunato. She baked peanut butter banana biscuits for them, stamping each of their names into their cookies.

The tasters were Fireball Feldman, an 11-year-old greyhound; Gizmo Funyuns Feldman, a 5-year-old greyhound; Sassafras Delilah Feldman, a 15 1/2-year-old hairless Chinese

crested; and Gigi Feldman, a 10-year-old Chinese crested-Maltese mix.



Fireball Feldman

was fun for their owner to match the properly labeled ones to each dog. ■

While the tasters weren't big on quotes, their leaping and chomping bore testimony to the fact that all were extremely pleased with their treats. It's not clear that they noticed the personalization on each cookie, but it



Fortunato makes full use of her compact kitchen.

FGCU's campus is used as a living laboratory. Here two biology students take samples of water to conduct research.



BOOKS

New book trains critical eye on FGCU's sustainability efforts

BY KAREN FELDMAN

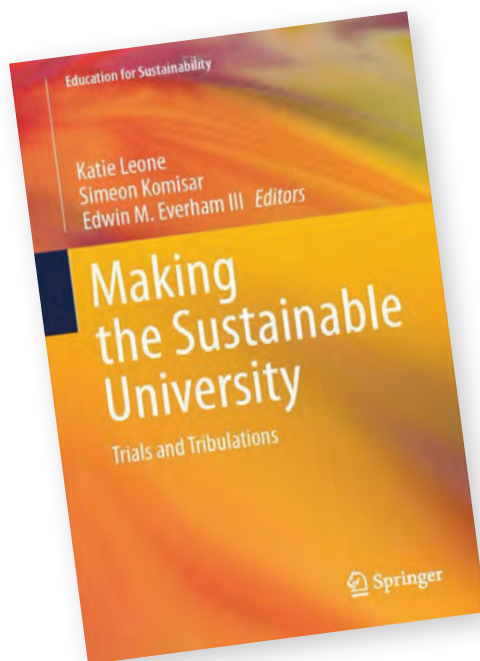
IT TOOK 69 AUTHORS, three editors, three years to write and 18 months to publish, but “Making the Sustainable University: Trials and Tribulations” (Springer Nature Singapore, \$149.99, hardcover; \$109, eBook) is now available, all 310 pages of it.

The book tells the story of the creation of Florida Gulf Coast University and the intentional way in which it was created as a sustainable institution.

It is not a puff piece.

“It grew out of a conversation we had in which we were eager to talk about not just the triumphs but also recognize our shortcomings,” said Sim Komisar, Ph.D., an associate professor, program director for environmental engineering and one of the book’s editors. “We wanted to create a road map to change the future.”

Contributors include students, staff, faculty, community members and administrators. They explore the institution’s creation, employee training, developing the University Colloquium course, creating the campus as a living laboratory, the role of the



Food Forest, how to sustain a philosophy of sustainability and much, much more.

As President Mike Martin said in the introduction, “At FGCU, we know that sustainability is a dynamic concept. It is a journey with mile marks but not a

fixed destination.”

Win Everham, Ph.D., professor of environmental studies and one of the book’s editors, said it was a challenge but “in the end, it was a satisfying project. I’m really proud of how it turned out. We hope the lessons we learned will be valuable to others.”

Katie Leone, the third book editor, former FGCU sustainability coordinator and now director of corporate social responsibility for Hertz, said there was a mix of feelings about how the university turned out but, in the end, “I think the book is really balanced when it comes to evaluating FGCU’s vision and practices.”

Komisar wants to take it up a notch in coming years: “In the next two decades, we need to raise sustainability to the cabinet level. A vice president of sustainability would help.” ■

MEET THE AUTHORS

A celebration of the book will take place Saturday, Feb. 12, during FGCU Day. Check fgcu.edu/fgcuday for details.



IN THEIR OWN WORDS

There's more to Greek life than parties and hijinks

BY SAM PALMISANO

THERE IS A GROUP of FGCU students that consistently earns above-average GPAs, performs more service hours than required, has raised more than \$1 million for philanthropy and boasts members involved in every leadership position on campus.

It consists of the 1,381 members of the 28 FGCU fraternities and sororities. While representing 12 percent of the student body, the group accounts for many individual and group accomplishments since Fraternity and Sorority Life (FSL) was established at FGCU in 2003. Under the leadership of Julie Gleason, assistant dean and director of FSL, fraternities and sororities have grown tremendously.

The social component of Greek organizations is one reason people join. While in their undergraduate chapters, members develop lifelong friendships. Their brothers and sisters often serve in their wedding parties, as godparents to each other's children and references for employment opportunities. These connections are invaluable, but there are other advantages, too.

Since 2012, the FSL community's GPA has risen consistently. Except for two semesters,

the fraternities and sororities have earned higher GPAs than the campus average.

"Academics is one of the main focuses for all organizations of NPHC," National Pan-Hellenic Council President Shantae Clarke says. "Our council is proud to have some of the highest GPAs throughout FGCU's FSL community."

Additionally, members of fraternities and sororities have earned higher GPAs than the men and women on campus. During 2020, the average fraternity member GPA was 3.17 compared to the all-men's average of 3.08. The average sorority member GPA was 3.39 compared to the all-women's average of 3.31.



Sam Palmisano

Whether working with national organizations like St. Jude Children's Research Hospital or Make-A-Wish, collaborating with local organizations, or volunteering at nonprofits, fraternities and sororities are involved at FGCU and the community beyond.

Since their founding, the university's Greek organizations have raised more than \$1 million for charity. COVID-19 didn't stop these efforts. During 2020, the community raised \$90,142 through innovative virtual fundraising challenges and by adapting events to meet health and safety guidelines.

"Philanthropy is a great way to help our community," says Panhellenic Association President Gracie Mercurio. "It's amazing being able to spread love and raise money and awareness with a group of people who have the same goal in mind."

While FGCU students need 80 service-learning hours to graduate, most FSL members complete this requirement during their freshman or sophomore year then keep going.

"Service to us means supporting and enriching, not only our university community, but the communities around us," says Multicultural Greek Council President Denise Lobos. "We strive to make a wide-scale difference and be contributors to society."

On average, an FSL member serves more than 50 hours per year, earning 207 service-learning hours before graduation.

Many chapters pride themselves on leadership as a core value, and it shows when looking at involvement statistics



throughout campus. Whether it is FGCU's top leadership positions, starting and leading student organizations, or top honors given to graduates, members of fraternities and sororities can always be found leading the way.

Since 2006, all but two Student Government presidents have been affiliated with a fraternity or sorority. The majority of vice presidents and executive officers all belonged to FSL chapters.

Ten of the last 15 presidents of the Programming Board, FGCU's largest student organization, came from FSL. The 2019-20 Leadership Education and Development Team had seven of 10 members in an FSL organization. The fraternity and sorority members can also be found throughout campus as resident assistants, orientation leaders, teaching assistants, academic tutors, PEERS CARE mentors, student organization presidents and student employees.

Within FSL, the Order of Omega honor society consists of the top 5 percent of fraternity and sorority members who best represent the values of the chapters.

"Order of Omega has developed me into an open-minded leader," President Morghan Hogg says. "Our members are continuing to learn each day how to be better leaders through the different organizations we collaborate with."

The FGCU Hall of Fame is the highest recognition given to student leaders who demonstrate superior leadership, integrity and achievement as members of

the university community. Since it was established in 2007, the Hall of Fame has had 143 inductees. Of those, 49 have been members of a fraternity or sorority.

The fraternity and sorority experience comes with a lifetime membership. This means that alumni can remain involved in FSL chapters, and they also are more likely to remain involved with their university.

Many FGCU faculty and staff are alumni of FSL chapters either at FGCU or other institutions. Chair of the Alumni Board of Directors, Michael Nacheff, is an alum of a fraternity on campus and is vice president of governmental relations for Lee Health.

"Joining fraternities and sororities can enhance your collegiate experience by beginning lifelong connections and building foundational skills that will prove helpful well after graduation," Nacheff said. "My time as an undergraduate brother in Sigma Phi Epsilon at FGCU helped refine my leadership skills and provided a network of brothers and friends I still lean on today more than a decade after graduating."

Many FGCU faculty and staff give their time to serve as advisors for the undergraduate chapters of fraternities and sororities they are now alumni of.

Even President Martin belongs to a fraternity. ■

— *Sam Palmisano is in the environmental studies master's program and is the Interfraternity Council president. He earned a bachelor's degree in economics in 2019, an MBA in 2020 and served as president of his fraternity, Beta Theta Pi, graduating cum laude and was named to the FGCU Hall of Fame.*

FGCU FRATERNITY AND SORORITY CHAPTERS

INTERFRATERNITY COUNCIL

- Alpha Epsilon Pi
- Alpha Tau Omega
- Beta Theta Pi
- Kappa Alpha Order
- Kappa Sigma
- Phi Delta Theta
- Pi Kappa Alpha
- Pi Kappa Phi
- Sigma Chi
- Sigma Phi Epsilon

MULTICULTURAL GREEK COUNCIL

- Lambda Upsilon Lambda
- Sigma Iota Alpha
- Sigma Lambda Beta
- Theta Nu Xi

NATIONAL PAN-HELLENIC COUNCIL

- Alpha Kappa Alpha
- Alpha Phi Alpha
- Phi Beta Sigma
- Sigma Gamma Rho
- Zeta Phi Beta

PANHELLENIC ASSOCIATION

- Alpha Chi Omega
- Chi Omega
- Delta Delta Delta
- Delta Gamma
- Kappa Delta
- Phi Mu
- Sigma Alpha Epsilon Pi
- Zeta Tau Alpha
- Fraternity / ● Sorority

ABOVE: Members enjoy the Greek Get Down on the campus Great Lawn.

ARTS



Illuminating perspectives

Working as a gallery assistant shaped Farrah Alkhadra's journey as an artist

BY KATY HENNIG



GRADUATING LAST spring with a degree in art and a minor in English, Farrah Alkhadra reflects on her time at Florida Gulf Coast University with gratitude.

"I took a good deal of English and poetry courses, both of which gave me incredible perspective," Alkhadra said. "Creativity in literature benefited how I conceptualize and discuss my own pieces. It is incredibly important to have the ability to converse about your work and intent, and this is still an ongoing learning process for me as my work evolves."

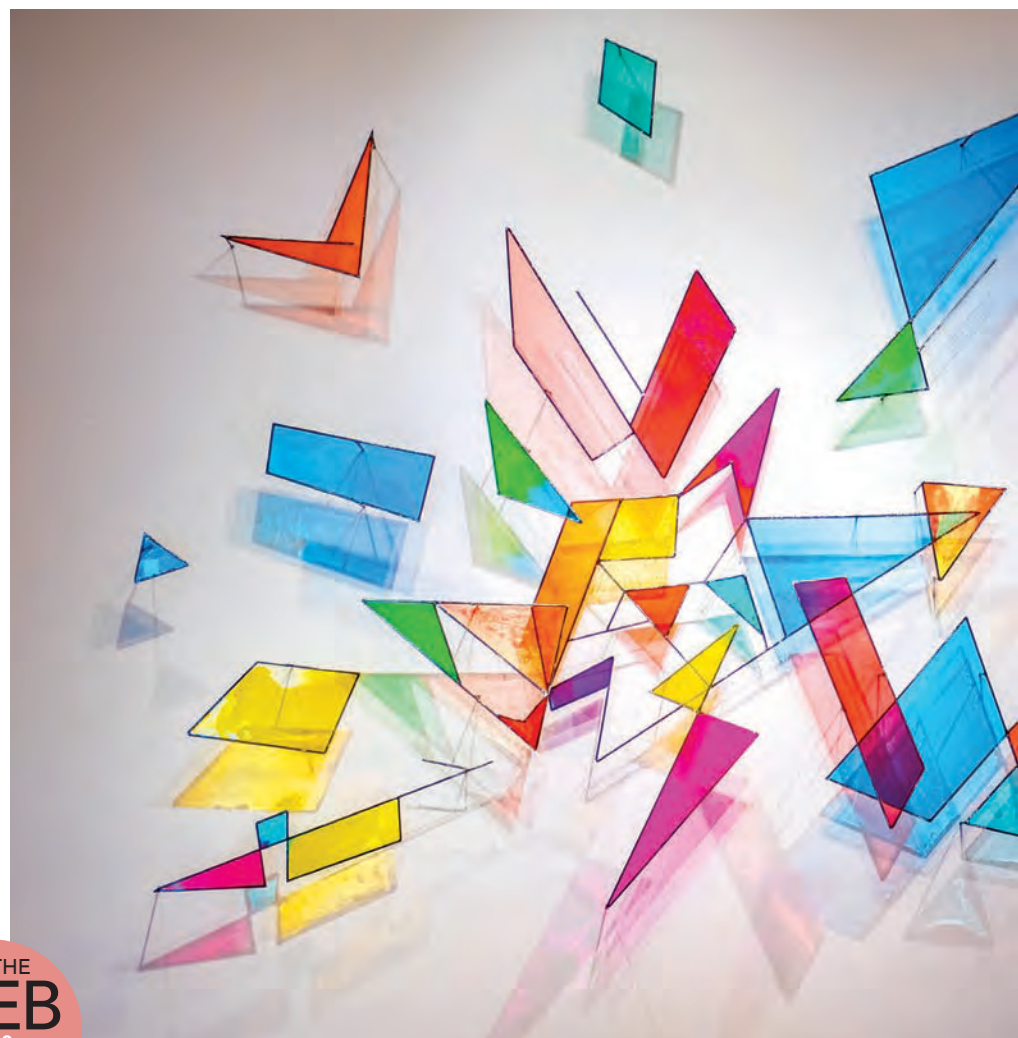
Showcasing "Colorway," a wall-size installation developed with glass and resin and built in-place for a senior projects exhibition, she radiated with pride at the final display and effect of the piece.

"I am indescribably happy with the outcome of the installation and how each color reacts with light," Alkhadra said. "I am continuing to experiment with various new shapes and layouts. My next pieces will be for outdoor installation where color can interact with daylight."

Finding her way to FGCU while visiting friends when she was still in high school, Alkhadra recalls taking the time to explore the campus and the nature trails. "I even sat in on a marine biology and nature writing class."

She credits that early introduction for chiseling her path to the university. "Those professors were very kind to let a non-student sit in and even answer some questions. I instantly fell in love with the personality of the campus and the hospitality of the educators."

During high school Alkhadra was deeply interested in building and creating things that could spark excitement and dove into every college-level art class in sight. Fine-tuning her creative process, it became clear that her art was well received, and she set her sights on creating art as a career. "Once people I knew commissioned me for custom pieces, I improved my creative process and devoted myself to becoming a working artist," she said. "Then, applying



ON THE
WEB
FGCU360.com
SEE A PANORAMIC
VIEW

to a university and pursuing art gave me extra confidence as an artist and professional."

Further confirmation of her talent came when she received the Kevin S. White Memorial Art Scholarship, for which she had to submit samples of her work.

Expanding her palette upon arriving at FGCU, Alkhadra was recommended for a gallery assistant position as a freshman and was promoted to lead gallery assistant her senior year. Expressing gratitude for the connection so early in her college career, she described how working in the gallery helped shape her journey.

"Experience in the gallery contributes to how I create work – I visualize how it may appear on the wall or on a pedestal," she said. "Craftsmanship is extremely important to me. Viewers want to see

"Colorway," by Farrah Alkhadra (above) is a glass and resin wall-size installation that reacts to changes in light.

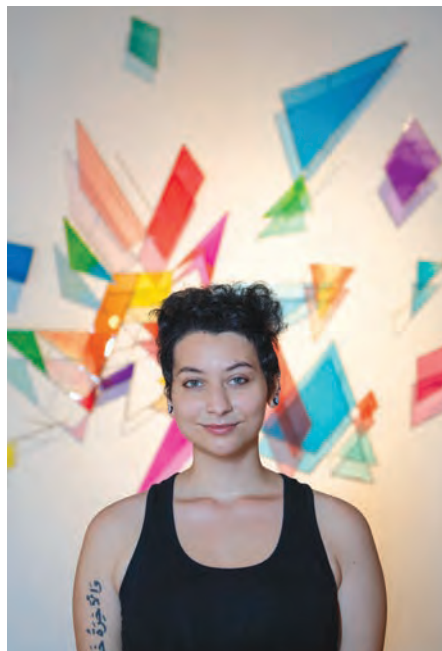
that you care about the object you are making. I believe that if you care about your object, it will reflect in how it is perceived."

Understanding the value of that perception and how the art impacts the viewer is one of the aspects of developing the large-scale pieces that Alkhadra enjoys the most.

"Working at the galleries has also offered me experience photographing artwork across all media, which directly improved how I capture my own pieces. I use the best photos for my art Instagram, which connects me to other artists and the public."



After wrapping up all of her projects and graduating in early May, Alkhadra planned to continue working at the FGCU Art Galleries for an additional year, staying closely connected with the local art community. “I’ll also continue to work with Artis – Naples as a contracted art handler,” she said, emphasizing the skills she’s acquired in working with packing, showcasing and storing her own art. “Creating work for myself and for



others to enjoy and hopefully sell is the goal for most working artists.”

Describing the process of creating “Colorway,” Alkhadra approached her senior project with a plan to weld steel and create sculptural geometric work.

“My initial design was symmetrical and reminiscent of mandalas. After a day of experimenting in the studio, the symmetry fell away and evolved into an abstracted explosion of shape and color. I revisited color theory and incorporated colors that would recede and push forward. In specific areas, I stacked red in front of or nearby blue to emphasize the perception of depth and motion.

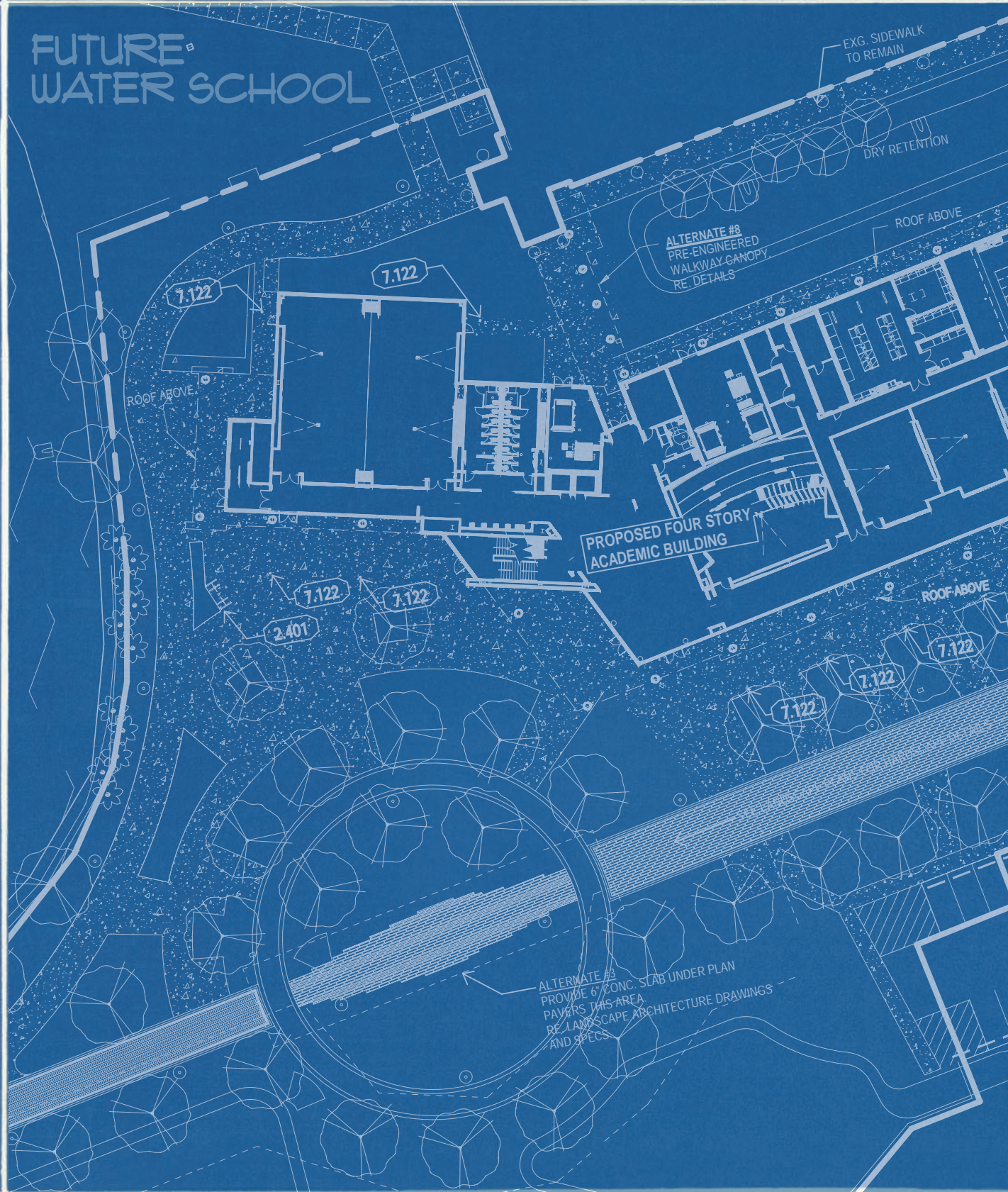
“The pieces were made using a MIG (metal inert gas) welder and sanding equipment. Incorporating color into my designs called for the unique properties of resin — it’s versatile and fairly user friendly. I was able to control the color saturation and hue using bottles of concentrated resin pigment.

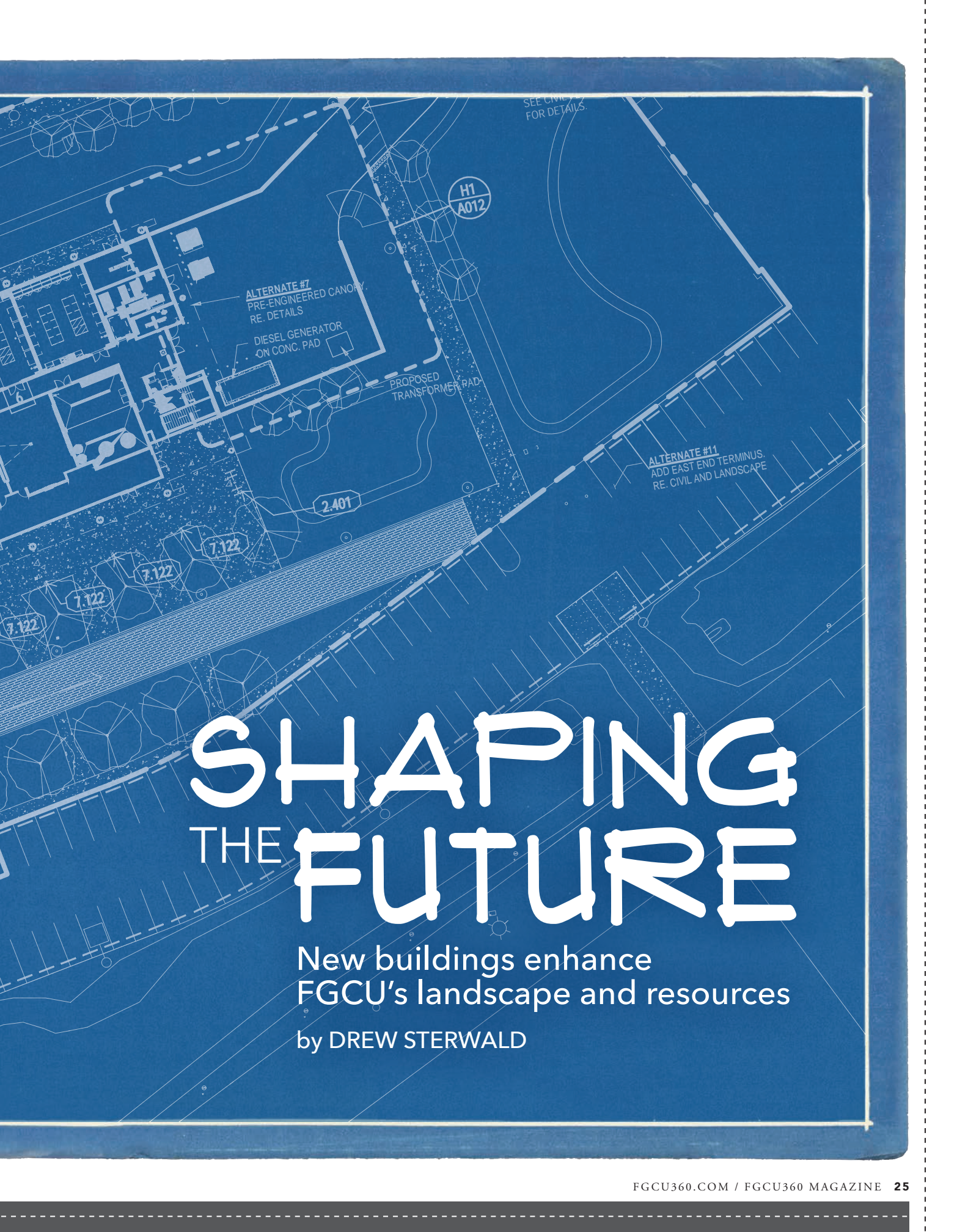
“The finished components were arranged in a way that imply outward movement and expansion. The legs of each piece are inserted directly into the wall and project out into the space by approximately 10 inches, with some components projecting more than others to create overlapping areas.

“I lit the installation using flood and spotlights coming from different angles to create strong cast shadows and color reflections. The resin interacted with the gallery lighting in a way I could not anticipate. The variations within the mixed resin created textures that were unique to each component. In some shapes I see patterns that remind me of the bottom of swimming pools, the surface of water and the bending of light. This was only revealed to me after installing and lighting the piece. The inability to completely see what I’ve made until the very end of the process is very surreal and exciting to me.” ■



FUTURE² WATER SCHOOL



An architectural site plan of a campus, likely Florida Gulf Coast University (FGCU), rendered in white lines on a dark blue background. The plan shows various buildings, parking lots, roads, and landscaping elements. Key features include a building complex on the left, a parking lot with several spaces marked, and a road running diagonally across the middle. Labels on the plan include 'H1 A012', 'ALTERNATE #7 PRE-ENGINEERED CANOPY, RE. DETAILS', 'DIESEL GENERATOR ON CONC. PAD', 'PROPOSED TRANSFORMER PAD', '2.401', '7.122', 'ALTERNATE #11 ADD EAST END TERMINUS, RE. CIVIL AND LANDSCAPE', and 'SEE CIVIL FOR DETAILS'.

SHAPING THE FUTURE

New buildings enhance
FGCU's landscape and resources

by DREW STERWALD

w

hen Greg Tolley , Ph.D., joined Florida Gulf Coast University in 1997 as a founding faculty member, he and many of his peers were quartered in temporary trailers.

For that matter, so were the first bookstore and the first food outlet (a cooler and a vending machine). There were no bona fide research labs for him or his colleagues, only teaching labs.

As FGCU approaches its 25th anniversary next year, the marine science professor and executive director of The Water School prepares to move into some impressive digs, Academic Building 9. At 114,414 square feet in four shimmering stories, the facility opening its doors to students in January becomes the largest academic building on campus, with 58,600 square feet of research lab space in addition to classrooms and teaching labs.

“This building is going to have a high ‘wow factor’ from a lot of different angles,” Tolley said. “It’s a very imposing structure. But at the same time with so much glass, it really reflects the environment — literally and figuratively. In my mind, it fits into the landscape in a really impactful way and will be inviting to the public as well as the campus community. It also doubles the research space available for faculty and students on campus.”

Along with Lucas Hall, which welcomed entrepreneurship students and faculty for the first time this fall, the buildings represent a new phase, and in some ways a new look, for the campus landscape. While very different architecturally and internally, they share some common ground as well as strategic value. Both bring together students and faculty from across diverse disciplines. Both structures were painstakingly designed around the fields of study they house. To different degrees, both feature expanses of glass that simultaneously bring the campus environment indoors and offer tantalizing glimpses of interior features and activities to those passing by.





The Water School is nearing completion on campus.



Architectural renderings of the inside of The Water School under construction.

AB9: Shedding light on water issues

Javier Salazar, a design principal and project manager at RG Architects, likens AB9 to a beacon that will draw people from across campus and entice visitors to explore The Water School while also expanding FGCU's architectural language. RGA partnered with HuntonBrady Architects to design the building with extensive input from Tolley and other faculty, staff and students.

"In discussions with the team, we all felt this would be an opportunity to take a leap, to evolve the architecture of the university," Salazar said. "That's why you see some features that are not exactly like other buildings, though some components like the glazing and off-white color are the

same. Bringing natural light into the space was as important as anything else. Most buildings are more enclosed, with very narrow corridors and enclosed classrooms, so you only get light when you get to an open space."

In contrast, people who use or visit AB9, which sits next to Parking Garage 1, will be struck by the sheer openness of the glass-fronted building. As they approach the plaza out front and the main entrance, their eyes will widen at the four-story atrium and concourse that spans the length of the research and education wing. Once inside, their gaze will be caught by light playing optical tricks with a three-story, water-themed mobile hanging overhead.

The splendor in the glass doesn't end there. On some floors, corridors run next to the



Greg Tolley

transparent exterior, creating a sunnier, more welcoming environment for those walking the halls, waiting to enter classrooms or squeezing in a little homework between classes.

"The architects designed the building so that students and visitors get the best views of campus and the preserved land to the east," Tolley said. "They won't feel like they're buried in the bowels of a building. They'll feel connected to the outside."

Even students from outside the marine and environmental sciences may be inspired by the activities they glimpse



through research lab and classroom windows — like those offering a tantalizing peek into the aquarium room on AB9's ground floor. This lab will hold water tanks for fish, crustaceans and other aquatic organisms and will be partially visible to passersby, including students from business, health, engineering and other fields that overlap with The Water School's mission to study ecosystem health and seek solutions to water problems.

Another unique feature of the \$58 million building: A limited-access biosafety lab where researchers can work securely and safely with potentially toxic organisms like the blue-green algae that has plagued area waterways in recent years. Labs like this require special machinery and ventilation systems, which are typical

for research-heavy buildings and amp up their energy use. A number of measures have been taken to mitigate energy costs, including glazing on the exterior that adds a layer of insulation. The structure is oriented so that even during the sunniest time of year, minimal direct sunlight heats up the building; horizontal wings on the exterior sides also create shade that helps with cooling — and they look pretty cool, too. On the rooftop, solar panels will maximize the Sunshine State's natural power resource to provide 15-20% of the building's energy, according to Tolley.

Outside and in, he says, AB9 represents the best in current design, sustainability and technology coming together to enhance the student experience and advance critical research impacting

Southwest Florida and beyond.

"It's an opportunity to kick up our game in terms of tools and resources that we can bring to answering important questions in this region related to the environment and water," Tolley said. "Students will have the opportunity to train on state-of-the-art equipment and collaborate on research that will give them a leg up on getting jobs when they graduate."

Lucas Hall: Designed for collaboration

"Form follows function" is a time-honored design adage that gets a modern twist in Lucas Hall, the new home of the Daveler & Kauanui School of Entrepreneurship.

Initially intended to mirror its next-



Lucas Hall, home of the Daveler & Kauanui School of Entrepreneurship

door neighbor on campus, the Student & Community Counseling Center, Lucas Hall was re-envisioned to reflect the unique needs of entrepreneurship students and faculty, as well as their community partners, as they innovate the next big ideas in business. Collaboration being a major function of entrepreneurship, there are large spaces in the floor plans where groups can congregate formally and informally, or break off into smaller teams to brainstorm on projects, share feedback or practice business pitches. Glass-walled offices show that faculty, administrators and mentors are accessible, rather than ensconced in upper-floor suites. Modular, moveable furniture that can easily be reconfigured was chosen to make the most of multipurpose spaces.



**Sandra
Kauanui**

Architects to help achieve the vision of Sandra Kauanui, director of the Daveler & Kauanui School of Entrepreneurship and catalyst for the program's meteoric growth. "We would not have designed the same building without her input and her students'," Prokop said.

"Everything had a lot of forethought,"

"The way the academic program works very much informed the design," according to John Prokop, project manager for Rowe Architects Inc. The firm partnered with Parker Mudgett Smith

Kauanui added. "We used the basic plans from the counseling center but did a lot of revisions to it. Typically, a lot of entrepreneurial work is done in group projects and partnerships. Having wide open space to sit in allows students to share different skill sets. Someone might be good at running numbers, another at technology. They can share their strengths with each other."

With Lucas Hall, entrepreneurship students finally have a dedicated home on the main campus, after years of commuting north to the Emergent Technologies Institute. During that time at the ETI, Kauanui noticed that the faculty's glass-walled offices encouraged students to engage with them between classes. That's why she and others are located on the ground floor of Lucas Hall in offices



TOP: Architectural drawing of one of the inside collaborative work spaces.

ABOVE: The Maker Space has 3-D printer, and a shared meeting space.

where students can see them.

"I feel like the more available you are to your students, the more chances you can help them and prevent them from giving up in the face of difficulties," Kauanui said.

That sense of transparency was one of the key design parameters for Lucas Hall, which is named for philanthropist David Lucas, whose \$4 million gift advanced its construction.

"That's why there's so much glass in the space," Prokop said. "The visibility between faculty and students is very high. But the

transparency idea wasn't only about them. We paid a lot of attention in the design to what people passing by would see – the activity, the action – even if they weren't going into the building."

Thus, Eagle eyes are able to spot fledgling innovators developing ideas and fabricating products in Lucas Hall spaces like the FineMark National Bank & Trust Incubator and the Rist Family Foundation Maker Space. The transparency theme even extends to industrial-like interior features such as concrete flooring and exposed steel bolts.

"It's subliminal, but the public spaces were designed so that students can see how a building is put together," Prokop said. "One of the things entrepreneurs do is figure out how to make things — that's the art of design." ■

WATER POLICY SPECIALIST JOINS FGCU

Noah Valenstein, J.D., former chief resiliency officer for the state of Florida, was named in August as the first presidential fellow in water policy for The Water School at Florida Gulf Coast University. Valenstein also served nearly four years as secretary of the Florida Department of Environmental Protection.

"Noah's experience will help us advance the agenda of The Water School across the state," said Greg Tolley, Ph.D., executive director of The Water School. "He will also help us focus our efforts on issues related to water policy."

Valenstein brings more than 10 years of combined governmental experience to FGCU.

"Since it was announced 2 1/2 years ago, The Water School at FGCU has worked to find solutions to our state's water issues," Valenstein said.

"I've watched this program come into its own over the last few years, and I want to be part of the good work happening here."

ENTREPRENEURSHIP MASTER'S LAUNCHED

Since 2017, Sandra Kauanui, Ph.D., has built FGCU's entrepreneurship program from a minor to major, from an institute to a school hailed as one of The Princeton Review's and Entrepreneur magazine's top 30 universities for undergraduate entrepreneurship studies.

Now, with more than 600 majors, the Daveler & Kauanui School of Entrepreneurship has launched a graduate program. The master of science in entrepreneurship is a 30 credit-hour interdisciplinary degree designed for students who are passionate about creating or growing new ventures. Students not only learn the essential skills of innovation, but also advance their industry-specific knowledge by taking graduate courses from other disciplines at FGCU. For more details, go to the school's website, fgcu.edu/soe.

– Drew Sterwald





DEFINING SUCCESS:

Mike Martin's first
four years at FGCU

By **KYLE McCURRY**

As Florida Gulf Coast University approaches its 25th anniversary celebration, its achievements will be front and center. Much praise will go to one person, President Mike Martin. In this interview, FGCU's fourth president discusses his accomplishments, challenges and vision for the future.

On any given morning, you'll find President Mike Martin sitting at Einstein Bros. Bagels in the Cohen Student Union – coffee cup in hand – talking with those who make FGCU tick. The conversation is often tinged with a joke, a word you might have to look up, a personal anecdote and a bit of wisdom only a man with 50 years working in higher education can provide. It's an uplifting sight, and despite the first worldwide pandemic in a century, *weltschmerz* hasn't set in with this septuagenarian.



“From the time I went away to college to today, I have lived by this same, simple mantra: ‘I will only do a job if I can promise myself it’s interesting, rewarding and fun.’ Now it doesn’t have to be all of those every day, and if no one else makes it fun, I will. People might get annoyed, but this is part of my responsibility to myself,” Martin said with a laugh.

Martin’s approachability has established him as “the people’s president,” but he’s clear about what matters. He values scholarship. He appreciates the opportunity to evaluate a situation and make the best decision possible. He expects people to do their jobs. He is squarely focused on making a difference in the lives of young people in Southwest Florida.

“I’ll tell you what the best moments are always for me: when the students come back, and commencement when everyone celebrates,” Martin said. “I think what’s been gratifying is we turned the corner

on a number of issues that have better stabilized the finances of this place.”

It didn’t take Martin’s economic training to see the university was in trouble in the summer of 2017. Just before he took the reins, FGCU lost \$8 million in performance-based funding, a ranking system determined by 10 metrics that evaluates Florida public institutions on a range of issues. This reduction was an unwelcome, but not unexpected, start to the Martin presidency.

“It struck me early on that the most important sustainable issue [for FGCU] was economic sustainability. When you’re in the bottom three [of performance-based funding rankings], you take an \$8 million hit your first day on the job, a variety of things like that cause you to say, ‘We’ve got to tee it up and make this place financially sound, so that the campus we’ve inherited really has a useful purpose that can be carried out,’” Martin said.

ABOVE: President Martin lends a hand on move-in day (Pre-COVID).

TOP RIGHT: At a ribbon cutting for Lucas Hall.

BOTTOM RIGHT: President Martin helps the women’s basketball team celebrate its ASUN victory over Liberty.

Within days of becoming the university’s president, Martin had plans to increase FGCU’s recurring operational funding. He wanted the legislature to give FGCU \$32 million. To date, and in spite of the pandemic, he’s secured more than \$23.7 million.

“I understand the need and the desirability of pursuing the 10 metrics, but there’s one big metric in my head that I always think we should be pursuing. That’s pursuing the day when every citizen of Southwest Florida has a very personal reason to be glad FGCU is here,” Martin said.

More than money

Beyond the funding, Martin laid out several goals, which he covered in a fall 2017 interview with FGCU360 magazine. The strategic plan needed to be revamped. Student outcomes left much to be desired. “Upping our game,” he said, in graduate studies, including the creation of FGCU’s first Ph.D. programs, must happen. A new school focused on water was on the horizon. And, by the way, there would not be a football team during his time as president.

A new strategic plan, complete with five pillars, debuted before the end of his first six months on the job. The first pillar is “student success,” and Martin moved on it early in 2018. Mitch Cordova, Ph.D., then dean of Marieb College of Health

& Human Services, became FGCU’s first vice president for student success and enrollment management. Cordova and his team created an entirely new division that led FGCU to make significant strides



**Mitch
Cordova**

between 2017 and 2020:

- The 4-year graduation rate improved by almost 19 percentage points.
- The 6-year graduation rate rose 4.6 percentage points.
- Net cost of tuition and fees decreased 48% for those who completed their degree in four years instead of six.

“Mitch’s leadership, in putting together a team and initiative, and his natural competitiveness, which will not allow him to fail, had a lot to do with that,” Martin said.

Getting others to “buy in” to this approach was key.

“This is a case where it took a village, and we had a village,” Martin said. “But it does, I think, reflect the fact that we reemphasized, reinvested in and held



LEARN MORE

Genesis of Student Success & Enrollment Management; one student’s perspective
Go to **FGCU360.com**

people accountable for getting it done.”

In addition to Cordova’s efforts, the president points to the work of advisers and faculty for helping move the student success initiative forward. Add to that the value of the entrepreneurship and integrated studies majors. The programs are led, respectively, by Sandra Kauanui, Ph.D., and Maria Roca, Ph.D.

“I think Maria Roca [through integrated studies] gave us an approach for students to self-design a degree that they really got engaged in,” Martin said. “The inspiration that’s come out of the entrepreneurship school, led by Sandy, gives people a sense that ‘I’ve learned something; I want to get out there and put it into action as an entrepreneur.’”

“In both instances, [the majors have] been magnets for students – internally and externally – to find a new home and a place to go with their education, and an incentive to get out and make a difference.”

Despite the pandemic, enrollment is soaring. This fall, FGCU enrollment approached 16,000 students. To say the least, student outcomes are improving.

With the strategic plan’s fourth pillar – health sciences – the most significant impact occurred in counseling. Martin oversaw the completion of a building to house Counseling and Psychological

Services for students and the Community Counseling Center to support members of the public. It makes sense that earlier this year, FGCU doubled down in this area by announcing plans to develop a doctoral program in counselor education and supervision. If approved, this would be FGCU’s first Ph.D. offering.

Although it’s not a pillar in the strategic plan, The Water School officially launched in March 2019. It will anchor the campus’ newest and most prominent building when it opens in January. In two years, the school has attracted significant local, state and national attention.

“It’s easy, I think, to champion The Water School because it hit just at the right time,” said Martin. “All of these great fortunes, think about it. We dream up The Water School just prior to being told that we have to have an area of distinction by the [Florida Board of Governors] and the legislature. We already had one. That’s another one of those cases where you say, ‘Maybe we’re good, but

we’re darn sure lucky.”

Entrepreneurship is another critical, strategic plan-related achievement. Beyond the aforementioned enrollment success, the program has grown from a minor to a major to a school offering a master’s program. Kauanui, director of the Daveler & Kauanui School of Entrepreneurship, and the FGCU Foundation secured more than \$8 million in philanthropic gifts to build a new facility – Lucas Hall. For the past three years, the Princeton Review and Entrepreneur magazine ranked the undergraduate entrepreneurship program among the nation’s best. (*Learn more about Lucas Hall and The Water School on page 24.*)

“All those things are interesting, but, you know, part of it is having the place believe in itself enough that we develop a little swagger. I don’t mean cockiness; I mean a certain amount of swagger. It took a little while to get people to believe that you don’t have to apologize for being the new kid on the block,” Martin said.

What’s next?

No one can bypass the challenges Martin faced leading an institution through a pandemic. Even now, COVID-19’s impact on FGCU is not fully defined. The president is intimately involved in the campus response, but he still takes time to look for the silver lining.

“This is a historically tragic time in human history,” Martin said. “If nothing else positive came out of it, the pandemic has revealed to me people I did not know, but I have come to discover how good they really are, and those are some of the things that are greatly satisfying.”

The stress levied on employees and students due to COVID-19 is significant. That has directed the president’s attention to the way people interact. Simply, there are a couple of things he expects.

“We continue to build the notion that if you’re going to be a participant in the academy, the first and most important value is collegiality and civility toward one another,” Martin said. “That you can’t measure, and you never know

BOTTOM: The Water School press conference in 2019.

TOP RIGHT: Graduation is one of Martin’s favorite campus moments.

BOTTOM RIGHT: President Martin led FGCU’s response to COVID-19.





if you have a legacy, but, for me, that's important."

When it comes to race-related issues, some progress has been made. FGCU opened the Center for Critical Race and Ethnic Studies under the direction of Ted Thornhill in 2020. The Black Faculty and Staff Association also formed that year.

"We try to be as proactive as possible, but oftentimes it is reactive," Martin said. "We hope that becomes part of our core value system, and it starts with some elementary principles – the fundamental respect of everyone, no matter who they are as a member of our species, with the rights to have 'life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.'"

As a 40-year member of the NAACP and champion of Native American issues, Martin would like to have delivered greater racial diversity among the faculty and staff ranks at FGCU. It's an issue on which he and Provost Mark Rieger are focused.

"I'd hoped to have more progress. We've been able to do a little bit more at the administrative level because we could do it a little more targeted. We've hired high-quality people who also send the message that we embrace differences here for the sake of the strength of the institution," Martin said.

Calling it a "fundamental objective," Martin wants to have at least the university's faculty and staff ranks reflect the racial makeup of the region.



He hopes to see more recruiting from historically Black colleges and universities. Provost Rieger has also talked about the importance of creating a pipeline.

"If we just hire professors of color away from other institutions, we're not addressing the larger issue – making higher education a desired avenue for the people we seek to attract," Rieger told FGCU360.com in November 2020. "If we want more people of color working in academia, we must start at the pipeline."

As previously reported, Rieger believes FGCU's focus on undergraduate education is the right place, with student success at the forefront, for him to create programs that inspire scholars to earn master's and doctorates.

"So, when we have a student who goes on and gets their Ph.D., we need to invite

them back for a seminar and offer them a job. We have to get behind the longer-term approaches. We have to spend some money on summer programs, honors programs and senior thesis programs to get students excited about discovery. And when they do, they will likely have that intrinsic motivation that takes them to a Ph.D."

Setting a timeline

It's no secret that Martin has fewer days ahead of him at FGCU than he has behind him. He was already eyeing retirement when he left the chancellorship of the Colorado State University System, but FGCU beckoned. Nearly four and a half years later, the president has spent more time leading this institution than any of his previous posts at New Mexico State University, Louisiana State University or the aforementioned system.

"I've always thought I better know what I can get done and what I can't. Starting to fake it is not in anyone's best interest," he said. "So, you bring your agenda. You run as hard as you can. You get to the end of that agenda, and you hand the baton off to the next person."

As of now, Martin plans to retire from FGCU in December 2022. He isn't looking for another job. That's made his decision-making process much less political.

"I have the advantage of being at the end of my career, and I have a little latitude that others don't," Martin said. "I care, but I don't care about the outcome for me. The outcome for me has now been largely defined in almost every way."

The president will watch the university take its next steps from afar. FGCU will have just turned 25, and a new leader will kick-start the second quarter-century. Like the FGCU leaders who came before him, Martin has played an important role in shaping the university for future generations to enjoy.

"I think we've had the good fortune of being able to do some things in these five years that have been meaningful. I don't want to take any credit for it. However, I want to acknowledge that this administration, my administration, has allowed them to happen. That's been a good, fun thing to see." ■



THIS JUST IN

WINK News has the scoop on promising **FGCU**
JOURNALISM
GRADS

By **KYLE McCURRY**



Emma Heaton

If you watch local newscasts in Fort Myers, you're bound to hear reporters on one station end their stories with the phrase, "WINK News ... Now." For the first time, a graduate fresh out of Florida Gulf Coast University's journalism program is uttering those words. Her name is Emma Heaton.

"A lot of people are surprised that I started my career in Southwest Florida," the 2021 alumna said. "I thought I was going to go to North Dakota. I almost accepted a job offer there before I went to WINK."

That's because most journalists start their on-air television careers in significantly smaller places. Heaton jumped ahead in the line. "She started as a production assistant and worked her way into actually producing a newscast while

she was going to college," said Tom Doerr, news director for WINK News.

Heaton's journey into journalism is rooted in her moxie. Years before joining WINK, the then-journalism student was interviewed by another station's reporter. She asked if he would help her get an internship. He did, and she got her start.

That same determination re-emerged earlier this year. With encouragement from assistant journalism professor Judd Cribbs, Heaton attended a news-focused roundtable. There, Doerr said something that changed the course of Emma's life.

"I remember him saying, 'I will hire people out of college as long as they are hardworking, determined and willing to learn.' I'm all those things, but I was so nervous to call him," Heaton said.

Nonetheless, she did and following multiple discussions, she got a verbal offer.

"She sat here, and she said, 'I want to



Judd Cribbs

be a reporter," Doerr recalled. "So, there was no risk in hiring Emma. She already had so many great qualities that made her a really excellent candidate."

Heaton's gig began in late May. She turned her first story by the fifth week on the job. She's excelling, but it hasn't been easy.

"It's been more difficult than I imagined, but in a good way," said Heaton. "It's really hard starting in a middle-sized market right out of school, especially when you've never been a reporter."

It's not just Heaton who has experienced this phenomenon. FGCU's journalism program has become a pipeline for local TV news, which is impressive given the size of the market.

Big market, big responsibility

For television journalists, market size matters. According to Nielsen, a company that measures audience size by “designated market areas” or DMAs, there are 210 markets, ranked by the area’s population. So, suppose you are working for a TV station in New York City (market No. 1). In that case, you’re speaking to a lot more people than those in Glendive, Montana (market No. 210).

The Fort Myers-Naples DMA is ranked No. 54. Starting in a bigger market is exciting for new reporters, but it also brings some challenges, which Doerr



addresses with mentoring.

“We’ve established a way of having a manager mentor for the various disciplines within the newsroom. The idea is that people come in, and they may be at the very beginning of their development as a professional. We want to help accelerate that process. The faster we can develop strong journalists, the faster our product is going to improve,” said Doerr, who has led newsrooms in places like Miami, Houston, Chicago and Washington, D.C.

That approach to mentorship has benefited other FGCU graduates. Mike Danielewski grew up watching WINK News. He earned his journalism

degree in 2018 from FGCU, and his professor, Cribbs, recommended him for a photojournalist job at WINK. Now chief photographer, Danielewski is one of WINK’s newsroom leaders.

“We have a family mentality here,” Danielewski said. “Everybody helps each other. Everybody hangs out with each other outside of work. There’s no animosity between people here, so it’s really about everybody building each



Tom Doerr

other up, everyone mentoring each other.”

Bryan Ellison is a 2018 graduate from Naples who made his way to television after a stint in public relations. He produces WINK’s 10 p.m.

show, helping write stories and create and execute the plan for each show. In other words, if you’re watching the 10 p.m. newscast, Ellison determines what you see and when.

“I started on mornings,” Ellison said. “I was able to form bonds with executive producers and other people who were given a chance out of college. They showed me the ropes. I also had the willingness to learn.”

Ellison credits the writing experience he gained in his FGCU public relations classes with helping him excel at WINK. In fact, FGCU alums working at WINK frequently mention writing skills – particularly the journalism program’s rigorous grammar test.

A grammarian factory

The upper-level courses require students to pass a 100-question test proving their grammar proficiency.

“It is a challenging test,” Cribbs said. “I always tell students, ‘If you can pass that test, you know grammar better than probably 99% of the population.’ It’s a pretty comprehensive test.”

In 2014, Jack Lowenstein was wrapping up his sophomore year at FGCU. Journalism was not part of his plan – until he took a news literacy course with Cribbs.

“He pretty much attracted me to the field and the program,” Lowenstein said. “It wasn’t until the beginning of my junior year that I declared journalism as my major. I went immediately into grammar and realized that was not going to be a cakewalk.”

Students have the opportunity to pass the test three times. Joseph Lyshon, ’17, is quick to point out that he passed the test on the first try. That wasn’t the case for some of his WINK colleagues who also went through the FGCU journalism program.



"I did take the course seriously, but I didn't realize how bad my parts of speech were when it came to the written language," Lowenstein said. "Those of us who didn't get off easy and pass it the first time really ended up hunkering down on a weekly basis. We helped each other pass the test. Some of us passed the second time. Some of us passed the third time. It didn't matter because we became a team at that point. It was a really amazing experience."

After a sojourn to print journalism just outside West Palm Beach, Lowenstein was recommended by Danielewski for a job. Many of the people Lowenstein worked with in the journalism program were his colleagues at WINK. For three years, he was a digital content producer, writing web stories, managing social media and supporting many other aspects of WINK's online presence. In October, Lowenstein made the leap to a bigger market. He is now a digital content producer and assignment manager for CBS Denver.

Lowenstein's fellow FGCU graduates agree with his assessment of the journalism program.

Lyshon, a WINK photojournalist, said the journalism program offered a balance of print-based journalism skills and photography and videography.

"Judd Cribbs put a decent amount of emphasis on the fact that visuals play a separate and vital role in journalism," Lyshon said. "It was something that I enjoyed a lot. I'm not the kind of guy to get in front of the camera, and Judd's class led me to visual storytelling."

"You learn how to be self-sufficient," said Danielewski. "In the program, you're learning how to do everything from the ground up, whether it's writing, reporting, shooting, editing, it was kind of like an all-encompassing program that put me in line to step in the door at WINK."

That mix is essential to Doerr.

"Journalism, it's a hard profession," he said. "It's fast-paced. It changes on a dime. People who are good at it have to be quick to be able to adapt. We have unforgiving deadlines, and we're asking journalists to parachute into situations where they're asked to understand as many aspects of a story as they possibly



Jack Lowenstein

can. At the same time, they must try to understand the human condition."

Part of exclusive club

Even before Heaton's hiring, WINK was known for employing on-air reporters right out of college. The first-time journalists within the station's ranks have recently come from the University of Florida, the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Virginia Tech and the University of Miami. Now, FGCU is part of that prestigious list just 10 years after launching its journalism program.

"It's been really rewarding," Cribbs said. "Personally, I just enjoy watching our students' success. I've been watching their development throughout the four years they're here. You hope, as a professor, that you prepare them for the rigors of the industry. To see them go out there and thrive, I get much more reward out of their success than I ever did from any of my own achievements."

More and more FGCU students and graduates are working or have worked for WINK, primarily in the production department.

"We're really just beginning to explore the potential of recruiting FGCU students for other roles," Doerr said.

Such was the case for Michelle Alvarez, who minored in journalism. Graduating alongside Heaton, Alvarez spent a good part of her collegiate career producing radio and television newscasts in English and Spanish and reporting for WGCU Public Media, a Public Broadcasting Service and National Public Radio affiliate in Fort Myers. FGCU owns the station.



Michelle Alvarez

"Ever since I started, I knew my goal was to report," said Alvarez, who started at WINK in May as a production assistant. "I love to tell stories, and I'm also bilingual. So, they took a look at my reel. We eventually got to talk, and they

opened the opportunity."

Fort Myers Broadcasting, which owns WINK News, purchased the Univision Southwest Florida affiliate a few years ago. The station produces newscasts, known as Noticias WINK, in the same newsroom as WINK. That means a bilingual employee has multiple tracks to becoming an on-air reporter. Alvarez will continue as a WINK News reporter and will contribute content to the Univision affiliate.

Being raised in Collier County and interacting with the Immokalee community for most of her life, Alvarez sees an opportunity to improve the news coverage for an underserved population. WINK agrees with this perspective, and its on-air product is set to expand.

“There are so many stories that can be covered in that area, but usually it’s when something bad happens. One of my main goals is to get out there and make those [other] stories heard,” she said.

Alvarez’ achievements bring pride to her family.

“I’m the first to go to college in the United States. This [career] is just a great accomplishment. They’re incredibly proud of me, and I’m super proud to use both languages in what I’m going to do. That’s a big part of me,” she said.

Getting the opportunity to start her post-collegiate on-air career at WINK was a bit of a surprise, like it was to Heaton’s friends.

“If you told me a year ago I would have gotten the job that I’ve been dreaming about, I would have not believed you. Honestly, I still can’t believe I got it. I just want to make sure I stay humble and thankful because I know it takes so much hard work to get here,” Alvarez said.

A different track

Justin Kase, ’17, earned a communication degree with a concentration in communication studies. Kase started his career at a television station in Hazard, Kentucky. He wanted to anchor, and that station gave him the opportunity right out of college. Two years later, he got a job at WINK.

“Growing up in Southwest Florida, I actually used to watch WINK,” Kase said. “I remembered Chris Cifatte, Lois Thome and Jim Farrell. When I was at FGCU, I had Chris Cifatte as an adjunct instructor, who I now work with, and he tosses to me when I’m in the field doing live reports. The other exciting thing was getting to meet people like Jim, who was kind of a childhood idol, in a way.”

Kase credits the communication studies track with helping him polish his public speaking capabilities. He was able to

produce public service announcements in the major. It also helped him secure an internship with ESPN3 through FGCU Athletics.

“One of the things that helped me the most was doing play-by-play for men’s and women’s soccer and volleyball. There’s actually a lot of similarity between doing color and play-by-play to reporting live in the field, especially on breaking news. When you are reporting on a breaking story with limited details, you are heavily describing what you’re sensing, perceiving and seeing. That’s kind of what you’re doing when you’re calling a soccer game, for example.”

Kase just hit his second anniversary as WINK’s weekend anchor.

“I did not anticipate my second stop in news being in Southwest Florida,” he said. “The stars kind of aligned. I ended my contract in Kentucky, and I posted a picture from the beach at the Naples Beach Club. A woman who used to work at the same station I did in Kentucky now works at WINK. She asked if I was back in the area, and I sent her my materials. Within days, I got a call from the assistant news director to come in for an interview.”

He got the job he wanted and is now an anchor on the station he watched as a child.



The future is bright

While Kase didn’t graduate from the FGCU journalism program, many WINK employees did. Beyond hiring, the connection between WINK and the journalism program is growing. Lyn Millner, who founded the program and teaches news literacy, works closely with Doerr and his team.

“She is becoming more and more of a trusted adviser just from the standpoint of someone to discuss the issue of the erosion of public confidence in our institutions like academics, science, government or journalism, in particular,” Doerr said. “We’re all concerned about those in the public who don’t have as much confidence in the traditional journalism outlets that we once enjoyed.”

Doerr looks forward to working with the journalism program in other ways. He wants the opportunity to share with students what the career tracks are in news. He looks forward to talking with undergraduates about the pros and cons of getting into the business. Finally, he hopes to get to know FGCU students before they apply to WINK and, perhaps, offer his brand of mentorship while they’re still earning a degree.

“Our business has needs, and there are some really important needs and jobs. A lot of universities are not offering much in the way of introducing students to producing, but the demand for producers is really, really high. Most often the pathway to newsroom leadership and editorial leadership is through the avenue of producing. We really want to find people who are interested in that job,” Doerr said.

Cribbs believes the journalism program is ready for the challenge.

“Anecdotally, many more students get into behind-the-scenes work – production, photography, videography,” Cribbs said. “We teach them the fundamentals so they can do everything. We teach them about ethics, how to think like journalists and how to be good writers and storytellers. We also cover audio and video graphics. That way, when they graduate, they can take those skills and go off in whatever direction they think they want their career to go.”

Perhaps Cribbs’ former student, Jack Lowenstein, put it best. “The FGCU journalism program creates journalists.” ■

SPORTS



PHOTO BY PATRICK MEREDITH

“

This year I think we'll be even better than we were last year.
I know I'm excited. I know the team is excited.
We've been working hard.”

”

KIERSTAN BELL, JUNIOR GUARD



Hoops teams' spirits, hopes high for upcoming season

BY SETH SOFFIAN

THE FGCU WOMEN'S basketball team boasts a fleet of returning talent, a probable top pick in the WNBA draft, four strong transfer additions and even one former starter returning to the roster.

But Eagles coach Karl Smesko has an important reminder for those thinking that means his mid-major powerhouse is automatically destined for an extra special campaign in 2021-22:

The Eagles aren't alone.

Given the competitive upheaval caused last season by the COVID-19 pandemic, the NCAA opted to grant student-athletes an extra year of eligibility and allow transfers to play immediately without having to sit out a customary season.

That means many – maybe even most – teams will be in similar boats as the FGCU women and men, who also are eyeing a return to their former glory with a seemingly strong squad as well.

“We do have a lot of talent and good players returning,” said Smesko, whose team went 26-3 last season, won its eighth ASUN Tournament title in 10 seasons and finished the year in the top 25 of both major polls for only the second time in program history.

“But the thing maybe people don't realize is most teams do. The majority of players are taking advantage of the extra year. It's not at all uncommon for teams

to have all five starters back, plus whoever they recruited. I think the level of play is going to be really high across the country.”

Only a year removed from resoundingly overcoming the loss of 90.6 percent of their sleading scorers from a season prior, the Eagles enter 2021-22 with the opposite script in place: so much experienced talent that managing the program's always lofty expectations may be a top task.

Four transfers – two seniors and two graduate students – join a roster that returns 95 percent of last season's scoring, led by 6-foot-1 junior Kierstan Bell, the Becky Hammon Mid-Major Player of the Year last season, and senior point guard Tishara Morehouse.

Fifth-year senior starters Tyra Cox and Emma List, junior Aaliyah Stanley and graduate student Andrea Cecil also return to a program that welcomes back former starter Kerstie Phills, a graduate student who opted out last season because of COVID concerns.

The overwhelmingly veteran roster consists of six seniors and four graduate students with only two juniors, three sophomores and no freshmen.

“I think we got better for sure,” Smesko said of the transfer additions: Karli Seay from LSU, Kendall Spray from Clemson, Kaela Webb from Detroit Mercy and Milan Schimmel from Cincinnati.

“We have a lot of really good players who started and played major minutes at high levels. A lot of people are going to maybe have to sacrifice some of their individual scoring or individual playing

Kierstan Bell (center) in huddle with team during a game against Michigan last year.

time for the betterment of the team. The team is going to have to be the top priority.”

FGCU does face two new obstacles.

The first is the addition of three schools to the ASUN: Central Arkansas, from the Southland Conference, and Eastern Kentucky and Jacksonville State from the Ohio Valley Conference.

While none comes close to the FGCU women’s history of success, the newcomers – lured to the ASUN in part by the league’s efforts to secure a postseason-eligible FCS football league in the near future – increase the number of teams vying for just one automatic NCAA Tournament berth.

The additions bring the league roster to 12 schools.

“I think it’ll definitely make the league more challenging,” Smesko said. “I think it’s going to be more difficult for anybody to try to get through this conference season without a few losses.”

The other change directly impacts FGCU’s calling card.

Citing record highs last season in 3-point attempts and conversions, the NCAA moved back the perimeter arc this season to 22 feet, 1¾ inches. That matches the WNBA, international and men’s college 3-point lines, which also moved back from 20 feet, 9 inches, two seasons ago.

Even with the added length, though, Smesko wants FGCU to shoot a better 3-point percentage than the 33-percent mark last year, when COVID limited practice time.

“We had a lot of new players and not a lot of practice,” he said.

For Bell, the team’s results may impact a big decision she’ll have after the season.

Following FGCU’s first-round NCAA Tournament loss in March to an under-seeded Michigan team, Bell craves a historic postseason run for FGCU as much as anyone.

Given projections that she could have

FGCU’s Luis Rolon goes for 2 points against Bellarmine.

been a top selection in the WNBA draft even after her FGCU debut last season, another year of significant team and individual success could be decisive.

“Right now, it’s more 50/50,” she said. “I’m not really set on it but I am considering it.”

Along with obvious on-court improvements, an emphasis on diet and conditioning also has been a big part of Bell’s regimen at FGCU – for the sake of herself and the team.

“This year I think we’ll be even better than we were last year,” she said. “I know I’m excited. I know the team is excited. We’ve been working hard.”

Something to prove

COVID impacted every school last season. But for programs like FGCU’s that pride themselves on doing things the right way and not cutting corners, strict adherences to health and safety protocols meant more frequent or more thorough shutdowns of team activities.

Given how well they played when



PHOTO BY JULIA BONAVENTA

having a little rhythm, the FGCU men came away from last season with chips on their shoulders – and keen confidence about this season.

As with the FGCU women, that's also thanks to a strong returning nucleus and multiple key offseason additions. That includes "the most accomplished signee in program history."

from Richmond, joined FGCU too late in the spring to contribute last year, but adds size, touch and athleticism to a major offseason transfer class.

Graduate students Tavian Dunn-Martin from Duquesne and Matt Halvorsen from Western Carolina add significant playmaking and shooting skills, respectively, in the backcourt.

projected as an NBA draft selection last season, Samuel picked FGCU over numerous major conference suitors to help him reach team and individual goals as a senior, Fly said.

"He saw what FGCU was able to do for Brandon (Goodwin), and what Brandon did for FGCU," Fly said of the former Eagles guard, who starred at FGCU after

"Had there been no COVID, we were on pace for one of the biggest turnarounds in the country."

MICHAEL FLY, MEN'S HEAD BASKETBALL COACH

"Had there been no COVID, we were on pace for one of the biggest turnarounds in the country," said Eagles coach Michael Fly, whose team went 10-8 and lost in the second round of the ASUN Tournament last year after being under .500 in his first two seasons rebuilding the roster.

"We were really excited about our group last year, and we were really good when we were allowed to play basketball. This will be year two of having quite a bit of returning scoring punch and experience back."

Leading scorers Cyrus Largie and Caleb Catto, ASUN per-game assists and steals leader Luis Rolon and league total blocks leader Dakota Rivers head the returning class, which also includes key contributors Zach Anderson and Franco Miller Jr.

Andre Weir, a 6-10 freshman transfer

And 6-8 junior Carlos Rosario from McNeese State and 6-6 senior Austin Richie from Tulsa are expected to contribute size, experience, efficiency, scoring and leadership in the frontcourt.

But the biggest offseason addition is 6-11, 255-pound, fifth-year senior Kevin Samuel.

A four-star recruit ranked in the top 10 of all prep prospects out of Texas in 2017, Samuel started all 95 games in three seasons at TCU while leading the Big 12 in blocked shots the last two seasons.

Originally from the Caribbean island of Barbuda, Samuel averaged 10 points and 8.4 rebounds a game as a sophomore and 8.8 points and 7.8 rebounds as a junior. But after going without an NCAA appearance in his career and not being

transferring from UCF and has gone on to play in the NBA. "We're excited about what he brings to the table."

Given so much experience and ability, quickly blending newcomers with returnees will be a task.

And because injuries and last season's COVID pandemic also have hindered much of FGCU's efforts in Fly's tenure, the longtime former Eagles assistant makes no promises for this season.

Still, after several years of frustration, FGCU may be poised to regain the program's former luster.

"I think internally we've got a pretty big chip on our shoulders based on what happened last year," Fly said. "I think we all feel pretty confident in what we can do." ■

FORMER FGCU SOCCER PLAYER MEDALS AT SUMMER OLYMPICS

Former FGCU women's soccer player Julia Roddar (2012-14) became the first-ever Eagle to medal at the Olympic Games as Sweden fell to Canada in a 3-2 penalty shootout to earn silver at the 2020 Tokyo Olympics at Nissan Stadium in Yokohama, Japan in July.

Sweden got on the board first scoring in the 34th minute and took a 1-0 lead into the half before Sweden equalized in the 67th minute via a penalty kick. Following extra time, Sweden held a 2-1 lead in penalties but missed its final three shots as Canada converted its final two for the win.

Roddar spent her freshman season at Wisconsin before joining



Julia Roddar

FGCU in 2012. In her three-year stretch with the Eagles, she started in all 62 matches she appeared in, netting four goals with 10 assists. The Falun, Sweden native is a current member of the Washington Spirit out of the National Women's Soccer League (NWSL).

Roddar became the ninth Eagle to compete in the Olympics and was one of two featured this year. Current FGCU swimmer Petra Halmaj helped her Hungarian squad post a national record in the mixed 4x100 medley relay during the July games. ■

ALUMNI

CLASS OF 2017

Alumna blends sociology, communication into successful pharmacology career

BY TYLER WATKINS

WHEN PEOPLE think of sociology, they probably don't associate it with pharmaceutical work. But Andrea Jarquin has found a way to turn her Florida Gulf Coast University sociology degree into a meaningful career in pharmacology.

Jarquin, 27, a 2017 graduate who double majored in sociology and communication, works as a bilingual patient support specialist with Vertex Pharmaceuticals in Massachusetts. She lives in Boston but remains active with FGCU through the Multicultural Alumni Network. That continued involvement reflects the passion for inclusion and education that Jarquin says motivates her.

As a professional, Jarquin assists Vertex patients who have cystic fibrosis – an inherited disorder that causes severe lung damage – deal with pharmacy and insurance issues and provides them with product education.

Before making this leap, Jarquin didn't even envision herself going to college. That was until an encounter she had while touring FGCU that convinced her it was where she belonged.

"When I applied to FGCU to be an orientation leader, I met Tabitha Dawes," Jarquin said. "She has been an incredible mentor to me, still to this day, and I don't say this lightly, but I believe she saved my life

because she changed the trajectory of it."

Dawes, director of Eagle View Orientation, notices the impact Jarquin has on others.

"She was dedicated and hard-working in everything she did," Dawes said. "Most of all, she shined as an advocate, whether it was mentoring first-year students in orientation, working on a project in a sociology class, or supporting students in her RA (resident assistant) position. Andrea has a heart for others and ensuring they are supported and treated equitably."

Jarquin and Dawes stay in touch to this day. "Serving as a mentor during Andrea's time at FGCU was truly an honor. I was and am so proud of what she accomplished," Dawes said.

Jarquin believes FGCU prepared her well for the workplace – specifically, for a career that involves getting to know the patients she serves and requires insight into what they are experiencing.

"The communication and sociology faculty at FGCU are some of the most passionate across the university," she said. "When it comes to my communication degree, I can tactfully communicate and still have that rapport of getting to know them (the patients). The research I've done in sociology makes me passionate about the qualitative stories that folks have to share."

After graduating, she helped establish the Multicultural Alumni Network (MCAN) in 2020. The network is

composed of 12 chairs who bring expertise in membership, programming, fundraising, events and more. MCAN strives to help FGCU alumni of color stay engaged and connects them to resources offered through the university and alumni community.

"I think FGCU is an incredible institution and unique in many ways," Jarquin said. "It sits at a crossroads of really privileged populations and first-generation and low-income students. When students from very different backgrounds come into one space, you can see the disparities in lived experiences.

"It's important that they do feel like they belong, even after they graduate. I thought something was missing here, and the Multicultural Alumni Network was able to fill that gap," Jarquin said. "Now, folks can celebrate their successes with a group of students and alumni who relate with each other."

Her passion for postgraduate inclusion isn't lost on her alma mater.

"Andrea's strength, compassion and leadership led to the cultivation of the Multicultural Alumni Network," said Caroline Vives-Vietri, assistant director of Alumni Relations. "MCAN reinforces FGCU's core values that diversity, equity, and inclusion are central to our commitment to excellence."

Jarquin has carried that inclusive mentality into her job at Vertex as she has

“

“The communication and sociology faculty at FGCU are some of the most passionate across the university.

ANDREA JARQUIN, '17, SOCIOLOGY

”



Andrea Jarquin

been part of a diversity-and-inclusion team in her department for two years. This initiative is geared to enlighten her colleagues on social-identity development, psychological safety and how language barriers have impacted the Spanish-speaking community.

The Miami native started her transition to pharmaceuticals by earning her master's degree in higher education and student affairs from Indiana University. It didn't take long for her to find her first pharmaceutical job, as Vertex hired her soon after she received her master's. The position's reliance on education – and Jarquin's love for educating others – led her to take the job.

“I have a love for helping people feel empowered and educated about the decisions that they make,” Jarquin said. “This job had a huge education component, so when I transitioned, it was pretty much being adaptable and learning about insurance and specialty pharmacies.”

As a bilingual employee, Jarquin takes pride in communicating with Spanish-speaking patients. Her family emigrated to the U.S. from Nicaragua, and she grew up with Spanish as her first language. During most of her childhood, Jarquin was her parents' translator. This experience is why she believes she shares a personal connection with Spanish-speaking patients.

“When I talk to families who do not know what cystic fibrosis is, I'm that first person introducing them to this world and community,” Jarquin said. “I have a certain attachment to this population because I've been impacted myself, and my parents have been impacted due to lack of access, lack of resources and lack of education.” ■

CLASS OF 2014

Hard-driving golf management alum clearly on the right track

BY RICK WEBER

TARA MCKENNA isn't surprised that Warren Chappuis – just seven years removed from his FGCU graduation – has won an Emmy and manages a staff of a dozen people as broadcast operations manager for TrackMan Golf.

In 2010, Chappuis was in the first class that McKenna oversaw as program director for FGCU's PGA golf management degree. Even then, he stood out.

"He was completely personality-plus," she said. "He mastered the elevator pitch. You could put him in a room full of CEOs and he'd have those CEOs getting his business card at the end. That was kind of his personality. That's the way he's always been. He was always interested in going outside the box."

"It's been a quick rise up," he said. "I'm only 29 and already managing an entire division for a major company."

"Now, you ask my family, and they're not surprised: 'No, we knew you were smart.' They say that now. I'm definitely surprised. There has been a lot of growth quickly. Our broadcast division and product have grown quickly. I'm happy

I've been able to adapt and grow with it, stay on and do the job I'm doing now."

TrackMan is the gold standard for launch-monitor data in the golf industry.

Its proprietary, radar-based technology tracks the full trajectory of any shot, from 6-foot pitches to 400-yard drives, pinpointing the landing position with an accuracy of less than

one foot at 100 yards. It displays the shot's 3D trajectory together with 26 impact and ball flight parameters in real time, with data delivered within one second. If you've ever watched a golf telecast, you likely have seen the orange laser tracer making a majestic arc in the sky.

Chappuis spends most of his time on the road, orchestrating a staff that sets up the monitors on tee boxes at PGA Tour stops to capture the strategic TV shots. When he first started with TrackMan in 2015, he was a technician setting up the monitors. Now he's the person telling others where and how to set them up.

Which leads us to the Emmy.

A Technology and Engineering Emmy Award is given annually by the National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences (NATAS) for developments and/or standardization involved in engineering technologies that represent extensive improvement on existing methods or are remarkably innovative. Chappuis won his in 2019 after being nominated by CBS for the week he spent at Augusta National Golf Club during the Masters telecast and was lauded for "a three-dimensional Doppler radar system to track and display fast-moving pitched and hit balls."

"We were one of the first tech companies to use it during the main broadcast," he said. "It was very historic and a pretty big deal to be able to set up at Augusta because they were very slow to adapt to technology and they like everything old-fashioned and old school. They still don't even have digital leaderboards."

Warren Chappuis and his Emmy.





“Everything worked flawlessly for the week and we ended up winning. It put an exclamation point on a great week.”

McKenna was one of the first to get a glimpse of the stunning Emmy statue after he received it.

“I texted her with a photo and wrote, ‘Do you have another graduate who has won an Emmy? Just to mess with her,’ she said. ‘It’s definitely a conversation piece. Most people think it’s fake and I bought it on eBay.’”

Chappuis’ rise in the golf industry has its roots in FGCU’s unique PGA golf management program. FGCU is one of just 18 universities in the United States – and the only one in Florida – to offer it. McKenna says students enjoy 100 percent job placement upon graduation.

“FGCU and the golf management program helped me grow up and get real-world experiences,” Chappuis said. “The internships helped me take what we

At the bottom left of this image, you can see the Trackman as it is used in the FGCU PGA SIM LAB.

learned in the classroom, apply it and see it working. The majority of people don’t get real-world experiences. We applied what we were learning right away.”

He interned in Florida at Cypress Head Golf Club in Port Orange and Olde Florida Golf Club in Naples. In his third internship, he served as an assistant for 18 months to Jim Suttie, the #18 teacher in America, according to Golf Digest. They alternated between TwinEagles Golf Club in Naples in the winter/spring and Mistwood Golf Club in suburban Chicago in the summer/fall.

That’s where Chappuis first used TrackMan. And on one serendipitous day, Suttie’s TrackMan malfunctioned. Chappuis called the company’s support line, allowed the tech to remote into

Suttie’s laptop and learned that Windows would need to be uninstalled and reinstalled. The tech – shocked to learn that Chappuis was going to do it himself – asked him to call back when he was finished. The tech remoted back in and said the radar was working perfectly.

Oh, and one other thing: “Call me on your personal cell phone when you’re done working today.” That led to an interview in New York, which led to Chappuis moving to Scottsdale, Arizona, to join TrackMan.

“That’s a very unusual track for most of our students,” McKenna said. “It was more of the technical side, not the instructional/delivery side. But his confidence in his technical knowledge clearly is there.”

Chappuis and McKenna remain close, even though they rarely see each other.

“Every time I’m watching a telecast and I see that orange stripe, I smile and laugh to myself: ‘Well, there’s Warren,’” she said. ■



CLASS OF 2018

Alumna gathers rare seeds in hopes of preserving plants for future generations

BY SETH SOFFIAN

AN AVID HIKER raised from a young age with a love of the outdoors, FGCU graduate Jessica DeYoung ('18, Environmental Studies) always knew she wanted to work in nature. But it wasn't until a chance discovery in college that she learned how much she was missing when gazing at the world around her.

On a family vacation that included stops at state parks and preserves, DeYoung

tried on a family member's glasses and realized that, unlike her, others could easily distinguish individual plant leaves. She hadn't realized how much her nearsightedness had worsened over time.

"Once I unlocked that door I started to pay more attention to plants," DeYoung said. "One of the curiosities I had was how to grow plants from seed. I found out it was very complicated. It's not where people think you put the seed in the soil and it magically starts to sprout."

DeYoung's discovery did more than sharpen her focus on the world around her: It has helped make her a vital asset in preserving that world for us all.

A plant conservationist at the Naples Botanical Garden, the Florida native from Charlotte County has spent the past three years gathering, storing and diligently growing seeds from plants indigenous to southern Florida and subtropical locales in the Caribbean.

She has been so successful establishing

a seed bank containing the region's many plant species – threatened, endangered or completely overlooked all the same – that she rapidly has gone from intern to a manager needing her own assistant for help with volumes of testing, data entry and cultivation protocols.

“Her passion, her knowledge, her skills matched exactly what we were looking for,” said Chad Washburn, garden vice president of conservation, of DeYoung’s role developing a program in which he was the only member when she joined the staff in 2018. “She put us way ahead of where we would have been, bringing someone on and training them.”

Hurricane Irma in 2017 helped spark conservation efforts in greater earnest at the garden, which opened in 2009 on 170 acres on Bayshore Drive in East Naples and has been a key partner to FGCU in multiple arenas.

Damage from the storm exposed well-known ecosystem threats from habitat loss, climate-related stress and disease. It further revealed the urgent need for preservation, cultivation and restoration practices.

“It’s become imperative,” Washburn said of the conservation program, which now has six staffers. “We really need plant diversity to make our ecosystems more resilient. But we also need material for restoration, and she’s able to start making that happen immediately. We can’t thrive without it.”

South Florida, one of the most biologically diverse regions in North America, already has seen some 8 percent of its more than 1,400 native plants species go extinct, according to the garden, citing data from The Institute for Regional Conservation.

Only 10 percent to 15 percent of “scrub” habitat – sandy, high and dry areas favored

by developers and often overlooked for preservation – remains statewide, according to garden experts, citing the World Wildlife Organization. And about half of the species living in scrub areas don’t exist elsewhere.

“We need those ecosystems,” Washburn said. “They’re incredibly diverse. Some of the stuff out there is incredibly rare. Jessica is really unlocking the secrets of how to grow some of these plants. Many have never been grown in an agricultural or horticultural setting.”

Indeed, many of the seeds being stored – frozen – and studied by DeYoung over months-long periods are prioritized in part because few or even no other botanical gardens have banked them. That’s not enough to ensure the survival of species with often unknown or untapped potential, whether as landscape plants, key animal food stocks or even potential sources of medicines.

DeYoung experiments with moisture, temperature, light, scarring, fermentation

that mimics animal digestion and other factors to unearth natural and even optimal germination rates. Some seeds take more than 200 days to sprout, making for many protracted outcomes, some of the results of which she is close to beginning to publish for the benefit of other researchers, nursery managers, plants lovers and others.

Though DeYoung concedes the work can be tedious at times, there’s no shortage of field, lab, data entry and reporting work to be done when it comes to ground as uncharted as it is important.

“I love this job,” said DeYoung, excited to see the continued growth of FGCU’s formal and informal botanical coursework and surrounding activities within the environmental studies curriculum.

“I don’t go to work and think, ‘Oh man. I have to work today.’ I think, ‘I really need to work on this project so we can get these plants to grow for this ecosystem.’”

“It’s such a spiraling effect. One thing always helps another. We as people are getting this benefit. But the environment, the animals, the bugs – all of that – also are benefiting from what we’re doing.” ■

BOTTOM: DeYoung catalogs seeds at the Naples Botanical Garden.



Florida Gulf Coast University Alumni Association expands and engages Eagles coast to coast

BY KATY HENNIG

THE NETWORK OF almost 38,000 FGCU Eagles alumni across the country is growing and the Florida Gulf

Coast University Alumni Association is expanding to meet the demand.

If you ask Rachel Faramo ('05, Communication) about connecting with fellow Eagles through the newly formed FGCU Naples Eagles Chapter, you'll find that the founding president exudes pride when describing the network of FGCU alumni in the area.

"We love learning more about our chapter members, local alumni, community and building those connections," Faramo said. "Our VP who runs social media has done a fantastic job with this!"

With new groups from Naples to Nashville and then on to San Francisco, the FGCU alumni chapters offer lots of networking potential.

Kim Wallace, director of FGCU Alumni Relations, said that because of changes in the past year in event dynamics due to the pandemic, locations across the country have increased connectivity and sparked new interest in keeping up with the university. "The chapters offer the best opportunity for connecting with fellow Eagles, professional development and strengthening bonds between FGCU graduates all over," Wallace said.

New locations have been added and chapter leadership selected to build connections with Eagles who live in places where there are growing communities of FGCU alumni. There are now 20 chapters across the country.

FLOCK TO A CHAPTER

To find an FGCU Eagles Alumni Chapter near you visit: fgcu.edu/alumni, and click on **Get Involved**.



FGCU ALUMNI ASSOCIATION CHAPTERS

FLORIDA CHAPTERS

Cape Coral Eagles

Annie Banion '17, Vice President
ccfgcueagles@gmail.com

Fort Lauderdale Eagles

Chelsea Mills '19, Chapter President
chelseamills63@gmail.com

Fort Myers Eagles

Ryne Hensley '18, Chapter Co-President
& Kaitlin Danks '19, Chapter Co-President
fgcufortmyersalumni@gmail.com

Jacksonville Eagles

Jennifer Joyce '12, '15, Chapter President
joyce.jennifer.a@gmail.com

Naples Eagles

Rachel Faramo '15, Chapter Co-President
& McKenzie Van-Essen Morris '14,
Chapter Co-President
FGCUNaplesAlumni@gmail.com

Orlando Eagles

Cait Schall '16, Chapter Co-President &
Jenna Gillian '17, Chapter Co-President
caitschallfgcu@gmail.com

Sarasota Eagles

Jim Daily '12, Chapter Co-President &
Danielle Visione '14, '16,
Chapter Co-President
Jim.Dailey@RaymondJames.com
and dvisone92@aol.com

Tallahassee Eagles

Kaitlynn Orlandi '16, Chapter President
kaitlynnorlandi@att.net

Tampa Eagles

Andres Velosa '19, Chapter President
afvelosa@gmail.com

West Palm Beach Eagles

Carlos Ospina '18, Chapter Co-President
& Karli Van Keuren '16,
Chapter Co-President
ospina162@gmail.com
and karlivankeuren@gmail.com

EASTERN U.S. CHAPTERS

Atlanta Eagles

If you are interested in becoming
a chapter leader,
email: alumnirelations@fgcu.edu

Boston Eagles

Michael McDonald '11, Chapter
Co-President & Richard Ysidron '17,
Chapter Co-President
Michael.t.macdonald87@gmail.com and
richardysidron@gmail.com

North Carolina Eagles (Charlotte)

Skye Gonzalez '16, Chapter President
ncfgcualumni@gmail.com

Nashville Eagles

Chauntel Brown '13, '19,
Chapter Co-President
& Jason Finan '18, Chapter Co-President
jasonefinan@gmail.com
and chauntel.brown@hyatt.com

New York City Eagles

Joseph Marro '11, Chapter President
joseph.marro@yahoo.com

Washington D.C. Eagles

Pero Jolevski '07, Chapter President
pero.jolevski@hotmail.com

CENTRAL U.S. CHAPTERS

Chicago Eagles

Jordan Davis '19, Chapter President
jordantdavis813@gmail.com

Rocky Mountain Eagles

Jaime Tirado '18, '21, Chapter President
jrtirado5933@gmail.com

WESTERN U.S. CHAPTERS

Los Angeles Eagles

If you are interested in becoming
a chapter leader,
email: alumnirelations@fgcu.edu

San Francisco Eagles

Isaac Roman '12, Chapter President
isaacbroman@gmail.com

According to Faramo, the pride in the university has been passionate and consistent. "Our alumni are very connected with the community professionally and socially. Everyone we meet wants to give back to FGCU in one way or another," she said.

Leading the Naples Eagles, she credits FGCU with helping to shape her future, including meeting her husband, Jeff, also an FGCU alumnus, and lots of lifelong friends.

The Naples Eagles Chapter has led the way in hosting featured events based on feedback from alumni – such as a signature summer brunch, basketball watch party and a cornhole tournament in conjunction with the Fort Myers Eagles chapter.

The cornhole tournament, held at Riptide Brewing in Bonita Springs in August, was one of the first to include two chapters combining their Eagle pride and enjoying festivities together. This cross chapter meet-up aimed to bring the Naples and Fort Myers chapters together and connect local alumni who had not yet joined. ■



Eagles alumni, friends and family members enjoy a gathering at Riptide Brewing Co. in Bonita Springs.

GIVING



Laurie Holquist and Chris Westley,
Dean of Lutgert College

Longtime FGCU supporter Laurie Holquist adds university to her estate plan

BY KAREN BOOTH

WITH GOOD communication, mutual respect and shared values, relationships grow stronger and stronger over time. To

say that Laurie Holquist's relationship with FGCU is strong would be an understatement.

Holquist first "met" FGCU back in the late 1990s while serving as CFO for ALLETE Properties Inc., a real estate

development subsidiary of Minnesota Power. In time, she became senior vice president and, in 2001, was promoted to president, a position she held until her retirement in 2011.

Over two decades, Holquist served on



Laurie has been selfless in her commitment to this region's business community, and her gift ensures her influence will pay dividends for years to come.



CHRIS WESTLEY, DEAN OF LUTGERT COLLEGE

both the FGCU Foundation Board and the Lutgert College of Business Advisory Council. That's a long time, during which her relationship with the university grew even stronger.

So strong, in fact, that Holquist named FGCU in her estate plan and anticipates – market willing – that the percentage of her estate could top the \$2-million mark and is earmarked to support Lutgert faculty enrichment and student excellence programs.

Bill Rice, senior philanthropy officer, is overwhelmed by Holquist's generosity. "Planned giving is a win-win for everyone involved," he said. "For the donor there's often a tax benefit, but also and importantly, it's an opportunity for donors to establish their legacy in their lifetime." He said that for the university, Holquist's gift is nothing short of monumental.

"I've watched FGCU grow up," Holquist said. "I was part of it growing up, first by graduating in the second class of the EMBA program in 2000 and then by serving on the Advisory Council for the Lutgert College of Business and the FGCU Foundation Board.

"I am a member of the FGCU family," she said, adding that each of us wants to see our family succeed, whether our contribution to that success is in the form of dollars, time or sharing of expertise.

Over the years, Holquist has given generously in all those ways. She was never content with joining a board just to meet every quarter and listen to committee reports. She is a doer and a natural leader, and she made it clear she was interested in sitting on those committees and working to make a difference in students' lives, her community and the world around her.

To wit, she served in several capacities,

including FGCU Foundation secretary, chair of both the Finance and Real Estate committees and member of the Audit and Executive committees.

As Finance Committee chair, Holquist, who is a certified public accountant, was instrumental in convincing the foundation to hire an outside chief investment officer to manage the portfolio of more than \$100 million.

"At the time, the committee decided as a group how to invest, but following those directives was difficult when the board only met four times a year," she said. "It was impossible to manage market volatility. This has been clearly true over the last two years."

"I think leading the move to an outside CIO was the most important achievement I accomplished for the foundation," she said. "We did all the research for it, and we managed to get it approved.

"I'm always interested in getting involved and making a difference. When giving my time, I want to be sure it's worth my effort," she said.

As of this writing Holquist is rolling off the Foundation Board due to term limits. She continues, however, to serve on the Lutgert Advisory Council.

"I have a lot of positive history with Lutgert," she said, history that includes being a student in the Executive MBA program. She credits the knowledge, experience and confidence she gained

through the program for preparing her to be selected as president of ALLETE Properties, which occurred just before the real estate boom of the 2000s, when the company owned more than 20,000 acres of development property.

News of Holquist's gift didn't surprise Chris Westley, dean of Lutgert College of Business, who met her when he ran FGCU's Regional Economic Research Institute and she chaired the Southwest Florida Economic Development Alliance.

"Laurie has been selfless in her commitment to this region's business community, and her gift ensures her influence will pay dividends for years to come," Westley said. "She's a mentor and a friend of Lutgert, and I'm grateful for the effect she will have on future generations of business students."

Holquist is forthright about her decision to include FGCU in her estate plan. "I have been deeply involved with the university for over 20 years, seeing it grow up and knowing I was part of its growth. FGCU has had a huge impact on me and on my success, and, with my gift, I want to impact future generations."

In May 2021, Holquist established a restricted fund named the LCOB Faculty Excellence Program.

"Over my years serving on the advisory committee and Foundation Board, I learned that the first programs to be cut during lean times are those related to faculty development and student enrichment. Raising funds for these programs is difficult," according to Holquist. Therefore, the purpose of the program is to provide funds to promote faculty development and improved student experience. The estate funds are earmarked for this program and she hopes others will see the need for the fund and contribute as well. ■



LEARN MORE

Find out more about the fund by contacting Lutgert Dean Chris Westley at cwestley@fgcu.edu or Angela Kunkle, development director, at akunkle@fgcu.edu or (239) 745-4343.



Bob Hawkes (second from left), physician assistant program director, and recipients of the Shady Rest Foundation scholarships.

Shady Rest Foundation devotes funds to promote careers in eldercare

BY KAREN FELDMAN

STUDENTS PURSUING degrees in health fields that focus on older people are receiving assistance from a foundation that once offered that help itself but is now passing the torch to a new generation of caregivers.

Shady Rest Foundation is the entity that oversees the funds from the sale of a facility run by Lee County to care for low-income seniors. The county eventually turned the care center over to a non-profit corporation and, years later, sold the facility and the land on which it sat near Page Field in south Fort Myers.

Today, the officers of Shady Rest Foundation have chosen to use the money from the sale, in part, to fund scholarships for students who plan to go into healthcare for older adults. The \$3 million donation



Jo Stecher

support of these students.

Jo Stecher, Ph.D., R.N., who is vice chair of the foundation board and a former FGCU nursing professor who taught gerontology, among other things, sees a critical need.

“These scholarships can get students into the workforce in a more timely manner,” she said. “It serves the community and helps students who prefer to work with

the group has made will go a long way toward assisting FGCU students in the pursuit of that goal with the creation of two endowments. This most recent gift builds upon last year’s generosity of \$1 million for current

older adults. It also helps them complete their schooling with less debt.”

Another factor is that students enrolled in the Marieb College of Health & Human Services attend classes and clinicals virtually full time and are preparing for both when they aren’t in one or the other.

“There’s no time for them to hold down jobs while they are in school,” Stecher said.

Senior nursing student Valeria Cardona knows this situation well.

“Nursing is a very demanding major,” she said. “In order to have a high academic performance, I am unable to work full time. I am very thankful for this foundation and its scholarship because it empowers students to keep working hard toward their academic goals and because it inspires me to give back to my community.

“The words ‘thank you’ fall short to

“I am the first in my family to seek higher education and it’s generous donations like these that are helping my dream of becoming a physician assistant become a reality. “

SABREEN YOUSEF, GRADUATE STUDENT

describe how grateful I am. I would not be able to continue my studies at this time if it were not for the generosity of the Shady Rest Foundation.”

The tuition scholarships are awarded to both undergraduate and graduate students, which makes them unique as there are no other such awards for graduate students seeking to work with older adults.

Not only that, it doubles the number of scholarships available for graduate students at the university, according to Dolly Farrell, senior director of Development.

“I am honored to be one of the recipients of the Shady Rest Scholarship,” said Sabreen Yousef, a graduate student pursuing her master’s degree as a physician assistant. “I am the first in my family to seek higher education, and it’s generous donations like these that are helping my dream of becoming a physician assistant become a reality.



Brandon Butry

“My family and I were impacted financially by COVID-19, and this has helped take one more burden off of my shoulders so that I may put all my focus into my studies.

I am one step closer thanks to the Shady Rest Scholarship and will continue to stay committed to my education and the healthcare field.”

Brandon Butry, who is pursuing his doctoral degree in physical therapy, feels much the same way.

“This scholarship has had a tremendous impact on allowing me to fully focus on school without the stress of adding a full-time job into my busy schedule,” Butry said. “I have more time to put towards my studies and engulfing myself in what it takes to be a great physical therapist. I can’t thank the foundation enough for awarding me with this prestigious scholarship and I am extremely grateful for the impact it has made on my life.”

Given the shortage of nurses and other medical staff the nation is now experiencing because of COVID, these scholarships become even more significant.

“This gift would be welcome at any time, but is especially meaningful now when hospitals and senior care facilities all badly need well-qualified nurses and other trained healthcare professionals,” said Shawn Felton, Ed.D., interim dean of Marieb College. “FGCU prides itself on working to meet the needs of our community and the Shady Rest Foundation’s generous gift will certainly help us do that.”

Bob Murray, Shady Rest board chair, said “when we first sold the facility and put the money into the foundation, we wanted to

give back. It took us a couple of years to figure out what we wanted to do.”

He credits Stecher with making connections that made it possible to create the scholarships.

“I think this is the right thing to do,” he said. “It’s very heartwarming. I’m very happy that we could do this.” ■

BY THE NUMBERS

- ▶ **66:** Undergraduate scholarships awarded
- ▶ **\$325,250:** Value of undergraduate awards
- ▶ **99:** Graduate scholarships awarded
- ▶ **\$404,250:** Value of graduate awards
- ▶ **\$270,500:** Money to be awarded in spring/summer 2022



Valeria Cardona



Sabreen Yousef



Elizabeth 'Liz' McDowell

Alumna inspired by scholarship donors creates one of her own

BY DON MANLEY

ELIZABETH “LIZ” McDowell’s dream of giving back to FGCU in a way that meaningfully impacts students affected

by the scourge of substance abuse is now a reality. She and her husband, Jeff, established the Eagles for Recovery Scholarship, which was awarded for the first time this year.

The \$1,000-a-year scholarship is open to anyone whose life has been directly affected by drug and alcohol addiction.

Substance abuse has had an intensely personal impact on the Orlando-area native’s life. She’s endured the devastation of losing her older sister, Maria, to multiple drug intoxication in 2011. That led their younger brother to seek assistance in getting sober.

McDowell’s brother found help at the Justin’s Place Recovery Program at St. Matthew’s House in Naples while she attended FGCU. That, in turn, led her to volunteer with the Justin’s Place women’s program for several semesters, starting in 2013, as part of the university’s service-learning requirement.

“Through that experience I felt called to start working in the addiction-treatment field,” she said. “Also, I’ve had my own personal journey in recovery, as have multiple family members. And my husband has lost two brothers to addiction, so we just have really big hearts and a passion for addiction treatment.

LEARN MORE

To learn more about Eagles for Recovery and other ways to contribute, visit fgcu.edu/advancement/foundation or call (239) 590-1067.

PHOTO BY BRIAN TIETZ

That's why I wanted to create a scholarship, but not just for students in recovery. The scholarship is also open to students who've lost a loved one to an overdose or maybe their parents are in recovery or still struggling with addiction."

McDowell ('14, Sociology) cited a second motivator for starting the Eagles for Recovery Scholarship: the thrill of having been a scholarship recipient herself while at FGCU. One was from the Sanibel Captiva Trust Company. Another was the 2013 President Wilson G. and Jo Anna Bradshaw Scholarship.

"I was able to attend the President's Scholarship Luncheon and meet my sponsors and donors," she said. "It was just a really incredible experience. It was always on my heart that when I got to a place where I could create a scholarship, I wanted to. This year marks 10 years since my sister passed and 10 years of my own personal journey in recovery. It was just really meaningful for me to be able to come back and to establish a scholarship and bring hope to others. I'm just really excited."

After graduation, McDowell and her husband moved to Columbia, South Carolina, for five years for his job. While there, she earned an MBA from Columbia International University. For the last eight years, she's worked in the addiction-and-recovery fields, in South Carolina and Florida, where she's a state certified recovery support specialist and a certified recovery residence administrator.

"It was always on my heart that when I got to a place where I could create a scholarship, I wanted to."

ELIZABETH 'LIZ' MCDOWELL,
'14, SOCIOLOGY

The couple recently moved back to this area, with her husband becoming the new senior director for the men's program at Justin's Place, which is where they first met. The couple has two children, 3-year-old daughter Faylee, and 1-year-old son Perrin. Liz McDowell currently is exploring employment opportunities.

The McDowells donated \$5,000 to create the scholarship.

"Moving forward, I would love to give more," said McDowell. "Right now, with a young family and working in social services, we aren't financially able to do more, but that is our hope and goal for the future."

She's also hoping that the scholarship will eventually become endowed, which requires a minimum donation of \$25,000, and which will mean it will continue on in perpetuity.

McDowell became emotional when discussing what it means to achieve her goal of creating Eagles for Recovery.

"It really, really brings a lot of gratitude to come full circle from being a student, receiving scholarships, really my whole journey, and to attend the scholarship luncheon and to meet my donors." ■

SOCCKER LOVERS FUND MUCH-NEEDED NEW TURF FOR FGCU FIELDS

Larry Pickering and his wife, Susanne, are Missouri transplants who love Eagles athletics.

It began when they purchased season tickets for men's and women's basketball. Then they started sponsoring academic scholarships for the student-athletes.

"Then I got more involved," Pickering said. "I joined the athletic board four years ago, then the executive committee."

The Pickerings started sponsoring soccer scholarships. "We have six grandchildren and two are really good soccer players," he said. "They got us interested so we watch some soccer. I'm always amazed at what fantastic athletes they are."

The couple have funded several men's soccer scholarships. "One of the players has just gone pro and he still stays in touch," Pickering said.

Pickering said he and his wife have also become good friends with men's soccer coach Jesse Cormier and his wife, Amy.

So, when Cormier told him the soccer field was in bad shape and in dire need of significant upgrades to prevent further injuries to the student-athletes, Pickering stepped up. Through the family's foundation, they donated the funds needed to rework the field, adding sand topped with new turf.

Besides being safer, "the new turf requires about 39 percent less water," Pickering said, and should change our ability to recruit good players."

Cormier says the athletics department is extremely grateful for the Pickerings' friendship.

"What Larry and Susanne give FGCU goes far beyond the financial support," Cormier said. "They're amazing people first. Their selfless nature, character, wisdom, generosity and support of our campus community, athletic department and our soccer programs fuels us all and has had a dramatic impact on the success of our institution."

In honor of the gift, the teams now play on Pickering Field at the FGCU Soccer Complex.

"We are so thankful for the amazing generosity of Larry and Susanne in making this project come to life and for their overall support of the university and athletics," said women's soccer head coach Jim Blankenship. "The Pickerings' investment in FGCU soccer not only benefits our current team, but will impact future generations of young men and women as well. We hope to make them proud and are truly honored and humbled to play our home contests at Pickering Field."

Pickering is enjoying watching the teams play on the new turf. "It gives us a lot of pride to see the nice field that is helping to minimize injuries," he said. ■

- Karen Feldman



Colloquium inspires sustainable mindset

TRAVERSING KNEE-DEEP WATER AND learning about the ecosystem in Southwest Florida is an integral piece of the course work for all undergraduates who attend FGCU. The FGCU University Colloquium is a unique and hard-to-measure experiential learning opportunity to introduce students, no matter the major, to the sustainability mission and goals of FGCU.

The course brings lessons in the environment and our impacts as citizens and is a direct indication of the substantial effect of the long-term benefits of exposure to science and sustainability.

Envisioned as environmental education and maintained over FGCU's 25 years of existence, the course not only creates new knowledge but implements knowledge to foster change using living labs to teach and promote sustainability.

Jessica Marcolini ('12, M.S., Environmental Studies) is an instructor in Sustainability, Service Learning, Civic Engagement and Environmental Science and leads a Colloquium class. Marcolini earned her undergraduate and master's degrees at FGCU, focusing specifically on the outcomes of the University Colloquium and the value that FGCU students bring to their communities.

"We look to meet students halfway, to identify commonalities and small changes that they can make in their own lives," Marcolini said. "There is no one formula for gaining this type of awareness and making adjustments in our own actions."

Marcolini said that feedback indicates that many students don't see the immediate benefits of the course when they discover that it's required.

Field trips to the CREW Sanctuary, Six Mile Cypress Slough, Lovers Key and various nature trails on campus sometimes bring them out of their comfort zone. But with service-learning projects like the "Dumpster dive," in which students find, weigh and categorize waste on campus and uncover ideas for energy solutions, most graduates discover their experience in the Colloquium course opens their eyes and hearts to another way of looking at their personal approach. Often, reflections on the course describe it as a life-changing experience.

The ripple effect of immersive experiences that guide decision making and effect everyone's sustainable choices is tough to quantify, but Marcolini said that the results of the University Colloquium over the span of a quarter century show an overwhelmingly positive response to the course, especially the fieldwork. ■

— Katy Hennig





Lee County teachers join FGCU faculty for a wet walk in a cypress dome on campus.

PHOTO BY KATY HENNING



Florida Gulf Coast University
FGCU360 Magazine
10501 FGCU Boulevard South
Fort Myers, FL 33965-6565

NON-PROFIT ORG.
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
FT. MYERS, FL
PERMIT NO. 498

COME **CELEBRATE OUR 25th ANNIVERSARY** WITH A FUN-FILLED FGCU DAY, **SATURDAY, FEB. 12**

A colorful, collage-style graphic celebrating FGCU's 25th anniversary. It features various icons and text elements: a map of Florida, a sun, a graduation cap, a 5K medal, palm trees, a bicycle, a bird, and the FGCU tower. The text includes 'SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 12TH', 'FOOD, FAMILY, FUN & GAMES', 'RAIN OR SHINE', 'FGCU 25 YEARS', 'FGCU DAY', '5K FUN RACE/WALK', and a call to action to learn more and schedule the day.

**SATURDAY,
FEBRUARY 12TH**

**FOOD,
FAMILY,
FUN &
GAMES**

**RAIN OR
SHINE**

**FGCU
25
YEARS**

**FGCU
DAY**

**5K FUN
RACE/WALK**

LEARN MORE AND SCHEDULE YOUR DAY AT FGCU.EDU/FGCUDAY