Hospitality students learn fine points of food and beverage business

From sustainability education to eco-friendly art, ethos takes root on campus and beyond

Academy helps teachers make the grade ▶ Alumnus fills county commission seat ▶ SBDC volunteer wins state honors ▶ FGCU fills Rx for health-care professionals

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## Acknowledgement:

Pinnacle magazine thanks The News-Press for the use of photos appearing in the special tribute section to FGCU’s men’s basketball team in the magazine’s fall issue.
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“FGCU will serve as an effective catalyst for economic development”

University plays key role in launching regional initiative to attract business.

Q: The recently formed Southwest Florida Economic Development Alliance is a partnership that includes FGCU, Lee County’s Horizon Council and the Greater Naples Chamber of Commerce. Would you explain the university’s role in the formative stages of the Alliance?

A: The late Richard Pegnetter, founding dean of the Lutgert College of Business, was an early pioneer in the effort to create a regional approach to economic development in Southwest Florida. After he retired as dean, Dr. Pegnetter continued to serve as Special Assistant to the President for Economic Development. He saw the void in the region’s economic presence. He urged the individual economic development entities to come together. If he were here today, I believe he would be proud of the Southwest Florida Economic Development Alliance and the promise it holds. FGCU will continue to serve as an effective catalyst for economic development in our region. We have been an integrator, by providing education and career paths; a facilitator, by hosting events and conferences such as those that created the Alliance; a provider, through our expert faculty and staff resources; a trusted and engaged partner; a workforce developer and a powerful business recruiting tool. The formative phase of the Alliance was facilitated by the Lutgert College of Business Advisory Council, chaired by Laurie Holquist, and Gary Jackson, director of FGCU’s Regional Economic Research Institute (RERI).

Q: What role do you see FGCU playing in the Alliance’s future?

A: Sometimes we will lead and sometimes the leadership will come from others, but FGCU always will be an active participant in the region’s economic development. We will be a catalyst, bringing value to projects on the table. The university also can provide stability. Those involved can count on us and our resources to be available for the long run.

Q: FGCU drives the economy in other ways as well. What is the impact of overall expenditures and job creation, labor income and discretionary spending by students, faculty and staff?

A: RERI’s latest assessment, conducted by Dr. Jackson and released in December, shows that in 2012-13, the university contributed $422 million in expenditures to the five-county region, including capital expenditures, money spent by students and that spent by other businesses to meet the demands of the university and its student body. FGCU also was responsible for the creation of 3,723 jobs throughout the region. That’s a tremendous impact. Even during the recession, FGCU continued growing, adding students, faculty and staff. While our employees and students experienced decreases in discretionary income during the economic downturn, that is beginning to ease and spending is starting to increase. The university isn’t a perfect buffer for economic downturns, but it is a driving force for overcoming them.

Q: How does the Small Business Development Center (SBDC) benefit the region’s economy?

A: More than 80 percent of Southwest Florida businesses employ fewer than 10 people. The SBDC provides a wealth of resources as they start up and expand. In 2012, the SBDC devoted more than 7,450 hours to 1,270 clients. In the process, they helped create 91 new businesses, and created or retained 620 jobs. I believe our SBDC is among the best in the state. It has an experienced and knowledgeable staff. The seminars they provide – how to get a business loan, how to talk to the government, how to create a business plan, to name a few – are invaluable in helping small businesses succeed.
Q&A: PRESIDENT WILSON G. BRADSHAW
(continued from previous page)

Q: What part does providing a more educated workforce play in contributing to a more robust economy?

A: When you look at any region where there’s a highly educated population, you will find a higher quality of life. In general, those who are more educated are more civically engaged. They work to make the community better. They serve on boards and volunteer in countless ways that improve the community economically, socially and culturally. I believe FGCU benefits the region greatly in that respect.

Q: FGCU is itself a major regional employer. What role does FGCU play as one of the region’s largest economic engines?

A: More than 20 years ago, the state of Florida and regional business and political leaders recognized that creating the tenth state university was a good investment in this region. Florida Gulf Coast University has exceeded all of their expectations. Today, with an annual budget in excess of $205 million, we educate 14,000 students and employ more than 1,200 faculty and staff. We are not only educational and research leaders, but we significantly contribute to the region’s vitality in the arts, athletics and community engagement. Investments made in FGCU through scholarships, professorships, buildings and programs have paid off tremendously. Our elected officials, donors, supporters and communities have received a tremendous return on their investments and this will continue well into the future. We are proud of what we’ve accomplished and the people of Southwest Florida should be extremely proud of their institution as well.
The face of scholarship

LIKE EVERYONE WHO HAS GONE TO COLLEGE, I’VE BEEN ON THE RECEIVING end of donation pitches since I graduated. Both the college from which I obtained my bachelor’s degree and the university at which I earned a master’s maintain regular contact via email, phone and snail mail.

I’d been working at Florida Gulf Coast University for less than two weeks when I received my first request to make a pledge here as well. Since then, I’ve been a steady donor, albeit a small one, giving through payroll deduction and increasing the amount a little each year. While I knew I was doing something good, I didn’t give it a lot of thought other than the one time a year when I had to designate how much to give.

That changed this year. As in the past, I requested my gift go toward the First Generation Scholarship program, which helps students who are the first in their families to attend college. Besides being a great cause, the money goes further because the state matches what private donors give.

Just what a difference that makes hit home when I received a letter from Karie Seilberger, scholarship manager, hit home when I received a letter from Lindsey Touchette, director of Alumni Relations and Annual Giving, and Karie Seilberger, scholarship manager, to meet this great cause, the money goes further because the state matches what private donors give.

Karen Feldman with Raegina Washington at this year’s President’s Scholarship Luncheon.

One of five children, she grew up in Sarasota and is the only one of her siblings to go to college. This scholarship, she told me, was one of eight she received and one of 30 she applies for each year.

“My scholarships cover all of my expenses — housing, books, tuition, everything,” she says. “Otherwise I wouldn’t be able to go to school.”

She also holds a part-time job, which she fits in between classes and studying. She’d been planning to major in finance but discovered she likes communication more.

As we parted, she gave me a big hug and another thank you.

I find myself thinking about her frequently, hoping she is doing well and thinking about when she graduates and goes out into the world to make something of herself. Knowing where that money went and how it’s being spent has been planning to major in finance but discovered she likes communication more.

As we parted, she gave me a big hug and another thank you.

A month later, I had the opportunity to meet this articulate, ambitious young woman at the President’s Scholarship Luncheon.

Karen Feldman with Raegina Washington at this year’s President’s Scholarship Luncheon.

My scholarships cover all of my expenses — housing, books, tuition, ‘Otherwise I wouldn’t be able to go to school.’

I find myself thinking about her frequently, hoping she is doing well and thinking about when she graduates and goes out into the world to make something of herself. Knowing where that money went and how it’s being spent has been planning to major in finance but discovered she likes communication more.

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THE DUNK CITY BANDWAGON THESE DAYS INCLUDES A CAST OF thousands. But when Brian Rasnick discovered FGCU, there was no band or wagon, let alone a lime-green pickup truck.

Five years ago, Rasnick, 40, watched a basketball game from the Alico Arena suite of Alico Inc., a client of Rasnick’s Self Insured Plans LLC. He became a frequent guest and started asking questions – the primary one being, “Why aren’t there more students here?” – and making recommendations.

“They turned it on me and said, ‘Great idea, why not put it in place?’ ” Rasnick says. “So we started to get more involved in trying to get students to the games.”

Rasnick and the athletics department came up with “Best of the Nest,” in which students head onto the court and shoot baskets. The person who hits the longest shot wins $100 and returns to compete for $1,000 against other winners at the last game of the year.

That led Athletics Director Ken Kavanagh to ask Rasnick to join the Eagles Club Advisory Board, which raises funds for athletics. Fifteen months later, he was voted chairman – a job that keeps him busy 20 to 30 hours a week.

Rasnick’s passion for FGCU sports is evident in his shrine-like office at Self Insured Plans, too, with its massive logo, framed photos and a piece of the original Alico Arena floor, signed by former men’s basketball coach Andy Enfield, women’s basketball coach Karl Smesko and volleyball coach Dave Nichols.

“I’m now blue and green all the way through,” says Rasnick, a graduate of Denison University.

The piece de resistance is the aforementioned truck, nicknamed the Dunk Truck, which Rasnick bought but shares liberally with the athletics staff. It’s a Ford F-150, painted lime green and blue. It’s a fixture outside Alico Arena and is frequently used to pick up recruits at the airport. Rasnick also wrapped his personal watercraft to match.

“I just thought we needed to get more excitement in the community,” he says, “but as it turns out, it’s even brought national attention to FGCU. The day we put it on campus for the first time, it was all over Facebook, Sports Illustrated, NBC and collegebasketball.com.”

Rasnick’s passion has spread to his family. It isn’t unusual to see three generations of Rasnicks – his parents, Steve and Joanne, Brian, his wife, Melanie, and their three children, William, 9, Cooper, 8 and Addie, 4 – at nearly every basketball, volleyball, baseball and softball game.

“The Rasnick family, led by Brian, has taken hold of FGCU athletics,” says Butch Perchan, FGCU senior associate athletics director for external affairs. “They best represent community involvement and commitment to an emerging athletics program. We are fortunate to have them on our team.”

– Rick Weber
The Rasnick family, led by Brian, has taken hold of FGCU athletics. They best represent community involvement and commitment to an emerging athletics program. We are fortunate to have them on our team.”

- Butch Perchan, FGCU Senior Associate Athletics Director for External Affairs

[ IN THE NEWS ]

Power play

Gov. Scott selects FGCU alumnus to fill Lee County Commission seat.

In Brian Hamman’s Office, A Bright Blue Eagles Sports Towel Catches Visitors’ Eyes — a collegiate splash in a formal setting with framed, black-and-white prints of Florida nature scenes.

“We decided to put that in the office so everyone knows we’ve been,” proudly notes the newest member and vice chairman of the Lee County Commission.

Hamman (’04, Communication) moved into Room 107 of the Old Lee County Courthouse Oct. 29 after being hand-picked by Gov. Rick Scott to fill the vacant District 4 position. Hamman beat out 33 other applicants. At 32, he appears to be the youngest to hold a seat on the county dais.

FGCU political science Professor Peter Bergerson says such appointments are strictly political in nature, although Hamman is a fresh face.

“It’s a compliment,” he says. “He obviously had a lot of people who recommended him. My goodness, it’s rare, and you can say that he stood out. There was something special, something that really attracted the governor.”

After receiving Scott’s evening call, Hamman shared the news with his wife, Rebecca (’04, Human Services), and his parents. He was sworn in and attended his first meeting the next morning. He says it’s been a whirlwind of knowledge-gathering and meetings ever since.

“There are a lot of people who want to meet with you immediately when you take office,” he says. “All of it’s welcomed, and I enjoy getting in and getting right to work.”

District 4 includes 120,000 residents over part of central Fort Myers and the northern portion of the city where Hamman was born and raised: Cape Coral.

His rise to political office began at WINK-TV. As a Cape Coral High School senior, Hamman got a part-time evening job as camera operator. After graduating in 1999, he pursued his associate’s degree at Edison State College, then enrolled at FGCU. Throughout college, he worked in local television, moving from videography to sports reporter. Hamman took a main news anchor position in Joplin, Mo., for 3 ½ years before the couple returned to Lee County, where Hamman became manager of market development for CenturyLink.

In August, he announced his intention to run for the District 4 seat, shortly after Commissioner Tammy Hall resigned after federal prosecutors charged her with misusing campaign funds. Hamman’s seat is up for election in November.

“The biggest reason I got into this is because I want people who grow up here to be able to graduate and find good-paying jobs here in Lee County,” says Hamman, whose top concern is diversifying and growing the regional economy. “FGCU is absolutely part of the fabric, an asset, in our community and part of our future. We want to keep the best and the brightest at home.”

Giving up his CenturyLink job for a high-profile public office “was a tough choice to make but I was willing to make the sacrifice to serve the community and preserve the family way of life,” he says.

– Cathy Chestnut
Barbecue like a pitmaster

Luc Martin lifts the lid off his Weber Smoky Mountain Cooker and a cloud of woodsy smoke hits his sweat-dampened brow. He leans over the grill to slather barbecue sauce on planks of tofu and check the temperature of a grate full of uniformly trimmed chicken thighs that resemble precisely wrapped gifts.

Martin has packed the bullet-shaped grill’s 726 square inches of cooking space with pork shoulder, ribs, rib tips and more for a low, slow smoke over cherry wood. Just another weekend barbecue for a handful of friends at his North Fort Myers pad.

But when it’s competition time, the 27-year-old budding barbecue pitmaster hitches up the big rig, a smoker on wheels with propane tanks welded to the trailer frame. He’ll need to fire up three or four racks of ribs in addition to pork shoulder, chicken and beef brisket for judging. With his ironically named Last Place Barbecue Team, Martin competes in a half-dozen cook-offs a year, most sanctioned by the Florida Barbecue Association. With some major wins in the “backyard” or amateur division under his belt, Martin has graduated to the professional ranks of ’cue competition.

“I’ve learned by trial and error – and reading,” Martin says. “At competitions you learn a lot from other people. We’re usually the youngest team out there. It’s a constant learning process.”

It helps that he completed food handling safety certification when he and a friend owned the now-defunct Cool Hand Luc’s, a hip coffeehouse/soy ice cream shop in Fort Myers that also booked rock bands and exhibited local art. It was “a labor of love,” the Los Angeles native says, that lasted about 18 months.

These days, Martin works as WGCU-FM’s traffic manager, which means he runs the on-air computer systems that keep programming on track. The barbecue? That started as a hobby sparked by “BBQ Pitmasters,” a reality TV show that follows smokers competing for cash and other prizes.

“I didn’t know anything about barbecue, but I wanted to try it,” Martin says. “I just winged it at first.”

For novice smokers, he suggests starting with pork shoulder, also called pork butt
A couple of his key ingredients: banana ketchup (a Filipino condiment made of mashed banana, sugar, vinegar and spices that's available in Asian markets) and rice vinegar. The rest is secret, of course.

- Trim the membrane from a rack of ribs and the excess fat from most meats. "People think fat is always good, but you don't want to bite into a big piece of it," Martin says. "It's really important in competition."
- Martin is a firm believer in low, slow smoking. When the cooker reaches 225-250 degrees, he puts the meat on and maintains the temperature.
- Bigger cuts of meat such as pork shoulder tend to plateau at about 165 degrees. "Two theories on this: one is the fat is starting to render; the other is the water is being sweated out, and the evaporation is cooling off the meat," Martin says. To boost temperature once the meat has a good bark, or crust, you can wrap it in aluminum foil and return it to the cooker. "The wrap accelerates (the heat) and breaks the stall to get to 195-205 degrees. It's important to not overcook meat, as it gets mushy and loses its texture," he says.
- Watch the temperature more than the time, and don't open the grill more than you have to because releasing the heat just adds to cooking time. "You have to be ready to dedicate a day to it. You can't always predict when it's going to be done," Martin says.
- When smoking brisket, choose one of the better USDA beef grades. The three best, based on degree of marbling and the age of the animal at slaughter, are prime, choice and select. "Beef grades are really important for fat content," Martin says. "Brisket is a difficult thing to get down right. Get a good cut of meat, usually choice or better, and just be sure to hit 200 degrees."

- Drew Sterwald

or Boston butt, an inexpensive cut that yields pulled pork. "It's the hardest to mess up," he says. "As long as you get it to 190 degrees, it's going to be good."

Some other tips gleaned from his experience:
- Try commercial spice rubs and sauces before deciding what flavors you prefer and developing your own recipes. Every region has its own signature barbecue style. Florida's is sweet – as opposed to vinegar or mustard based, Martin says.
Richard Pegnetter, founding business dean, dies

RICHARD PEGNETTER, FOUNDING DEAN OF THE LUTGERT COLLEGE OF Business, died Sept. 9, after a brief illness.

“Dr. Pegnetter’s attributes and abilities successfully crossed a wide spectrum — from corporate board rooms to the back woods where he loved to hike and fish,” said President Wilson G. Bradshaw. “He was intensely present wherever he was and I think this is just one of the secrets to his great success.”

He came to FGCU in its infancy and revered in creating a business school from scratch, hiring the faculty and developing a curriculum that balanced practical application with theoretical principles. He led the college to attain the gold standard of accreditation with the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business, and helped the college achieve the distinction of being listed among the Princeton Review’s best business schools in the country.

He also reached out to colleagues around the world, establishing partnerships with universities in Germany, Mexico and China, among other places.

Bradshaw said, “His legacy of bringing people together has been critical to the success of this institution and its programs.”

In 2007, when then-President William Merwin resigned, he served as interim president for seven months, until Bradshaw filled the post.

He also incubated the U.A. Whitaker School of Engineering, growing it until it became a standalone college. He retired in January 2011, continuing to serve as Special Assistant to the President for Economic Development.

FGCU has established the Dr. Richard Pegnetter Scholarship Endowed Fund. Gifts may be made at www.fgcu.edu/foundation. Mail checks (payable to the FGCU Foundation) to Florida Gulf Coast University Foundation, Attn: Dr. Richard Pegnetter Scholarship, 10501 FGCU Blvd. South, Fort Myers, FL 33965-6565.
Dr. Pegnetter’s attributes and abilities successfully crossed a wide spectrum – from corporate board rooms to the back woods where he loved to hike and fish. He was intensely present wherever he was and I think this is just one of the secrets to his great success.”

– FGCU President Wilson G. Bradshaw

[ IN THE NEWS ]

Giving her all
Barbara Melvin takes volunteering to the extreme.

“Good luck trying to have an uninterrupted conversation with Barbara Melvin in a public place on the FGCU campus.”

Outside the Cohen Center ballroom before an appearance by author, musician and screenwriter James McBride, a private chat is impossible with Melvin, a Naples bank executive and frequent visitor to FGCU as volunteer, mentor, speaker and, on this night, a resident who enjoys the diverse programs the university offers. Never more than a few minutes go by before someone offers a polite “excuse me” then embraces Melvin in a warm hug and heartfelt greeting.

It seems everyone wants a piece of this engaging woman. By day, Melvin, a native of Blackstone, Va., who moved to Detroit before a banking promotion led her to the Sunshine State 12 years ago, is vice president and business development officer for Wells Fargo. But she’s also got volunteering game that likely could make the cut on Mother Teresa’s roster of those who selflessly give their time, talent and love.

“I’m a member of 12 boards,” Melvin says. “Thankfully, many only meet once a month, so I’m able to get around and help as many people as I can.”

Her crown of benevolence includes jobs as president of Dress for Success SW Florida and vice presidencies with the Collier County branches of the NAACP and the Haitian Coalition. The most recent jewel in that crown has everyone sparkling with pride at FGCU’s Small Business Development Center: Melvin was named Florida’s 2013 SBDC volunteer of the year, a distinction that followed her honor as top regional volunteer.

“I was shocked,” Melvin says about the September trip to the Orlando SBDC convention, where she received the statewide award. She had no clue she’d been nominated by Suzanne Specht, assistant director of FGCU’s SBDC – part of a federal program that offers guidance to start-up and existing small businesses throughout Southwest Florida.

“Good luck trying to have an uninterrupted conversation with Barbara Melvin in a public place on the FGCU campus.”

“I especially like reaching out to those who need help in the rural areas, like Immokalee. It’s all about passing it along, being a positive role model.”

— Barbara Melvin

Melvin’s award showcases the remarkable woman who serves on the center’s advisory board and is president of its underlying Small Business Resource Network.

Although Specht has a banking background, Melvin is “her banker … the one I go to when I need someone to talk to clients about banking.”

“Barbara knows the value of what we do, and she’s a real cheerleader for us,” Specht says. “She has a passion for small business – and the same passion for the SBDC that we do.”

For Melvin, it’s about sharing the savvy that a 22-year ascension from part-time bank teller to vice president has brought her.

“I love to teach, love to show people how to qualify for loans, how to manage their books,” she says. “I especially like reaching out to those who need help in the rural areas, like Immokalee. It’s all about passing it along, being a positive role model.”

— Keith Gibson
[ MAKE A DIFFERENCE DAY ]

Joined in service
FGCU, Wells Fargo team up to help area nonprofits.

EVEN THE WEATHER PITCHED IN TO CREATE A MAKE A DIFFERENCE DAY TO remember as more than 250 FGCU students, alumni, faculty and staff combined forces with 75 Wells Fargo team members to assist not-for-profits complete much-needed projects.

“We can make a bigger difference when we partner with others, and Wells Fargo is a great community partner,” FGCU President Wilson G. Bradshaw told the group beneath sunny skies Oct. 26. “Together we’re helping to make a difference in the community, not just on Make a Difference Day, but every day.”

Wells Fargo Regional President Derek Jones, who moved to the area recently, said he is impressed by “the power of having everyone together to make a difference. Wells Fargo is excited to have the opportunity to partner with FGCU on this day.”

Jan Fifer, executive director for Special Equestrians, said the group truly appreciates volunteer efforts such as this.

“We have 110 volunteers who help with classes here,” she says, referring to the therapeutic riding classes the organization offers disabled people ages 2 to 75 years. “We can’t ask them to fix things, too, so when groups like FGCU and Wells Fargo come out, it’s an amazing thing.”

Close to 30 FGCU/Wells Fargo volunteers joined about 18 from The News-Press to lend a hand there.

The FGCU Foundation, Alumni Association and Center for Civic Engagement and Service Learning hosted the event for the second year.

A project begun more than 20 years ago by USA Weekend magazine, Make a Difference Day is now among the largest national days of service, with millions of volunteers stepping up to help in their communities.

– Karen Feldman

PLACES AND PROJECTS

Barefoot Beach Preserve, Naples: Cleaned beach, removed exotic species

Bonita Nature Place: Installed aluminum hiking trail signs, cleaned the trail

Cypress Cove, Fort Myers: Helped residents create Facebook accounts, “The Difference Your Life Made” books and refurbished a wheelchair accessible garden

Easter Seals Lily Academy, Naples: Built a raised garden for students

FGCU: Planted trees and beautified grounds, gardened at Food Forest, constructed outdoor room and beautified grounds at Family Resource Center

Gulf Coast Humane Society, Fort Myers: Painted kennels, assisted with a garage sale and car wash

Harry Chapin Food Bank, Fort Myers: Prepared food packages for distribution

Salvation Army, Fort Myers: Cleaned grounds, refurbished basketball court

Special Equestrians, Fort Myers: Constructed a sensory trail activity, helped clear the grounds
WHY THEY GIVE

“You get so much joy out of helping an organization that focuses on helping others. That’s why we come here.”

— Cynthia Rubio, FGCU senior, at Salvation Army

“It’s a great opportunity to support the university and the community. We’re fortunate to be able to do this.”

— Garry Long ('03, Master’s, Education), at Harry Chapin Food Bank

“I enjoy giving back to the community. It’s such a worthwhile cause, and I like the fellowship you gain from this sort of experience. It restores your faith in humanity.”

— Tom DiLello, Wells Fargo team member, at Salvation Army

Top left: FGCU students lend a hand at Special Equestrians.
Above top: More than 300 volunteers from FGCU and Wells Fargo turned out for Make A Difference Day.
Above: Wells Fargo team members pack food at Harry Chapin Food Bank.
Left: Volunteers helped clean up the grounds at The Salvation Army.
Natural attraction
James Wohlpart’s passion for Earth resonates in new work.

When you’re raised with four siblings by a botanist father and stay-at-home mother, you’re bound to spend countless hours outside during long summer days.

“We’d leave before breakfast and not come back till dinner,” says James Wohlpart, who today as an adult still enjoys walking the Earth – as gently as possible – often with family and friends, but also alone.

Wohlpart’s new book doesn’t hide the dean of Undergraduate Studies and English professor’s passion for roaming landscape and pondering nature. “Walking in the Land of Many Gods: Remembering Sacred Reason in Contemporary Environmental Literature” (University of Georgia Press, 2013) examines how we are placed on Earth and what our relationship is to the world around us. It delves into how our thinking affects the way we relate to the world.

He explores three literary works in the book: Janisse Ray’s “Ecology of a Cracker Childhood,” Terry Tempest Williams’ “Refuge: An Unnatural History of Family and Place” and Linda Hogan’s “Dwellings: A Spiritual History of the Living World.” The three authors’ questions and insightful articulation help Wohlpart confirm and affirm that we fully participate in the ecology of life, writes Simon J. Ortiz, a respected and widely read Native American poet. He critiqued Wohlpart’s book.

The book idea was spawned in 2000, when Wohlpart taught with fellow FGCU Professor Peter Blaze Corcoran, with whom he co-edited “A Voice for Earth: American Writers Respond to the Earth Charter” (University of Georgia Press). He also has co-authored “unspOILed: Writers Speak for Florida's Gulf Coast” with Susan Cerulean and Ray (Red Hills Writers Project).

Although “Walking” is more textbook than leisure reading, early feedback shows it resonates with people seeking better ways to live in tandem with nature.

Nature’s backdrop for Wohlpart comprises Switzerland, Colorado, Texas, Ohio and Tennessee. He moved frequently until FGCU beckoned in 1994. As a founding faculty member, he set up at the branch campus of University of South Florida.

He thought he’d stay two years.

“It was hot, green and flat year-round,” he recalls. “It took me three years to realize the subtle seasons.” Now he speaks enthusiastically about the translucent green of springtime cypress needles and the scent of pine forests at Thanksgiving.

The father of two, whose wife also works at FGCU, cannot imagine leaving. He’s started his next work that will transform “Walking” ideas into something palatable to mainstream readers. Nature will remain a central theme.

“Place and landscape have been important to me all my life,” he says. “I’ve been outside my whole life.”

– Betsy Clayton
[ WHERE ARE THEY NOW ]

Jason Chang, ’99
Entrepreneur serves up tasty business at alma mater.

WHEN JASON CHANG (’99, FINANCE) ATTENDED FGCU, food came out of vending machines. It was, after all, a fledgling university, with a handful of buildings that served as classrooms, student center, library and food dispensary.

After obtaining his MBA at the Thunderbird School of Global Management, then working for several years as an investment banker in Shanghai, Hong Kong, Tokyo, Denver and Seattle, Chang finds himself back at his alma mater, the first alumnus to run a business on campus.

Truly Organic Pizza by Jason opened at FGCU’s Cohen Center on Aug. 15, sharing a food court with Chick-fil-A, Home Zone, Blu Sushi and Jamba Juice.

The idea for a completely organic pizzeria arose from Chang’s desire to feed his two sons – now ages 6 and 4 – healthy food. He opened his first pizzeria in Naples in March 2012.

“We found it difficult to find good food the kids would eat,” says Chang.

The idea came to him one night in bed.

“I woke up my wife and said, ‘We can make junk food better. We don’t have to reinvent the wheel, but we don’t have to compromise either.’”

And Truly Organic Pizza was born.

Combining his business acumen and his zeal for nutritious food, he created his company, opening his Naples location then his FGCU branch, which also offers free delivery to the Estero community within a 5-mile radius of the university.

He uses no fillers and nothing that isn’t USDA-certified organic. Instead, his pizzas contain organic unbleached flour, mozzarella from organic milk, meat from free roaming and grass-fed cattle, heirloom pork and vegetarian-fed chickens. Nothing contains antibiotics, hormones, GMOs or pesticides.

That means he pays more for his ingredients but his 10-inch pies cost a reasonable $6.95-$8.95; the 18-inch versions are $16.95-$26.95 (that’s for the Carnivore, which includes pepperoni and his homemade sausage and meatballs). There are also wild mushroom, eggplant parmigiana, chicken Alfredo, vegetarian and other options as well as design-your-own versions. Salads and calzones are also available.

Chang doesn’t intend to be a one-trick entrepreneur. He owns the rights to trulyorganicburgers.com and trulyorganicsweets.com and hopes to do something with both concepts in the future.

Meanwhile, he isn’t looking for greener pastures.

“We love it here,” he says. “We wanted to raise our family here. It’s nice and clean; the weather’s great.”

And serving pizza to university students is as natural a combination as it gets.

— Karen Feldman

Photo by Ed Clement

Investment banker turned pizza impresario Jason Chang.
On the right course
Pilot House residents learn life lessons while earning degrees.

The finer nuances of conflict-resolution, living within a budget and by the rules aren’t lost on the 18 students living in the Gresham-Kite Pilot Scholarship House at FGCU’s North Lake Village. It’s their way of life.

The women share cooking and cleaning duties and attend mandatory monthly house meetings. They hold “family nights out,” going to campus events, the beach, zumba classes, or stay-at-home study and movie get-togethers.

The Pilot House combines aspects of dormitory life and apartment sharing in a communal environment overseen by a house manager and a board of directors made up of residents. The house receives moral and monetary support from the nonprofit Pilot International, both state and local chapters in Naples and Fort Myers. But the FGCU students are responsible for running things.

“You have social needs that need to be met, and you have study needs that need to be met,” says house manager Yvette Mesa, a junior biology major from Fort Lauderdale who has lived in the house for all of her college experience. “When there’s an issue, it’s instantly solved, at least, that’s the goal. A positive attitude is contagious, and so is a negative attitude.”

Policies govern alcohol, guest visitations and other matters, but adhering to the rules has major financial benefits: Students live rent-free – a savings of about $10,000 a year. Residents are chosen based on academic excellence, character, citizenship and financial need. They must maintain a GPA of 3.0 or higher. The scholarships, annual operation and placement are overseen by the Southern Scholarship Foundation.

Brittany Thompson appreciates that she earns 70 hours of community service each semester while serving as house president. For the business management major from Port Charlotte, living at the house has made college affordable. She embraces the lessons it presents.

“You have to live as an adult faster than you would if you lived in a dorm or apartment because you don’t get things, you have to budget and plan for them, and it turns into a habit,” she says.

The Gresham-Kite Pilot Scholarship House opened in 2003. Its 10th anniversary celebration is slated for Jan. 16. It is named for Fort Myers sisters Francine Gresham and Barbara “Bobbie” Kite, both members of the Pilot Club, who each donated $75,000. The houses are supported through “showers” that Pilot Club members stage, donating items such as cleaning supplies, groceries and furnishings.

Longtime Fort Myers resident and Pilot Club member Linda Hessler says, “They’re near and dear to my heart, I envision that with their goals, they will be successful and they will take a lot of different paths in their lives. It’s a good education for them when they get in the real world.”

— Cathy Chestnut
Murder by the numbers

Database may lead to better understanding and tracking of serial killers.

WHEN KRISTIN ELINK-SCHUURMAN-LAURA DECIDED TO WRITE her master’s thesis on serial killers with military backgrounds, she needed to compare data on those who had been in the military and those who had not.

While the topic itself seems daunting enough, she found that getting access to such information was a monumental undertaking.

First, the FGCU graduate student approached the FBI. “They said they don’t keep a database of serial killers and even if they did, it would not be available to college students,” she says.

She eventually found Mike Aamodt, professor emeritus of psychology at Radford University in Virginia, who maintained his own database on serial killers and was happy to share it.

Using the data Aamodt collected over 20 years, Elink-Schuurman-Laura (‘12, Master’s, Criminal Forensic Studies) was able to statistically determine that military training did not necessarily make serial killers more vicious, although it might make them more likely to use a gun.

Aamodt’s information – compiled in large part through student class projects – was assembled on an Excel spreadsheet, so it wasn’t easily accessible to the public.

Elink-Schuurman-Laura and Duane Dobbert, an FGCU forensic studies professor who teaches and writes extensively about serial killers, saw an opportunity for FGCU to broaden access to the database and help it grow. With the assistance of Elink-Schuurman-Laura’s husband, Brian, who handled the computer coding, they created what’s now known as the Radford/FGCU Serial Killer Database, a searchable repository that includes information on more than 3,200 serial killers, mass murderers, spree killers and others. Those involved hope students will perform service learning hours to help continue building it.

“I’m excited,” Aamodt says of the collaboration. “I’d gotten to the point where I needed some fresh thinking. I’m in psychology. They (the FGCU team) are in forensics. It’s a different way of thinking.”

Elink-Schuurman-Laura describes the project as “a labor of love.”

“When I first saw Dr. Aamodt’s database I thought ‘Wow! This is amazing. But I think I can make it better,’” she says. “I wanted it to be available to all the other researchers out there as well. The problem with serial killer research is there is not enough quantitative research. There’s plenty of qualitative research, but you can’t make generalizations out of case studies.”

Dobbert, her former professor, is equally enthused.

“To the best of our knowledge, this is the largest privately held serial and spree murder database in the world,” he says. Additions to the meticulously kept database must include documentation and are reviewed by a committee to ensure accuracy. Access to the system is strictly limited to those conducting research from an accredited university or a law enforcement agency. They can search the site by the name of the murderer or victim, or by dozens of criteria such as victim preference, location, method, sexual orientation and whether the person had a history of cruelty to animals (often a precursor).

“The research and application potential from this database is immeasurable,” says Dobbert.

When he testifies as an expert witness in trials, for example, rather than basing recommendations strictly on his extensive experience, he hopes eventually to be able to use data to predict whether a particular person will kill again.

Dobbert believes that the database will lead to statistical models that will prove invaluable in developing new ways to understand serial killers and “will also be immensely valuable in assisting law enforcement in delineating suspect groups. This database has the potential to be one of the most important contributions to the system of jurisprudence in decades.”

— Karen Feldman

MORE INFO

The website is http://skdb.fgcu.edu. To find out more, contact Kristin Elink-Schuurman-Laura at kelink@fgcu.edu.
Entrepreneurship 101
Algenol team nurtures inventive nature in honors students.

WATERPROOF OIL TO PROTECT SKATEBOARD WHEEL BEARINGS from rusting. An enzymatic inhibitor that would help prevent tooth decay. A system that converts cow manure into energy to power home generators. An inflatable pillow built into a backpack.

These are but a few of the items dreamed up by FGCU honors students this fall, the end products of a biotech entrepreneurship course led by a team of Algenol Biofuels experts.

That team included Paul Woods, the firm’s CEO and founder, who first shared with the class the story of the Lee County company’s efforts to produce low-cost ethanol from algae using a method he invented while he was in college. Toward the end of the semester, Woods returned to talk about Algenol’s future and to bat around the students’ ideas for the products they would pitch as the culmination of the class.

Mitch Ruzek, program director and educational liaison for Algenol, served as the primary instructor. He says he and Woods thought it would be a good fit with the multitude of STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) projects the company has been involved with around the region and would build on the occasional lectures and assistance Algenol staffers offer on campus. They designed the course in collaboration with Sean Kelly, director of the honors program, and Ron Toll, FGCU provost and vice president for Academic Affairs.

“The ultimate goal here was to use ourselves as a template,” Ruzek says. “If we made really green fuel, it’s wonderful for the planet. That’s fine, but if it doesn’t make money, we aren’t in business. It puts the muscle behind the fluffy ideas.”

The team decided to “take a lot of smart kids and push them beyond what they thought they could do,” Ruzek says, by exposing them to concepts that make them think beyond simply becoming an engineer, a lawyer or doctor.

“The students had two lectures with Paul. It’s hard to get a meeting with him let alone two lectures,” he says. “There were no questions we wouldn’t answer. We laid out what it takes to go from concept to commercialization of an idea.”
Woods told the students that they needed “a good idea, a passionate delivery and to show that the idea would work for us as a society.”

He also shared some of his management philosophies, which included, “You have to know when to micromanage and when to macromanage. Is it your specialty? That’s when you play a larger role. If it’s an area that’s not your expertise, find a partner. Even if you are an expert, it’s easy to get overwhelmed. You have to teach others and not try to do it all yourself.”

Ruzek believes the course was especially good for female students. “We find it’s hard to find top-notch women in science fields,” he says. “This class had a good cross section – business students, chemistry, biology, physics, math. Take a good cross section of men and women and let them know they can do this. Gender is irrelevant.”

Kelly sees value in this course no matter what discipline students are studying. “So many students are going to end up working in industry but don’t see that as a career coming in,” he says. “They say ‘I want to be engineer’ or ‘I’m going into business’ but don’t know what it means. Many students don’t know what it means to be an entrepreneurial company. It’s been great for the students. The scientists get to see the business side and the business students get to see the science side. It’s a great way to teach interdisciplinarity.”

Michael Tolvo, a junior from Deland, has aspirations of becoming a general manager of a sports team but got a lot out of the class, ending with the pitch he and classmate Emily Catizone created for a product called Pillow Pack, essentially a backpack with an inflatable pillow built in, an ideal product for sleep-deprived college students who might use it to catch some shut-eye between classes. “It was exciting,” says the management major, “and it was fascinating to learn about Algenol. A lot of the science stuff was over my head but the class helped me understand what it takes to get a product or idea off the ground.”

Emily Catizone and Michael Tolvo make their pitch for a backpack with an inflatable pillow.
What’s cooking in Sugden

Students learn basics of commercial kitchen management.

The School of Resort & Hospitality Management’s kitchen affords an amount of breathing room that most restaurant chefs would die for. Students taking classes related to catering, food science and restaurant management take turns helping prepare three-course menus for their classmates to serve and evaluate. They may also be called into service to plate a smorgasbord of hors d’oeuvres for one of the special private hospitality events that makes use of the adjacent dining room or wine-tasting facilities. In the kitchen, they learn about safe food storage and handling, operating an arsenal of appliances, developing flavor with herbs and spices and even a little cooking chemistry when making ice cream with liquid nitrogen.

1 HIGH HEAT The gas-fueled salamander, or broiler unit, is used for toasting, browning gratin dishes, melting cheeses on sandwiches and caramelizing desserts such as crème brûlée. The vacuum ventilation hood system above it is the most expensive feature of the kitchen, costing roughly $1,000 a square foot; it removes grease-laden vapors and replaces the air without causing negative air pressure in the kitchen.

2 FIRED UP Visiting instructor James Fraser demonstrates flambé technique on a $5,000 Vulcan commercial-grade 200,000-BTU six-burner gas range. An American Culinary Federation-certified executive chef, Fraser formerly taught at Le Cordon Bleu College of Culinary Arts in Miami and has a master’s degree in business administration.

3 GRILL THRILL A 200,000-BTU Vulcan gas grill has four variable controls so that different spots can be heated to appropriate temperatures for different food. A flat-top griddle and a self-filtering dual basket deep-fryer are out of view.

4 HANDY HEAT Tracks of heat lamps as well as yellow power boxes can be pulled down from the ceiling and retracted for use at various stations.

5 FRESH FOOD A student carts out food items from the walk-in refrigerator and freezer behind him. The kitchen also
has a complete dry pantry, sanitation closet for safely stowing chemicals and cleaning tools and a storage room for banquet and dining dishes.

6 CHOP CHOP Cutting boards are color coded for different uses to avoid cross-contamination of raw meats, vegetables and prepared items.

7 TAKE CARE Teaching safe practices is a constant concern in the kitchen. Elbow-length gloves are worn to apply highly corrosive degreasing chemicals to cooking appliances and ventilation filters, for example. Students wear hair nets and gloves when prepping food. Six hand sinks ensure cleanliness always is within reach.

8 SPECIAL APPS Students learn practical use of a variety of small kitchen appliances such as the professional-grade Robot-Coupe food processor, which comes with myriad accessories and costs several thousand dollars.

9 CLEAN SCENE The steward station is equipped with a commercial-grade dishwasher that cleans at 160 degrees and rinses at 180 so that dishes come out sterile. Three deep sink bays for cleaning large pots are outfitted with retractable water hoses.
Help Wanted

With expansion of access to the health-care system, FGCU steps up to fill critical need for primary care professionals.

By DAYNA HARPSTER

The home page for the new family medicine residency program at Lee Memorial Health System looks like a travel brochure. Enticing photos of the bridge at Lovers Key and a pool at Sanibel Harbour Resort & Spa appear beneath a message from Dr. Gary Goforth, founding director of the program affiliated with the Florida State University College of Medicine. The headline: “Come join us in beautiful Fort Myers, Florida!”

The goal is to lure talented young doctors to this area, hoping they will stay. Estimates are that 60 percent of physicians stay within 60 miles of their residency programs, said Richard Akin, chairman of the Lee Memorial Health System Board of Directors and, for the past 32 years, president and CEO of the nonprofit Healthcare Network of Southwest Florida, serving Collier County.

“There is data that says there may be enough physicians in the whole country if you were to spread them out evenly, but that’s not what happens,” Akin said. “We know they stay in clusters where they train, and they don’t go to rural areas anymore. So you need to train … in places where they’re not going.”

Goforth said applicants to Lee Memorial’s new family medicine residency program are asked about their anticipated practice location, “so we recruit those who would like to stay in Southwest Florida.”

That’s one way to address a coming crisis in primary care in Southwest Florida, where both the established doctors and the population are older than much of the rest of the country.

“In addition to the increased demands placed on the health-care system with the aging baby boomer population, there is a concomitant population of baby boomer physicians who are retiring now,” said Mitchell Cordova, dean of the FGCU College of Health Professions and Social Work. “Additionally, more physicians are retiring earlier due to shrinking reimbursement rates. Collectively, this is leading to a rapid shortage of physicians. “And we aren’t seeing a replenishment of those physicians at nearly the same rate.”

If experts in education and medicine are soothsaying accurately, the competition for health-care professionals is increasing in many fields as the Affordable Care Act (ACA) funnels more people into the already overburdened system.

With 24.8 percent of the population younger than 64 uninsured, Florida ranks just behind Texas for the nation’s highest number of uninsured residents. The rates are even higher in Lee (27 percent) and Collier (30 percent) counties.

With the access that the ACA is designed to provide, the health-care system is preparing for a tsunami of demand. As many as 175,000 people in Lee and Collier counties alone are eligible for coverage. Statewide, some 3.5 million people may enter the system.

Cordova and the college’s faculty, in conjunction with university administration and the region’s medical community, have been examining the need for medical personnel in the coming years and adding programs accordingly.

Healing the system and closing the professional gaps in Southwest Florida, as elsewhere, will take time, money and innovation.

“But (innovation) does not shorten the amount of time it takes for a doctor to get through medical school (and residency),” said Brian Bossak, chair of FGCU’s Department of Health Sciences.

That takes roughly 12 years. “The problem is there are not enough (primary care providers) to meet even our current needs,” said Jon Cecil, chief human resources officer for Lee Memorial Health System. “For the past 10 years we’ve been
saying we’ve got a physician shortage and then the state decides to cut funding to medical schools. On top of that, more than 50 percent of graduates of medical schools are female, and they’re graduating in the child-bearing years.”

That makes the amount of debt medical students amass even more of a deterrent, said Cecil.

In an article examining the much-discussed physician shortage, the Nov. 11 issue of the trade weekly Modern Healthcare cites reports in the health-policies journal Health Affairs and the Bureau of Labor Statistics Occupational Outlook Handbook in its argument that non-physician professionals in new health-care delivery models can fill the gap. Nurse practitioners working in retail clinics and pharmacists giving vaccinations and encouraging medication compliance can go a long way.

**Return on investment**

The cost of educating doctors has been increasing steadily for two decades. According to a report by the Association of American Medical Colleges in February 2013, the average doctor graduates with $170,000 in debt. Over the past 20 years, the report says, the average debt and the average cost to attend medical school have consistently risen at nearly three times the rate of inflation. The average debt for a new doctor in 1992 was $50,000.

Residencies last three to seven years, according to the American Medical Association. A U.S. medical resident earns an average of $50,000 per year while shouldering more than three times that amount in debt.

“I really hope we see better funding of students selecting primary care specialties” (typically pediatrics, family and internal medicine), Goforth said. “Students often select high-paying specialties so they can pay off huge student loans, so the government needs to provide better loan repayment or higher compensation for graduates going into primary care if they want to increase the number of primary care physicians.”

Locally, the infant Florida State University family medicine residency program reflects hope in the way of a team approach to medical care. Because FSU does not have an affiliated hospital, its residents train with hospitals, hospices, family health centers and other general practice venues. The result is a graduate who has worked in a variety of settings with different types of professionals, all learning from one another.

**Shift of responsibilities**

Health-care experts agree that lack of access to primary care hurts millions of Americans, including many in Southwest Florida. While the problem has deep and far-ranging roots in history, geography, economics and simple arithmetic, the solution is one on which there is broad consensus.

The answer is the mid-level practitioner: the physician assistant, nurse practitioner and other such professionals.

Graduating more people in these fields – and possibly widening their scopes of practice to allow them more independence – could go far toward solving the problem of primary care access.

But physicians remain somewhat uneasy with that answer.

An article in May in the New England Journal of Medicine confirmed that a controversy over what nurse practitioners in particular can do is alive and well. In a study, about 1,000 professionals nearly evenly split between doctors and nurse practitioners were also split in their views about whether doctors provided higher quality examinations and consultations in a primary care visit. Doctors overwhelmingly said yes; nurse practitioners, no. There was similar disagreement on whether nurse practitioners should be paid at the same rate as doctors for the same service.

At least one local doctor and high-level administrator takes another view: “A mid-level practitioner can do 80 percent of what a family practitioner does,” said Dr. Allen Weiss, president and CEO of NCH Healthcare System in Naples.

With the Affordable Care Act expected to increase demands on the health-care workforce, nurse practitioner jobs are predicted to grow 94 percent from 128,000 in 2008 to 244,000 in 2025, according to a study published in the July issue of Medical Care. The FGCU Primary Health Care Nurse Practitioner Program has increased its enrollment and begun to vigorously market the program to increase the number of enrolled students to help meet the workforce demands of nurse practitioners in primary care locally.

“In response to recommendations from the Institute of Medicine and the National Organization of Nurse Practitioner Faculties that nurses should achieve higher levels of education and training through an improved education system, the School of Nursing has proposed curriculum changes to transition the current MSN Primary Care Nurse Practitioner Program to a Doctor of Nursing Practitioner Practice Program in fall of 2015,” said Anne Nolan, director of FGCU’s School of Nursing.

Local health-management professionals are eager to see the program grow.

“That’s going to be the highest demand position,” said Lee Memorial’s Cecil.

“That’s something FGCU should have on the top of its radar screen.”

Still, nurse practitioners alone won’t meet patient demand for primary care, in Florida or nationwide.

**Looking ahead**

Master’s level physician assistants may also help to fill the primary care need. But more education programs are needed. Among Florida’s public universities, only the University of Florida has a program of study in place. The University of South Florida is expected to seat a class in summer 2015, said Cordova.

FGCU plans to help fill the void. Cordova said the university filed
paperwork in 2012 to begin the process of adding a master’s level physician assistant studies program in “anticipation of the need to expand the delivery of primary care in our region with the implementation of the ACA.”

“We have been granted approval by the Florida Board of Governors to begin planning for our PA program,” he said. “We have also received approval from the Accreditation Review Commission on Education for the Physician Assistant to pursue provisional accreditation.”

If all goes as scheduled, the commission will review FGCU’s program plan in March 2017 and the first group of students will be seated that summer, according to Cordova.

Meanwhile, the nonprofit Florida Center for Nursing last year predicted that the state will run short of registered nurses in 2015 by 11,000 openings, and in 2025, by 50,000 openings.

Toward that goal, other coursework is under consideration at FGCU to educate wellness professionals, said Bossak, chair of the Department of Health Sciences. As the health care philosophy in the United States slowly shifts from treating disease to preventing illness, “we are exploring the frontiers of healthy living and the professionals that might be needed,” he said.

Cecil and Randy Toscano, a Lee Memorial human resources business partner and workforce planner, anticipate increased need for professionals in health informatics – an evolving science that seeks to best use technology to improve health, encompassing everything from electronic records use to telemedicine to the way technology is used in medical testing.

As technology picks up some of the critical thinking, Cecil said, medicine will need more licensed practical nurses, physical therapy technicians and pharmacy technicians. And with that continued focus on prevention, medical educators will be in higher demand.

"I think you’re going to see a lot of health coaches," said Weiss of NCH. “Exercise and health-care educators will be even more important because it’s so much more efficient for people not to be obese and end up with diabetes (for example).”

Cordova said the university is working to meet demand in this field as well. “FGCU’s bachelor’s degree program in exercise science is perfect to fit this paradigm as our program focuses on the importance and use of physical activity and exercise in helping prevent and treat a number of musculoskeletal conditions, cardiovascular disease and metabolic syndromes that afflict millions of people,” he said.

With the changes that will inevitably come with the new health-care program, health-care professionals are going to have to approach their jobs differently, Cordova said.

“As the ACA continues to be implemented, the way in which providers and educators view health-care delivery must change,” he said. “There is a sharp transition occurring where the focus is now shifted to value-based health care and not the traditional volume-based model. The emphasis now is clearly on outcomes (patient safety and quality) and this change needs to be embraced. Moreover, with the continued advancements made in health informatics, health-care delivery processes and systems need to continue to work towards efficiencies and access through telemedicine and advanced remote medical technologies.”

Regardless of how health-care delivery continues to unfold in the United States, “we just can’t continue to spend the amount of money we’ve been spending and having the outcomes we’ve been having,” Weiss said. “All of health care has to evolve.”

It’s safe to say that the health-care system, and primary care in particular, will undergo some growing pains in the next few years. But institutions like FGCU are listening, anticipating and adapting to the educational needs of a complex system that is still very much in flux.
CESE celebrates decade of scholarship, education and action to elevate FGCU’s environmental and sustainability mission.

Environmental sustainability interested Brandon Hollingshead as an FGCU undergrad, but he didn’t realize how much it meant to him until the semester he enrolled in a course called “Environmental Literature.” Peter Blaze Corcoran and James Wohlpart led the class, exploring human connections to the environment in literary works from the 19th century to today, nurturing an appreciation of the sense of place here in the western Florida Everglades and teaching students to listen to nature and understand its unique language. Hollingshead learned that Corcoran and Wohlpart were part of a group establishing FGCU’s Center for Environmental and Sustainability Education (CESE) to support and strengthen the university’s ecological mission.
“Peter plucked me out and said, ‘Why don’t you help out?’” recalls Hollingshead (’05, Communication). “I was involved pretty much from the first month. As a student, it gave me the opportunity to work with leaders in the field of environmental sustainability education and to do high quality research. I saw the center bring together people on campus – other scholars, local community members. The connections that can come from committed people working together are really valuable. The center was the conduit that led me to find my voice. It led me almost directly into grad school.”

As the CESE celebrates its 10th anniversary in February, Hollingshead represents a shining example of its achievements promoting scholarship, education and action around sustainability. As a student, he collaborated with faculty on research, programming and publishing. After completing his master’s in environmental humanities at the University of Utah, he returned to FGCU as an instructor in interdisciplinary studies and civic engagement and as a member of CESE’s leadership team.

“He worked himself up from dishwasher at a fundraiser to being editorial associate and now a faculty member,” recalls Corcoran, CESE director and a professor of environmental studies and education. “He’s truly one of the center’s success stories.”

One of FGCU’s seven academic centers and institutes, the Center for Environmental and Sustainability Education might be best known on campus for its signature events, the Rachel Carson Distinguished Lecture and the Terry Tempest Williams Student Dialogue. These annual programs have brought international scholars, authors and activists to Fort Myers to discuss issues such as conservation, social justice, food ethics and the connections linking environment, politics and climate destabilization.

But the center’s reach goes far deeper. Over the past decade, CESE has spread its roots throughout campus through faculty associates who have incorporated its core values in curriculum from art to engineering and through efforts to influence daily operations from tray-less food service with cage-free eggs to recycling waste into energy. Through small grants, it has seeded projects that send students and faculty abroad to learn and teach, in the process changing young people’s lives and touching folks around the globe. Corcoran is most proud of the center’s scholarship; it has published or collaborated on seven books on environmental and sustainability topics and has another forthcoming in 2014 as part of a series funded by the Dutch government.

“To establish a reputation globally, you have to produce scholarship,” he says. “We have a very strong record of publication for a young center.”

Corcoran’s connections in the field also have attracted world-class leaders to the center’s advisory board and generated international attention for FGCU.

“We may take it for granted because (sustainability education) is really embedded in what we do at FGCU – it’s just what we do here,” says Wohlpart, now dean of undergraduate studies. “The untold story is how the center works to incorporate sustainability in curriculum, the changes that have happened, the courses that have been redesigned to incorporate the Earth Charter and sustainability. We have gotten an international reputation for work in sustainability education.”

The pillars of the CESE – environmental scholarship, education and action – are embedded in the foundation of the Earth Charter.

In recognition of its eco-minded mission, FGCU signed on as an Earth Charter Initiative affiliate in 2009. Hundreds of other universities, cities and countries, faith communities, youth groups and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) have endorsed the charter, but only a small number are affiliates. The initiative launched in 2000 to promote the charter’s principles: ecological integrity; social and economic justice; democracy, nonviolence and peace; and respect and care for the community of life.

FGCU’s commitment to such ideals goes back even further to its founding, Corcoran acknowledges.

“The university started with the dream that we could create an institution deeply involved in environmental sustainability,” he says. “The center advisory board members were taken with the notion that a university could put sustainability at the heart of what it’s doing. We have a bold vision as a university that really does attract attention.”

Current board members include movers and shakers in a variety of fields: David Orr, an Oberlin College professor and high-profile figure in sustainability education; Vikki Spruill, president and CEO of the Council on Foundations, a nonprofit national association of grant-making foundations; Akpezi Ogbuigwe, coordinator of ecosystems management at the United Nations Environment Programme in Nairobi, Kenya; and Mary Evelyn Tucker, a

The Center for Environmental and Sustainability Education is an extraordinary effort at a very special university clearly dedicated to sustainability and to environmental education. There are not many places that combine science and social science and in particular, values and ethics.”

— Mary Evelyn Tucker,
Forum on Religion and Ecology,
Yale University;
CESE advisory board member

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Yale University professor and co-director of the Forum on Religion and Ecology at Yale. Sharon Bevins, an associate professor of physical therapy and an early CESE faculty associate, recalls feeling a bit awed introducing Steven Rockefeller, one of the Earth Charter’s principal creators, at the 2009 Rachel Carson Distinguished Lecture. “This is a prime example of the center’s uniqueness,” she says. “Internationally known people come to these signature events. At the time FGCU was founded no other university in the country required students to complete a course in environmental literacy. When I present at conferences, I see people from countries all over the world, and they’re very interested.”

High-profile visitors aside, Bevins’ dedication to CESE stems from working with individual faculty members interested in integrating the center’s tenets into their courses; if they achieve this goal, they are named CESE faculty associates. Some have received CESE grants of a few hundred dollars to $1,000 to help develop curriculum around “green” chemistry, the sociology of food, a first-year humanities seminar and sustainability in civil and environmental engineering. Programs must align with Earth Charter principles to qualify for grants, which total about $10,000 a year.

“I like to be able to have contact with faculty members across the university and figure out how disciplines overlap,” Bevins says. “They all meet somewhere, and at the center of that is CESE. Some of the most rewarding activities I’ve done on campus have revolved around the center. It’s not a physical place, but it exists in our minds and hearts. We meet through philosophical connections.”

Many of those closely aligned with the CESE credit its leader’s Energizer Bunny drive, personable style and globe-spanning connections for much of its success. Corcoran is a visiting professor at universities in Malaysia, Kenya and Fiji and is a senior adviser to Earth Charter International based in Costa Rica.

Constantly on the move, Corcoran left the United States this fall on a 10-month Fulbright Program to advance the legacy of Nobel Peace Prize laureate Wangari Muta Maathai at the Institute for Peace and Environmental Studies named after her in Kenya. He returned briefly in November for a CESE fundraising cruise with 2012 inaugural poet Richard Blanco. Naturally, Corcoran worked the crowd in his signature Panama hat and bow tie.

“Peter is a wonderful ambassador for FGCU,” Bevins says. “More than once I’ve been at a conference, and when I say I’m from FGCU they say ‘Oh, that’s where Peter Corcoran is.’”

Photo courtesy of Sasha Wohlpart

Briana Stiehl, a senior environmental studies major, works with students at a rural school in Costa Rica. A CESE grant helped fund the trip for 16 students.
“Peter has a galvanizing personality,” adds longtime collaborator Wohlpart. “He brings people together. Sustaining the support of these kinds of people will be the next challenge when Peter decides to retire. He has a strategic plan.”

That’s not the only challenge the center has faced in its 10-year history. The organization’s founding was at least partly spurred by the belief that the university’s commitment to environmental sustainability was weakening as it transitioned from an unconventional start-up school emphasizing distance learning to a more traditional university with typical academic structure and a growing number of students living on campus, according to Corcoran.

From the time the campus site was selected, questions have lingered publicly around FGCU’s “green” image.

“The national mark of distinction for FGCU was this mission of environmental sustainability,” Corcoran says. “By creating an academic center that supports student and faculty scholarship, education and action in sustainability, we thought we could keep the mission strong.”

As with many university programs, funding has been a continual struggle and the center’s biggest challenge, he says. With its budget cut from $77,000 last year to $25,000, Corcoran says, university funding mostly pays for student workers and mailing costs. The center has come to rely almost exclusively on private contributions to fund programs, he says.

Last year alone, CESE awarded 10 grants totaling $5,744 that supported a campus presentation on “Radical Green Building,” the art installation “Puno Mocha: A Project by Cedar Cornejo” and development of curriculum for the new Live-Learn Community for service-learning leadership in South Village.

Art Professor Patricia Fay received $500 to defray travel and lodging expenses for a two-week study abroad experience in the South American nation of Guyana. The trip cost more than $2,000 for each student, so they raised additional money through pottery sales and other fundraisers. Ten students and two faculty members traveled to the remote village of Yupukari, where they learned Macushi Indian life skills and taught arts and crafts classes designed to engage young children and help native artisans develop a commercial pottery market. Students were required to study the Earth Charter beforehand and later report on how they put its principles into practice in the field;

Peter Blaze Corcoran brought global connections in sustainability education to FGCU.
Fay has always looked for ways to connect her curriculum with that mission. “You can only do so much in a classroom,” Fay says. “Going out into the world is one of the most important things students can do because we’re so geographically isolated. Every student has a life-altering experience. It’s collaborative, learning about a community in a different environment. It’s very different from being a tourist. You stop being an observer and connect with the community.”

Students documented their experiences in blog posts that you can read at clubs.fgcu.edu/studyabroadguyana. “This trip has given me a new perspective on what’s out there in the great big world and has given me an understanding of myself I did not have,” writes art major Cydney Chaskey, who admitted she did not know where Guyana was before she signed up.

Adds art major Michelle Manta, “I understand more how much we as humans are connected with nature and made up of the Earth. This is something we tend to forget in our culture.”

To foster student leadership in sustainability and mentoring with faculty, the CESE launched an offshoot in 2008, Student Associates for a Green Environment (SAGE). SAGE has awarded grants for building an anaerobic digester to make energy from campus waste, studying virtual and 3D models as alternatives to biology-class dissections and redeveloping a worm-castings business enterprise at a local autism center.

Working with fellow students to get their projects realized is a labor of love for Andrew Stansell, a senior environmental studies major and CESE student assistant. An avid outdoorsman from Chuluota in rural central Florida, he was attracted to FGCU by its environmental mission and programs. “It’s been really rewarding trying to offer creative solutions and helping people complete projects like planting community gardens,” says Stansell. “I have learned a lot – writing skills, professional skills, editing a website, being able to meet people like David Orr and Mary Evelyn Tucker. I’ve come out more mature and confident.”

Skills such as these will serve students well after they graduate, says Maria Roca, a CESE senior faculty associate. An associate professor and program leader in the Department of Communication and Philosophy, she was instrumental in starting SAGE, partnering students and faculty and advising students on how to complete grant applications and seek corporate donations.

Roca sees those involved in CESE and SAGE as activists – not aggressive, but seeking to build consensus around sustainable living, democracy, peace and social justice. “For me, it’s the most empowering force on campus,” she says. “It’s a community that supports me, not just monetarily, but tells me, ‘Yes, you should do that.’ It’s one of the true jewels in the FGCU crown.”

With help from a CESE grant, FGCU students and faculty spent two weeks in a remote Guyana village where they taught children how to make clay ocarinas and practice other crafts.

CELEBRATING A DECADE

To mark its 10th anniversary, the CESE has invited actress Kauiulani Lee to perform her one-woman show about Rachel Carson, “A Sense of Wonder,” as the annual Rachel Carson Distinguished Lecture on Friday, Feb. 21. Carson is often credited with sparking the environmental movement in the United States. After the performance at Barrier Island Group for the Arts on Sanibel Island, the CESE will hold its 10th annual fundraising celebration. To request tickets or more information, send an email to cese@fgcu.edu or call (239) 590-7444.

“A Sense of Wonder” also will be performed free for students and the public at 7 p.m. Thursday, Feb. 20, in the TheatreLab on the FGCU campus.
Mari DeWees leads the way up the north trail of Cotopaxi.

Upper right: Mari DeWees stops for a rest on her way up the side of Cotopaxi.
Journey of a Lifetime

Professor learns that mountains come in many forms.

By MARI DE WEES
After a year’s planning and a trip of 1,884 miles, I lay sick and wretched on the side of snow-capped Volcano Cotopaxi, just 3,600 feet from my goal.

At 15,744 feet on the side of the mountain near Quito, Ecuador, altitude sickness had overcome me. Head pounding, stomach churning, I lay in the dark, frigid refuge house. Too weak to sit up, I listened as my fellow climbers set out to face bone-chilling 80 mph winds in an effort to make it to the summit.

Although he could have chosen to go with the group, my husband, Andy Bravo (’98, Accounting), stayed by my side, tending to me over eight hours that seemed like days.

When I was able to think about something beyond my miserable condition, I realized that this experience – and its unexpected turn in circumstance – starkly resembled the journey that people with drug and alcohol addictions face as they struggle to free themselves. It was for men attempting to do just that, residents of Justin’s Place, a faith-based drug and alcohol recovery center in Naples, that we had set out to climb the mountain.

At this moment, I felt as if I’d failed them.

Our journey began with a 2012 board meeting at St. Matthew’s House, a Naples charity that aims to transform the lives of the homeless and hungry. It offers emergency shelter, a feeding ministry, a catering business, transitional housing and thrift stores as well as the recovery program. With locations in Naples and Immokalee, the organization houses some 177 people on any given night, serves 237,317 hot meals a year and distributes roughly 8,000 bags of groceries to those in need.

The board members were brainstorming enrichment activities for clients of Justin’s Place, searching for ways to help them succeed as they took part in the yearlong residential recovery program. Sports had always helped me relieve stress. Surely, I thought, it could help these men, too.

Tennis, which takes relatively little in the way of equipment, seemed a good way to start. The Naples Community Tennis Center agreed to charge a reduced rate and, although volunteers were plentiful, we decided to pay instructors so that everyone would take the clinics seriously.
On a scorching July afternoon, I watched 18 men pile out of vans and onto the courts, each clutching one of the used racquets I’d rounded up.

One man remained on the sidelines as he realized he couldn’t play in the flip-flops he wore. Moments later, one of the volunteers quietly handed him the Adidas Barricades he’d been wearing. The man gratefully put them on and took his place on the courts.

It didn’t take long for the tennis players to relax and begin enjoying themselves, letting go of their troubles for a little while as they swung at the balls and took gentle verbal pot shots at one another in the process.

The men enjoyed themselves and it was immediately clear that the program meant something to them.

Of the volunteers, client Andrew Wasch said, “I was moved by the compassion of those willing to take their time and energy to help enrich our lives. Having been involved in athletics most of my life, I was also surprised by how challenging this sport truly is.”

We knew we needed money and volunteers to keep the program going.

J. Webb Horton, former FGCU men’s tennis coach and current assistant director of Community Outreach, stepped in to help, organizing fundraising events and supplying boxes of string, racquets, shoes and toiletries – anything he could get donated to advance our “healthy body, healthy mind” approach.
He also brought FGCU men's head tennis coach C.J. Weber on board and he, in turn, got team members involved so that we were able to put on three clinics a month. The team hosted a tennis clinic on campus as well, after which the Justin's Place residents began asking about college requirements, an encouraging sign they were beginning to think about their lives after rehab.

While we now had more volunteers involved, there was still the matter of money.

When I had climbed Mount Kilimanjaro the year before, I found that everyone was climbing for charity. I hadn't thought about it at the time but now I realized mountain climbing would be a great way to raise money for the clinics and would be a perfect metaphor for the road to recovery.

My husband's family lives in Quito, Ecuador, and many of them have climbed Cotopaxi, which is about the same height as Kilimanjaro. They said they would be willing to help us arrange a climb of Cotopaxi.

We started with a small-scale fundraiser, a scuba experience, where people could face their fear of the water and try scuba diving. Next was a paddleboard event, then a daylong outing at the tennis center that culminated with a '70s dance party on the tennis court. People donated money through Razoo, an online site for not-for-profits.

Meanwhile, my husband and I, Jill and Carter Wheeler and Kim Benedict, all from Naples, prepared for the climb. Over the course of some four months, we wore our hiking boots on the treadmill at the gym. We wore our backpacks while walking the dog, ignoring the peculiar looks from our neighbors. We ran and did strength and endurance training at the gym.

Finally, it was June and we headed south for what we thought would be the adventure of a lifetime.

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I don't remember much from the time when everyone else left the refuge shelter.

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The climb and the clinics have enriched the lives of the men in our programs. We are blessed to have such wonderful and committed community partners. People who give their time and resources can really make a lasting impact.”

— Vann Ellison, president and CEO of St. Matthew’s House, Naples
until well after they returned some eight hours later. Only one member of our group, Carter Wheeler, made it to the summit. The rest of us took vicarious pleasure in his success.

By then I had recovered enough to gather my gear as we prepared to head back to the base. Once back outside, I literally slid down the mountain on my feet, in an ungraceful but effective form of dirt skiing. I was the first one down the mountain and back to the safety and comfort of the minivan.

Much later that night, when I’d regained phone service, I noticed that I’d received several emails while I’d been on the peak. One was from Andrew Wasch, who’d been following our progress via social media.

He thanked us for all we’d done and for raising almost $14,000. He also said that although he knew we were disappointed that we hadn’t made it all the way up, we should know that it was a success beyond the imaginations of all the men in the program.

From their perspective, we had succeeded.

My husband put it this way: “I feel like my journey parallels closely what these guys go through in recovery. There are expectations and disappointments in life. At the end of the day, it can feel like no one believes in you. You just have to rely on yourself at some point.”

I realized that success doesn’t always look like you think it might when you start out and that is all right. In this case it took someone like Andrew who was working through his own far more serious challenges to remind me of that.

We all encounter obstacles, whether they involve substance abuse, family relationships, or problems at work or school. It’s the way in which you rise to the challenge and the support you receive from others that determines whether you succeed or fail.

– Mari DeWees is an assistant professor of sociology at FGCU.
Education Professor Linda Serro, architect of the New Faculty Academy, encourages colleagues enrolled in the academy to share experiences in an effort to develop solutions to problems they encounter in the classroom. Opposite page: Derek Lura, assistant professor of engineering.
here's an old joke about teaching and it goes like this:

Two teachers are walking in the park and one of them says to the other: "I taught my dog to whistle today."

The other replies: "Really? That's amazing. Can I hear it?"

"Well, no, you can't," says the first teacher. "I said I taught him; I didn't say he learned it."

That joke – tired though it may be – stands at the center of an ongoing national debate among educators about teaching and learning. Is it enough to know a discipline extremely well, then walk into a classroom expecting to teach? Some would argue: yes. Learn a discipline well, present it to the students, and if they pay attention, study hard and complete assignments, then they will learn the material.

Increasingly, however, educators are understanding that seldom are things so simple.

Ron Toll, FGCU's provost and vice president for Academic Affairs, entered the classroom for the first time as a teacher 31 years ago. A newly minted Ph.D., Toll's training was comprehensive and his knowledge of his discipline extensive. But he'd never received a single day's training on how to teach. "I literally had no idea about how to pass on the knowledge I'd learned to my students," says Toll. "My auto mechanic, my plumber, my doctor all have extensive training in the techniques of their professions. But not an hour of my academic training had been devoted to teaching me how to teach."

According to Toll, it took years learning teaching techniques by trial and error before he felt he had mastered how to manage a classroom. And over those years, he decided that someday he would do something to address the issue of training new faculty.

New Faculty Academy helps professors improve effectiveness in the classroom.

By KEN SCHEXNAYDER
Photos by BRIAN TIETZ
Someday came in August 2009, when Toll spoke with Linda Serro, a professor in FGCU’s College of Education, about designing a teaching and learning center at FGCU. “I got to put all my dreams and hopes about working with faculty on paper,” says Serro. “Out of that work came the Teaching, Learning, and Assessment Initiative at FGCU. Then last year, I was asked to design the curriculum for an academy at FGCU designed to train new faculty in teaching techniques, classroom management, learning theory, assessment, and understanding the FGCU culture and the students they would be teaching.”

Serro solicited ideas from faculty across the campus. Then she designed the course, including topics such as lesson planning, grading strategies, use of technology, designing materials, course development, creating a syllabus, delivering an effective lecture and other effective teaching techniques.

She refined the course’s approach with Toll, and FGCU’s New Faculty Academy launched in fall 2013. The course: “Reflective Pedagogy in Higher Education: Finding Joy and Success in Teaching.” The name’s a mouthful, but it should be. It represents a couple of decades of thought and the collaboration of some of FGCU’s best faculty. Surprisingly, according to Toll, “the New Faculty Academy is one of the few such academies at any university in the United States dedicated to preparing new faculty to succeed in the classroom.”

Twelve “students” filter in, representing a range of disciplines: chemistry, engineering, mathematics, nursing, philosophy, political science and public affairs. Serro invites each to collect a folder and journal, and to choose a seat at any table. “Take a moment to write in your journal, and describe your teaching philosophy as it exists today,” suggests Serro. “We’ll revisit this later in the semester and take a look at how it has changed.” With that, the New Faculty Academy 2013 commenced.

The New Faculty Academy is one of the few such academies at any university in the United States dedicated to preparing its new faculty to succeed in the classroom.”

— Ron Toll, Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs

The presentations are varied – some inspiring, others heartfelt, funny or challenging work. Graduates celebrate the end of a semester’s pages, somehow strikes the heart of what many new faculty hope for their first year, that is to help their students embrace learning as an adventure, as a means to better understand themselves and their world.

Jingshun Zhang, assistant professor of education, agrees and says he always attempts to help students believe that they can master the subject he is teaching. Ian Campbell, instructor of chemistry, brings the conversation full circle, emphasizing that he learns as much from his students as they do from him.

A presentation on assessment by James Wohlpart, dean of Undergraduate Studies, generates a spirited debate, with Chris DiMattina, an assistant professor of psychology, questioning the state university system’s lack of a coordinated method of assessing how well students learn. His comments lead to a discussion among the group about whether students at each state university enter their first year at the same level of academic preparedness.

During one class, an academy participant expresses some difficulty she is having in the classroom. “No matter what I try, nothing works. I guess I’m just having a bad week,” she says. To which nursing instructor Tara Ryan replies: “You need a big hug.”

Ordinarily, colleagues would offer specific techniques to try with students to round out the rough spot in the class. But sometimes a big hug just might be the perfect prescription, an honest, empathic response to a colleague’s difficulty in the classroom.

It’s the final meeting of the 2013 academy, presentations-on-lessons-learned day. The classroom is full – deans, mentors and assorted visitors who want to hear the presentations and help the New Faculty Academy graduates celebrate the end of a semester’s challenging work.

The presentations are varied – some
entertaining. Derek Lura, an assistant professor of bioengineering, simply takes a chair at the front of the room and chats with his colleagues about what the academy has meant to him. Bob Lee, assistant professor of public affairs, lays out three apples to represent critical elements of teaching, then juggles them as he speaks about how the best teachers incorporate all three in their teaching.

Matt Neubek, instructor of mathematics, says that perhaps the immediate impact the academy has had in his classroom is how he talks with his students about non-course-related material. “I’m very conscious of my being a role model and influence, and not just a teacher,” he says.

Greg Boyce, an assistant professor of chemistry, displays a graphic that he calls the Pedagogy Tree, which describes the foundational concepts of the academy and follows his journey to achieving “joy in teaching.”

Ryan speaks eloquently about how transformative the class has been for her teaching, mentioning the importance of the textbook: Ken Bain’s “What the BEST College Teachers Do.”

“I put together some of the book’s most important sentences to me, and made a poem – or maybe it’s prose – to describe what I took away from the class,” says Ryan.

It is a poem, and a fitting tribute to a semester-long journey that 12 of FGCU’s newest faculty members made together.

**Teaching With Your Mouth Shut**

*Think about the kind of questions you ask yourself when you prepare to teach*

*Am I prepared and willing to make changes in individual class sessions or in the whole course to connect with my students?*

*Create courses that transform their lives, change everything and give them the ability to think on their own*

*Teachers should think about teaching as a serious intellectual act, a kind of scholarship, a creation*

*Moving students from mere performance levels to deeper thinking*

*Encouraging students to think aloud in a non-threatening environment*

*Creating conditions in which most, if not all, of our students realize their potential to learn*

*The most important aspect of my teaching is the relationship of trust that develops between my students and me*

*Successful teachers exhibit trust as an integral part of their attitude and conception*

*The way they thought about their students radiated through every encounter*

*Good teaching is not just a matter of technique*

*Part of being a good teacher is knowing that you always have something new to learn.*
Playing it safe

Newer methods and materials reduce toxic risks for artists and the environment.

WARNING: ART MAY BE HAZARDOUS TO YOUR HEALTH. An extreme message, but one that artists have been grappling with since not long after the first cave-decorating Caravaggios tried to clean their paintbrushes with distilled pine-tree resin.

Inhaling high concentrations of solvents like turpentine, long used to clean oil-based paint and printing plates, can cause dizziness, nausea, fatigue, loss of coordination or coma. Acids used in traditional etching, such as nitric and hydrochloric acids, can corrode skin and irritate eyes, respiratory system and gastrointestinal system. The health hazards of traditional printmaking, as detailed in Princeton University’s “Art Safety Training Guide,” are enough to send a sensible artiste to a less-toxic medium.

Watercolors, anyone?

Fortunately, new materials and methods that don’t risk the health of artists or the environment have been developed since the late 20th century. The importance of artists’ safety, as well as nontoxic and eco-friendly practices, is as ingrained as a coat of primer throughout FGCU’s art programs.

Painting students brush on water-based acrylics rather than oil-based pigments that require solvents like turpentine. A specially ventilated room was designed in which potters can wear ventilation masks while applying glazes that contain metals.

In the department’s nascent printmaking program, students use soy-based, water-soluble inks that clean up with soap and water and explore woodcut printing and drypoint techniques instead of acid etching.

“We as a program are much more sensitive to the use of materials, environmental concerns and students’ health concerns,” says Associate Professor Andrew Owen, who teaches printmaking and drawing. “Traditionally in printmaking, there’s been a heavy reliance on materials that are not good for the artist through years of exposure. We’re not alone in seeking a nontoxic approach. This is a national and international movement.”

As the program grows, Owen hopes to introduce more acid-free alternative techniques, such as printing from a glass matrix (vitreography) and from light-sensitive plates etched by sunlight (solarplate).
Solar printing – what could be more safe and eco-friendly than that? Still, all of these innovations lead one to wonder: Does altering traditional methods and materials compromise the quality of the output?

"I’m still trying to get a handle on that," Owen says. "I am finding that soy inks offer many of the same qualities, such as color depth, but the path to achieving those qualities is different. Consistency is there. So it is the way they are applied, layered and printed that has to be adjusted to."

Printmaking isn’t the only area where safety and environmental concerns come into play, of course. Students in varied disciplines explore these issues from day one, says Program Leader and Associate Professor Morgan T. Paine.

“In our foundation art classes, FGCU art students are required to engage some fairly complex information about the toxicity and environmental impact of the materials they use,” he says. “Our students start to understand the potential dangers inherent in their materials but also how to control their exposure to the risks posed by the materials and technologies they need to use to create stable and enduring work.”

Teaching Laboratory Supervisor Andy Morris is uniquely positioned to address safety measures in the Arts Complex. His background includes some industrial “hazmat” experience, and he polices the use and disposal of materials such as spray paints and chemical solvents in the various studios.

“We very seldom have problems with hazardous materials on this campus,” he says. “We have a room dedicated to mixing and spraying ceramic glazes that has a ventilation hood and filters that catch excess so it doesn’t go into the atmosphere. The students also use respirators. You may not feel the immediate effects of exposure, but these substances can build up in the lungs. We’re all very vigilant about smells.”

Faculty and students go beyond considering their personal safety when it comes to creating art; they weigh how their process may impact the environment and how they might repurpose materials. Ceramic glaze residue, for example, has been dried, mixed with clay and heated in a kiln to create stepping stones for FGCU’s Food Forest. Once fired, the metals in glazes don’t leech out into soil.

“The professors are really good about using recyclable materials,” Morris says. “We have classes based on recycling. We use cardboard from discarded shipping boxes around campus to do sculpture mockups. Once the project is done, the cardboard is recycled.”

Indeed, the “reduce, reuse, recycle” ethos permeates the curriculum in philosophy and practice. Courses such as “History of Art and Ecology” and “Environmental Art” explore “green” themes and art movements focusing on the natural world; students even design and fabricate clothing from recycled materials for a runway fashion show that occurs on Earth Day. Call it wearing your art on your sleeve.

Rebekah Barnes, a sophomore art major from Orlando, says the “Three Rs” philosophy has been incorporated in most of the art classes she has taken.

“I do think it’s important,” she says. “It helps the environment, and it’s a unique way to take something old and make something new.”

One day this fall, she joined other “Methods and Concepts II” classmates in casting small sculptures from melted-down aluminum framing scraps that were donated to the university. Students in digital media and graphic design classes are going green, too, developing eco-friendly packaging and digital promotional materials, says Assistant Professor Michael Salmond.

“Sustainability is a big focus and something design is looking at more and more,” he says. “I’ve had students working on briefs for companies like Goodwill in an effort to promote slightly used clothing as ‘hip’ and environmentally friendlier than buying new clothes. This shows FGCU’s design outreach, commitment to environmental solutions and how design can be used to promote these products."

— Drew Sterwald

SCULPTORS: THE ORIGINAL RECYCLERS

When it comes to recycling materials that otherwise might end up in a landfill and pollute the earth, sculptors were the original early adopters. From Marcel Duchamp’s groundbreaking urinal work “Fountain” in 1917 to Robert Rauschenberg’s 1960s “combines” of disparate objects artists have long repurposed discarded objects and industrial trash as art, says Associate Professor Mary Voytek, who teaches sculpture.

“Sculptors are the best scrappers,” she says. “Give a sculptor a discard, and he or she will think of something creative to do with it.”

How do FGCU sculpture students recycle?

- They break down used shipping boxes from around campus and discarded matte board from frame shops to fashion cardboard mockups before fabricating their projects.
- They melt down metal picture-frame scraps to use in aluminum casting. (Two large bins behind the Arts Complex are stuffed with trimmings donated by Rauschenberg, who lived on Captiva Island.)
- They reuse architectural foam scraps from the building industry.
- They create sculptures from electrical and copper wire purchased from a local scrap-recycling center.
- They turn wooden pallets into shadow-box wall hangings filled with found objects.
- They make jewelry from silver pieces purchased from pawn shops.
LISTENING TO NOVELISTS, SCREENWRITERS, SONGWRITERS, ESSAYISTS and poets talk about writing for four days at the Sanibel Island Writers Conference fired up Tyler Withrow about honing his prose. Just a few days after the November event ended, he already noticed changes in the way he was reading and writing.

“I am thinking about and seeing things that I wasn’t before, and it’s exciting,” said Withrow, 22, who graduated from FGCU in December with a degree in English and psychology. “I now have a better eye for what is and what isn’t important, which is doing wonders for me, especially in the editing phase. I am nowhere near the pinnacle of my writing abilities, and in order to get there I need to read and write in a bunch of different styles until I find my niche.”

Presented by FGCU, the eighth annual Sanibel Island Writers Conference did indeed attract writers in “a bunch of different styles” to share their knowledge with freelance journalists, aspiring writers and others interested in the craft.

Keynote speaker Richard Blanco was chosen by President Barack Obama to write and recite a poem for his second inauguration. Roxane Gay writes essays about the Haitian diaspora as well as steamy fantasies about famous men – including Mr. Rogers. Robert Wilder pens profane letters from the Tooth Fairy and comedic columns about parenting. Dan Bern wrote a dozen songs for the biopic spoof “Walk Hard: The Dewey Cox Story.”

Each shared insights into their experiences, from dreaming up metaphors to crafting creative nonfiction, creating an irresistible narrator to coping with Hollywood rejection.

“It’s like sitting in a room with David Blaine and having him explain how he does his tricks, then saying, ‘Got it? Good. Now you try.’ ” Withrow said. “Writers, avid readers and artists of any kind would benefit greatly from the conference. It’s a great place to solidify your self-identity as an artist.”

Pinnacle followed the Pompano Beach native through a day at the conference that began at 9 a.m. with lots of coffee and a small workshop on screenwriting and ended at 8 p.m. with a packed auditorium for Blanco’s poetry reading. In between: songwriting tips, author readings and a panel discussion with literary agents, editors and publishers.

Withrow had only dabbled in short stories and songs before he began taking creative writing classes at FGCU. This fall he completed “Narrative Techniques” and “Writing Theory & Practice,” courses that got him thinking about pursuing a master of fine arts in fiction.

“I would like to do a compilation of short stories,” he said. “I’m working on a few now. I don’t think I have the attention span for a full-length novel. A short story allows you to explore enough without droning on.”
The conference sessions that taught him the most, he said, were led by essayist Gay and Steve Almond, who has published short stories, creative nonfiction, verse and a memoir. Almond focused on the importance of using a fictional narrator to nurture reader interest and to provide appropriate and pertinent information, Withrow said.

“From these sessions I learned how to develop a balance between showing and telling, which are often needed in equal measure to successfully establish a scene for the reader,” he said. “Ms. Gay explained the necessity of being connected to one’s writing while also being able to remove oneself enough to acknowledge the perspectives of others, especially when they differ from one’s own. It’s OK to explore different ways of life, write about things that make you uncomfortable. Being a psych major, I like to look at internal and external affects a person’s mind has.”

A panel discussion on MFA programs also sparked his interest. As of November, he still sat on the fence but he left Sanibel with a better understanding of what he could gain from a master’s.

“My views of grad school were influenced mainly by individual conversations that I had with some of the authors,” Withrow said. “Some recommended it, others said it wasn’t necessary, but the shared opinion was that grad school gives you the opportunity to hone your skills in the presence of others or loses. That something intensely and desperately despite opposition. As a result of struggle, he wins or loses. That’s the plot of every movie.”

— Drew Sterwald

How to Make it in Hollywood (or Not)

John Dufresne, whose bestselling 1994 novel "Louisiana Power and Light" was a New York Times Notable Book of the Year, led a session on screenwriting at the conference. He was hired to write a screenplay of "Louisiana Power and Light," but the movie never got made. Here are some of Dufresne’s tips and quips:

► "It took 21 drafts before they said we had a first draft. Now they’re selling it as a TV show."

► "If they like it, they’ll tell you what’s wrong with it, how to fix it. Don’t think of it as sacred. No one else will."

► "A screenplay is a blueprint for someone else. It’s the least read form of literature there is."

► "Every (production company) script reader wants to say no as soon as they can. Don’t give them a reason to say no."

► "Your job is to engage the imagination of the person who can get the movie made. Don’t tell the actor (in the script) what emotions to play."

► "Movies are more insistent on plot than novels. There’s one central character who wants something intensely and desperately despite opposition. As a result of struggle, he wins or loses. That’s the plot of every movie."
How sweet it still is

Basketball teams still bask in glow of last year’s national spotlight.

The afterglow shining on Florida Gulf Coast University since the historic Dunk City run by the men’s basketball team in last spring’s NCAA tournament certainly extended beyond the 15 minutes of fame pop artist Andy Warhol promised everyone.

But 7 a.m. on a Tuesday in November?

This was uncharted territory, for sure, unless you’re walking the dog, going to church, stopping for coffee on the way to work … heck, maybe playing golf if you want to beat the heat.

But play a basketball game?

Donnie Wilkie, who does morning-to-night pairings in a high school gym for one of the nation’s top high-school basketball tournaments, the City of Palms Classic in Fort Myers, put it this way: “Conservatively, I’ve scheduled at least 800 games through the years in our tournament. Never one at 7 in the morning.”

Indeed, a sunrise tipoff was the price FGCU happily paid after a Sweet 16 appearance earned the team opening-act billing against Hartford at Alico Arena as the first game in ESPN’s daylong, season-opening college hoops extravaganza Nov. 12. The national-television appearance might have been a tad misleading when it was tagged “Breakfast at the Beach” since the nearest Gulf sand is about 15 miles from the university, but no one cared. The atmosphere outside Alico was electric in the predawn hours, bustling with boisterous students, alumni, faculty, staff, newly converted fans from the community and a swarm of news media, all wide awake and fired up for Dunk City’s triumphant homecoming.

Kim Wallace, coordinator of FGCU alumni programming and membership, said her staff would typically greet about 50 alumni before basketball games last season, but on this morning, hundreds were checking in and chatting at tables set up outside the arena entrance as birds started to chirp and students began to chant. “We’ve never had a turnout like this before,” Wallace said.

Even FGCU President Wilson G. Bradshaw didn’t see this coming. “Not at FGCU, not this soon,” Bradshaw said while mingling with the morning masses in his official “Breakfast at the Beach” T-shirt. “Ken Kavanagh is really teaching us how to be a successful Division I athletics program.”

Of course, there was Kavanagh, FGCU’s athletics director, in a light-brown suit and lime-green tie, working the crowd enthusiastically like the producer of a hit Broadway show at the opening-night after-party. There was a smile and a handshake for everyone he’d see. “Just a great day for FGCU athletics,” Kavanagh said.

The team’s 65-51 win over Hartford before 4,525 crammed-in, jacked-up, ear-rattling fans was almost an afterthought. And Bradshaw even put the feel-good morning in historical perspective. “You know, this really all started with our women’s basketball team,” he said.

Ah yes, the FGCU women. All they’ve done the past 11 years is hit enough 3-pointers behind relentless grit and hustle to win almost 300 games, four Atlantic Sun Conference regular-season titles, an A-Sun tournament championship and make the 2007 NCAA Division II National Championship game to cap an almost-perfect 34-1 season. That resume is incredible in any sport, and there’s a good chance that the team with six consecutive postseason tournament appearances will make a seventh this season.

“It takes the work of a lot of people year after year to have the kind of success we’ve had,” said Coach Karl Smesko, who, quite frankly, is way too modest. The only leader FGCU women’s basketball has ever known collects coach-of-the-year plaques like stuffed animals at a carnival booth, entering 2013-14 as one of only five active Division I coaches with a winning percentage better than .800 (160-38 in Division I games, 292-59 overall at FGCU).

“It’s been so much fun playing for him,” said team captain Sarah Hansen, a fifth-year senior. “He teaches us so much … I still learn from him every practice, every game.”

That’s sincere praise from a bright, articulate young woman who scores as well in the classroom as she does sparking the Eagles. The reigning A-Sun Player of the Year has her own collection of athletic honors earned coast to coast, last season leading the Eagles in almost every statistical category, most notably scoring (16.3 points per game) and rebounding (7.5 pg). But what makes Hansen special is what she does as a student. The Northwestern Pennsylvania native has earned a 3.92 grade-point average majoring in chemistry with an eye toward medical school and a career in pediatrics once she gets basketball out of her system.

“She’s everything a coach hopes for in a team leader,” Smesko said. “Elite player, elite person.”

Hansen’s arrival at FGCU coincided with its provisional rise from DII to DI, and she sees Smesko is elevating the team. “Coach has really started to recruit some great overall athletes, like Whitney and Kaneisha,” Hansen said, referring to sophomores Whitney Knight and Kaneisha Atwater.

“This team is only going to get better,” Bradshaw added. “It’s been so much fun playing for him.”
The whole mindset about FGCU basketball is different after what happened last year. The students are excited, the staff is excited, the whole community is excited.”

- JUSTIN KANE, FGCU JUNIOR

their Alico home games is a spirited brigade of area retirees who stay to the final buzzer so they can spend a few minutes on the floor exchanging smiles and hugs with the players in a post-game ritual. “They treat us like we’re their granddaughters,” Hansen said with a smile.

Smesko, for one, is sorry this is the first season the men’s and women’s teams haven’t had A-Sun doubleheaders at home – a missed chance to grab some of that Dunk City love from the crowd. “I think that those who might have come early for the men’s games would see we have a pretty good women’s team here, too,” he said.

It wasn’t always that way. Chase Fieler, a 6-foot-8 forward and the team’s only senior, remembers the men’s situation when he first arrived.

“We were coming off a losing season and we’d be lucky to get 2,000 in the stands,” said Fieler, a business management major.

From top left: Sarah Hansen, Chase Fieler, Coach Karl Smesko, Coach Joe Dooley and FGCU Dunk City fans.

“I couldn’t have envisioned playing before crowds like we get now.”

Excitement generated by watershed moments such as the rise of Dunk City has that kind of impact. The defending A-Sun tournament champion Eagles has that kind of impact. The defending A-Sun tournament champion Eagles have A-Sun championship in 2012, 2013.

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Fieler, a young man who, through practice, has developed interviewing skills as strong as his game (he was the team’s leading scorer and rebounder early this season after averaging 12 points in 2012-13), has enjoyed all the attention. “A lot of people back home (Parkersburg, W. Va.) didn’t know what happened to me after high school,” Fieler said. “They know where I am now.”

But “now” has become a turned page. Some of Dunk City’s poster guys are gone along with their coach, Andy Enfield, who left for Southern California. Fieler is joined by a pair of 6-3 junior guards: Bernard Thompson, the team’s leading returning scorer at 14.3 ppg in 2012-13; and Brett Comer, the playmaker who averaged almost seven assists a game.

“We’re not gonna let this turn into a one-and-done,” Fieler said. “Bernard’s a great all-around player, and Brett’s the best point guard in the conference, if not the country. And our coach knows how to win at the major Division I level.”

Joe Dooley, in fact, knows how to not only win, but his 10-year tenure as an assistant with the iconic University of Kansas program produced a Division I national championship in 2008. And while the Eagles’ new head coach doesn’t want to be a party pooper, he views the Dunk City phenomenon as something to be embraced, enshrined … and left behind.

“I talk to the team all the time about how there were 15 other teams in the Sweet 16, and they’ve all moved on,” Dooley said. “We need to move on, too.”

Move on, maybe, but not away from the magical March that changed FGCU forever.

“If the price of all that excitement is little sleep and lots of coffee, so be it.”

- KEITH GIBSON
Hampered by injuries and roster depletions, the FGCU volleyball team ended its season in the same playoff round as last year – the Atlantic Sun Conference semifinals.

The No. 4-seeded Eagles fell to top-seed Jacksonville. The loss was a rough ending to a season full of promise. The Eagles won the A-Sun regular-season championship last year and were expected to be conference contenders. FGCU returned a fleet of veteran talent and key newcomers.

As the season ended, six-year volleyball coach Dave Nichols also announced that he would resign in February. He finishes with a career record of 99-82, five A-Sun Tournament appearances and two A-Sun regular-season championships. He also launched the sand volleyball team in spring 2012.

"I feel that with the talented returners and redshirts, and a very strong 2014 recruiting class, that the volleyball programs will be in great shape for the 2014 season and the future," he said.

FGCU is conducting a national search for a new coach. The team was hurt by the absence of four scholarship players this fall. Injuries to leading hitter Jill Hopper (foot) and senior starter Christine Pinder (elbow) changed the makeup of the team. A grueling non-conference schedule, which included five-time national champion Penn State, didn't help matters.

The Eagles, however, should be primed to bounce back as the club will lose just four seniors to graduation. Freshman Marlene Moeller will be one key returner. Moeller led all FGCU players with 17 kills in the Eagles’ season-ending defeat against Jacksonville.

Junior Olivia Mesner and junior setter Gigi Meyer will also spearhead the club. Mesner ranked among the league's top performers with a season-long attack percentage of .319 through 114 sets. Meyer fueled the Eagle offense this year with 1,204 assists on the season.

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[ SOCCER ]

After winning their fourth consecutive Atlantic Sun regular-season championship, the FGCU women’s soccer team didn't expect their season to end in heartbreak.
The Eagles fell to Jacksonville 5-3 on penalty kicks in the A-Sun postseason championship game. It marked the first time the FGCU women (13-3-4) had lost on their home field in four years. The FGCU men (8-7-2) also had a shocking end to their season, falling 2-1 to underdog North Florida in an A-Sun Conference tournament semifinal.

“We’re disappointed but that’s sports. If you do it long enough you wind up on both ends and it’s not fun, but you have to use it to motivate and drive yourself,” FGCU women’s coach Jim Blankenship said. “There’s nothing good about losing and you have to be sure to respect that moment. We went after the game and, credit to them, they withstood all of the pressure and made big play after big play.”

The men and women had each won the last two conference tournament championships to earn consecutive trips to their respective NCAA tournaments.

After starting 0-5-1, the FGCU men’s team won its final two non-conference matches. The Eagles went on a six-game winning streak before suffering a loss and tie in October. The FGCU women’s team also had a rocky start, losing 3-1 to No. 9 Florida.

This year’s season-ending defeats should provide inspiration for next season, coaches said.

“We need to go back and start working on some things,” FGCU men’s coach Bob Butchorn said. “This was experience. We have a lot of young guys and it’s a tough experience but it’s experience.”

The men didn’t have a single senior on the team this year. The youth-heavy roster will be spearheaded next year by Isaiah Madrid, the conference freshman of the year. Madrid finished the regular season tied for fifth in the A-Sun with 11 points on four goals and three assists. The New Mexico native scored two goals versus USC Upstate and had an assist in each of the final two games, including the game-winning helper in FGCU’s victory to cap the regular-season title.

Madrid is the third consecutive FGCU freshman to win the award. Felipe DeSousa won it in 2012 and Xavier Silva in 2011.

Freshman goalie Danny George will also be a key force next season. George played well this year while spelling injured junior Nate Ingham much of the season.

The women will also return the bulk of their team next year. Sophomore Emma Blackwell, junior Shannen Wacker and conference Freshman of the Year Tabby Tindell played key roles on the squad. The trio was selected as part of the all-tournament team.

Tindell broke FGCU’s single-season scoring record with 15 goals. The previous high was 11. Tindell’s production, which also included four assists and 34 points, included a four-goal game in September against Idaho State and a pair of two-goal games.

“Tabby has been so important to us,” Blankenship said. “She’s been outstanding all season long.”

[ SWIMMING & DIVING ]

After being tested on a West Coast trip, FGCU’s prolific swimming and diving program looks on pace to capture the program’s sixth-straight Coastal Collegiate Swimming Association title.

The Eagles took second place in the prestigious Georgia Tech Invitational in Atlanta this fall. The University of Tennessee took home first place, but FGCU beat out Georgia Tech, Vanderbilt, James Madison, Miami and Florida Atlantic. The Eagles broke five team records at the competition.

“It’s what we train to do, to be able to be strong throughout the championship meet format,” FGCU coach Neal Studd said. “I am very proud of how we raced on almost no rest. I’m very excited about what this means for conference meets and conference championships.”

For the first time, Studd took his team to Los Angeles to compete against two Pacific 12 Conference teams and UC Santa Barbara in early November.
FGCU lost to UCLA and UC Santa Barbara but beat Oregon State. The performance inspired the team to perform well against the major Southeast schools at the Georgia Tech Invitational.

FGCU is looking forward to capturing its sixth-straight Coastal Collegiate Swimming Association championship in Knoxville, Tenn. in February. The Eagles earned a program-high No. 27 ranking on the Endless Pools/CollegeSwimming.com Top 30 and the No. 3 position on the Mid-Major Ranking.

The team is spearheaded by freshman Kira Toussaint, a native of Amstelveen, Netherlands, who has already picked up a conference honor this year. Toussaint was named a Coastal Collegiate Swimming Association Swimmer of the Week after her performance in Atlanta.

Toussaint registered three FGCU program records and two individual first-place finishes. Against a slew of teams from the SEC and the ACC, Toussaint won the 200 backstroke and 100 backstroke with FGCU and CCSA records. She placed second, setting a program record in the 200 freestyle.

Senior Briana Carlson took home the individual championship as FGCU finished in a tie for first place with Barry University at the 2013 Eagle Invitational at Worthington Country Club in Bonita Springs.

The women also did well in their respective home tournament. Senior Briana Carlson took the individual championship as FGCU finished in a tie for first place with Barry University at the 2013 Eagle Invitational at Worthington Country Club in Bonita Springs.

The women, however, struggled on the road. The Eagles took third out of four teams at the Eat-A-Peach Invitational and finished 11th and 10th, respectively, at the LPGA Xavier and Florida International University tournaments this fall.

The Eagles will lean on Carlson and junior Georgia Price during the spring season. Price finished tied for 22nd at the Florida International University Invitational.

FGCU men’s tennis junior Jordi Vives had an unprecedented fall season, which culminated with Vives beating some powerhouse programs in capturing the 2013 Dick Vitale Lakewood Ranch Intercollegiate Clay Court Classic.

Vives beat Princeton’s Zack McCourt 6-4, 6-1 in the singles championship. The first round of the tournament draw included top-10 programs like Duke, Minnesota, Florida and Arizona.

“Jordi is not only successful in terms of wins, he represents himself and the program so well on the court. He won over a lot of fans at Lakewood Ranch and I know we grew the FGCU brand because of the way he and the rest of the team represented themselves,” FGCU men’s coach C.J. Weber said.

The FGCU women’s team, meanwhile, also had some strong individual performances. Junior Sarah Means and senior Bettina Botha competed in the singles finals of the Florida International University Invitational, but both players lost their individual matches.

The Eagles have already started
Senior Kelly Perzanowski was named, along with FGCU senior Argeo Cruz, to the NCAA South All-Region Team for Cross Country.

Jordi (Vives) is not only successful in terms of wins, he represents himself and the program so well on the court. He won over a lot of fans at Lakewood Ranch and I know we grew the FGCU brand because of the way he and the rest of the team represented themselves.”

— C.J. Weber, FGCU men’s tennis coach

preparing for the start of the A-Sun regular season, which starts in March.

“I know the girls are aware of how important these next few months are in order to be prepared for dual matches and the start of the regular season,” FGCU women’s coach Courtney Vernon said.

[ CROSS COUNTRY ]

The FGCU men’s and women’s cross country teams have never had a better season.

The men placed in the top-three of three meets before taking fourth place at the A-Sun Conference Championships. The team then took a program-best 14th place at the NCAA South Regionals. Senior Argeo Cruz finished in 25th place, a program best.

The women finished in the top-five of two meets before grabbing 10th place at the A-Sun Conference Championships. Senior Kelly Perzanowski finished in 14th place, another program-best. Cruz and Perzanowski were named to the NCAA South All-Region Team, placing the Eagles on the championship awards podium for the first time.

“Our performance today was a great culmination of our season,” FGCU coach Cassandra Goodson said. “Almost everyone ran a personal best while leaving everything they had out on the course. To see FGCU on the award podium at regionals alongside some of the best teams in the country is very satisfying as a coach.”

Perzanowski and Cruz’s championship performance put a stamp on two hallmark careers. The fastest runners in school history, they broke every school record in the fall. The duo now owns 44 of the top-60 times in school history.

— Chris Duncan

FGCU swimmers compete at World Championships

FGCU swimmers Lani Cabrera and Karen Vilorio are among the few athletes who have had the opportunity to compete on the world stage.

In July, Cabrera, Vilorio and FGCU swimming and diving team coach Neal Studd headed to Barcelona for the 15th FINA World Championships. Cabrera, a sophomore and distance freestyler, represented Barbados, while Vilorio, a junior backstroke, swam for Honduras. Prior to coming to FGCU, Cabrera lived in Bridgetown, Barbados, while Vilorio grew up in Tegucigalpa, Honduras.

Vilorio competed in the Olympics in 2012, but Studd said, this event is comparable for swimmers.

“The World Championship is the biggest international meet other than the Olympics,” says Studd. “I think outside of the swimming world the Olympics are special and always will be, but in the swimming world the world champs are just a small step behind in importance.”

Studd was the official coach for the Barbados team.

“That was my main job,” he says, “but I actually coached Honduras earlier in the summer so they were quite happy for me to oversee Karen’s preparation, too.”

Cabrera competed in the distance freestyle events, swimming a 17:36 in the 1,500-free and 9:08 in the 800-meter freestyle. Vilorio performed her lifetime best in the 100-meter backstroke (1:04) and 200-meter backstroke (2:18), breaking her own national records in the 50-, 100-, and 200-meter backstroke.

“I’m proud of how they did and really excited about how well they represented their countries and their university,” Studd says.

Cabrera enjoyed having had “the opportunity to represent my country and being able to do something of substance.”

For Vilorio, “It was wonderful because I had the opportunity to represent my country and be part of such important event.”

— Suzanna E. Henshon
The results ... are always beyond calculation

Scholarships change the lives of hundreds of students each year

Annual luncheon pays tribute to donors who make them possible.

The transformative power of scholarships was palpable in the well-packed ballroom of the Hyatt Regency Coconut Point on Nov. 22, for the annual Florida Gulf Coast University President’s Scholarship Luncheon.

It was there that 625 donors and the students who benefit from their generosity had the opportunity to share a meal and get to know one another.

Wells Fargo sponsored the luncheon hosted by the FGCU Foundation, which awarded $1.53 million to 1,066 students for the 2013-14 school year.

Thomas Haggai, chairman of IGA and the THA Foundation, which supports scholarships for nontraditional students pursuing teaching careers, addressed the group after spending a day on campus and visiting the classrooms of previous scholarship recipients.

“I've not been in a university that has any more entrepreneurial spirit than this institution,” he said. After seeing the teachers at work “I could hardly go to sleep last night. It was one of the greatest days of my life.”

FGCU President Wilson G. Bradshaw said, “Florida Gulf Coast University is grateful to Tom and the THA Foundation, and to all our scholarship donors, for lifting students, the community and society by your giving.”

To the students, he said, “Remember that your scholarship sponsor believed in you when you needed encouragement and a financial boost. When you graduate and at other times when those good times roll, let them know you think of them still and appreciate and recognize the value of their kindness.”

Freshman Amy Odenwaelder inspired the group with her recollections of a childhood spent watching her mother cope with the debilitating disease of multiple sclerosis and how that had inspired her to become a nurse practitioner.

“Her family’s finances are strained because of her mother’s medical needs and she wasn’t certain she would be able to attend college until she received the Thelma B. and Edwin M. Oulton Scholarship.

“When my mother and I heard that I had received this scholarship, it brought tears of relief and joy to our eyes,” she said. “This scholarship is a tremendous help with lifting some of the weight off of my shoulders.”

She plans to pay that back through a meaningful career.

“Helping people is a part of who I am and who I want to be,” she said. “I will carry what my mom has shown me close to my heart for the rest of my life.”

— Karen Feldman
“If you have accomplished anything in life, you did not do it all by yourself. Somebody helped you get there. My wife and I started our scholarship fund out of a sacred obligation to give back, to do the same for others as was done for us.”

— Charles Winton, chairperson of the FGCU Foundation and scholarship donor

“I’m so grateful for this scholarship that’s helped me finish my last year. It’s given me that large push as I head into the real world.”

— Adelie Landis, senior, Culinary and Hospitality Education Foundation of Southwest Florida Scholarship
Eagles Scholarship Society aims to boost student-athletes

ONE OF THE GREATEST REWARDS OF MEMBERSHIP IN THE EAGLES SCHOLARSHIP Society is having the opportunity to bond with student-athletes and follow their personal and academic growth on the path toward graduation from FGCU.

Donna and Jim Sublett of Fort Myers have taken that a step further. They’ve experienced the thrill of watching a young man from North Fort Myers rise from high school hooves to national glory as part of FGCU’s “Dunk City” phenomenon. Eddie Murray, who graduated in spring 2013, was one of their scholarship recipients.

“We knew him from the City of Palms Classic, when he was playing for Bishop Verot High School,” Donna Sublett recalls. “I was delighted when he became one of my scholarship students.”

Others followed, benefiting from the Subletts’ financial benevolence and team spirit: Brett Comer, current junior and guard for the Eagles and fellow March Madness veteran; and new under their wing this year is sophomore forward Marc-Eddy Norelia, a transfer who awaits eligibility to play next season.

“He assures me that he’s using this year to study and make good grades,” Sublett says. “He’s going to be fun to watch. He reminds me of Dwyane Wade” – the Miami Heat star known for his high-flying style.

Yes, basketball is deep in the blood of Donna Sublett, whose father was a University of Missouri hoops star in the 1930s. He struggled for longer than most of his peers to complete college, getting through with the help of athletics scholarships. That’s why his daughter appreciates the importance of giving today’s students a boost through the Eagles Scholarship Society. Scholarships don’t just enable athletes to shine on a team and aim for major-league opportunities; they also allow students to focus on achieving academic excellence.

Members of the Eagles Scholarship Society – the highest annual giving designation in athletics – go the extra mile to back the young men and women who represent FGCU and Southwest Florida in 15 varsity sports, according to Director of Athletics Advancement Graham Diemer.

“Local individuals and businesses have continued to support us as we strive to maximize scholarships, update or improve facilities and give our student-athletes every opportunity to be successful on the field or court and more importantly in the classroom,” Diemer says. “We wouldn’t have enjoyed such unparalleled success in our short 13-year history without this amazing community and local business support.”

FGCU would like to help more student-athletes and has yet to reach its NCAA-approved number of scholarships; the Eagles Scholarship Society aims to establish more scholarships through private gifts.

Individuals, families and businesses can join the society by making a minimum gift or pledge of $15,000 annually for five years. Members are matched with eligible students based on the donors’ interests. Some choose to become better acquainted with their scholarship recipients (within NCAA rules, of course). Others find satisfaction in supporting a student-athlete who is from a specific part of the country or who is studying a particular field. Members also may simply request to have their gifts directed to a varsity program rather than an individual.

Society membership offers a number of benefits: top priority for season, individual and post-season game tickets; parking privileges for all home basketball games; invitations to Eagles Scholarship Society special events; an all-sports pass (excluding basketball); and invitations to private suites in Alico Arena.

Donors like the Subletts are acknowledged on the Eagles for Excellence recognition wall located at the north end of Alico Arena, below the Hospitality Suite. Other contributors honored there are:

- **Christopher and Carolyn (Susie) Allen**, of Allen Concrete and Masonry in Naples, whose generous support of FGCU Athletics dates back to a leadership gift for construction in 2007 and continues today with annual scholarships for the women’s basketball team.

- **Alico Inc.**, the south Florida agribusiness and land management company that donated $5 million over five years to athletics and was recognized with the naming of the arena.

- **Arthrex Inc.**, the Naples-based manufacturer of orthopedic surgical supplies, which also has supported academic programs including engineering and Wings of Hope.

- **Leo Boisvert and Erik Heben of Private Wealth Consultants**, society members who also founded an endowed athletics scholarship fund in 2010.

- **The Hillmyer-Tremont Student Athlete Foundation**, represented by Sam Crimaldi, Mark Wiles and Darin McMurray. In 2001, the foundation...
HALK IT UP TO THE DUNK CITY DYNAMIC. THERE WAS A NOTICEABLE boost in the buzz at the fourth annual Night at the Nest gala at Alico Arena, and it had everything to do with the improbable but electrifying Sweet 16 run staged by the men’s basketball team.

The Dec. 8 event sold out last summer before invitations could be sent out and an advertising campaign mounted. That meant not just 680 reserved spots – a 25.6 percent increase over last year’s 541 – but a significant boost in auction items.

Everybody wants to be a part of what’s hot. And the FGCU athletic program is smokin’ hot.

“I think Dunk City had a lot to do with it,” said Brian Rasnick, chairman of the Eagles Club Board of Advisers, flashing the official Sweet 16 ring – as big as a Super Bowl rock – that was among the auction items. Two buyers each paid $2,000 to own one. “It’s people who truly wanted to be here. They didn’t even wait to be invited. They sought us out.”

FGCU had the foresight to cash in on its heroes, who just a few months ago were walking the red carpet at ESPN’s ESPY Awards.

Normally, the men’s basketball players are food servers, along with all the other athletes. But on this night, the school’s two biggest marquee names – guard Brett Comer and forward Chase Fieler – were manning auction tables, mingling with the attendees like Hall of Famers working a Las Vegas casino floor.

“They do so much for us, so we’re kind of giving back to them,” Comer said. “We’re having a great time, just interacting with people who come out every night and cheer for us. We’re keeping the jokes going all night. We looked to make some bids ourselves, but there’s nothing for a dollar. We’re just having fun with it.”

In the end, FGCU grossed $375,000 to benefit athletics – 40 percent more than last year’s $225,000.

And former Eagles baseball star (and current White Sox pitcher) Chris Sale – a two-time MLB All-Star who was the winning pitcher in this year’s game – conceded he’s no longer the face of the athletic department.

“I think Dunk City has kind of overtaken the school,” he said with a smile.

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– Rick Weber

Night at the Nest draws record crowd in support of athletics programs

Brett Comer and Donna Sublett

Chris Sale

Photos by Brian Tietz

provided one of the first major gifts to establish athletics scholarships at FGCU and inspired others to follow suit; its endowed fund continues to award grants each year to student-athletes from Lee and Collier counties. As individuals, Crimaldi and his wife, Carol, also have been strong supporters of the men’s and women’s basketball teams.

■ Maurice “Moe” and Dorothy Kent of Naples, longtime FGCU donors who have contributed to fund athletics initiatives and scholarships.

■ Glenn and Angela Black and Northwestern Mutual Financial Network, supporters of athletics programs and scholarships as well as an endowed business college scholarship fund.

■ Brad and Kristi Hartfield of Bonita Springs, who joined the society this summer.

■ David and Beth Howard of Bonita Springs, FGCU tennis fans whose gift established an endowed scholarship fund.

■ Dean and Janie Schreiner of Fort Myers, owners of dESCO, LLC, who this year pledged after being inspired by FGCU’s run to the Sweet 16.

■ Duane and “Cookie” Swanson and family, whose financial support fueled construction of Swanson Stadium and doubled the funds available for baseball scholarships.

Black enjoys the satisfaction of helping provide opportunities for students to reach their full potential – in athletics and the professional world. The Glenn Black Group has employed many Eagles over the years.

“It’s a way to give back to your community and to help a young person at the start of their journey to success,” he says. “Many of our top interns and full-time financial representatives come from FGCU. If my scholarships and gifts can help students and student-athletes grow and succeed, then I am on board. It’s win-win for the student, for FGCU Athletics and for Lee County.”

– Drew Sterwald

Drew Sterwald
Husband honors wife’s passion for nursing career

Richard and Sharon Akin met as students at Florida State University. She'd planned to become a teacher but her future husband, who was headed into the health-care industry, convinced her to pursue a nursing career. “She became a very committed nurse. She did it all,” said her husband. She worked at Lee Memorial Hospital and, in the last decade of her life, for Hope Hospice. “I remember many times she'd come home and say ‘I held a patient’s hand while he died today. The family couldn’t do it and the patient was scared, so I did it.”

She died three years ago, in her 50s, and her husband wanted to pay tribute to her in a way she would appreciate. In her honor, Akin and the Healthcare Network of Southwest Florida created the Sharon Meredith Akin Scholarship, to which he has pledged $150,000. The fund will award scholarships to juniors and seniors in the nursing program who have GPAs of 3.5 or higher and have graduated from a Florida high school. “My wife was interested in older folks,” he says, “so we made the scholarship not exclusively for geriatric nursing, but people who are interested in that got an advantage. She was also passionate about single mothers trying to get an education. So single parents get preference, too.”

Akin was president and CEO of the Healthcare Network of Southwest Florida for more than three decades until he retired last August. He now leads the network’s Medicaid program and is chairman of Lee Memorial Health System’s Board of Directors. “When you do well, it’s your obligation and responsibility to give back to the community,” he says. “This is a way to do it that can help a lot of people. It raises the bar for the entire community.”

He says that the couple’s three sons are just beginning their careers and all three plan to give as they become successful. “We made a commitment as a family to do this together,” he says.

His current wife, Glenda, whom he has known since childhood, supports their efforts as well and understands their sense of loss, which she tells them will ease as the years pass. “Give God the benefit of time,” she says.

Mitch Cordova, dean of the College of Health Professions and Social Work, said, “We are absolutely honored that Mr. Akin has considered students in our BSN Nursing program in creating the Sharon Meredith Akin Scholarship. Mr. Akin has been one of the most visionary leaders in health-care administration in the state for the past 40 years. For him to believe in our students and BSN program by creating this tremendous scholarship for us is very humbling, to say the least. We will make Mr. Akin and his family very proud by honoring students who are most worthy of this scholarship.”

Yovanovich family creates scholarship for student-athletes

Michele and Richard Yovanovich know well the value of education. Michele, FGCU’s dean of students, and Richard, a Naples attorney, have successful careers, a result of good educations and hard work. They are passing those lessons on to their twin daughters, Caroline and Elizabeth.

They recently established the Yovanovich Family Scholarship Fund, which will be awarded to student-athletes. A preference will be given to female applicants. It is their second endowed scholarship fund at FGCU.

“Rich and I try to set an example to ‘give back,’ so it made sense that our daughters (who have practically grown up on this campus) be a part of this gift,” Michele Yovanovich said. “We admire the dedication that scholar-athletes demonstrate and through this endowment, our family will continue to provide financial help to females participating in collegiate sports at FGCU.”
Fort Myers woman’s passion for art will support future students

A FIRST-TIME VISITOR TO ALICE SHARP’S FORT MYERS HOME MIGHT BE FORGIVEN FOR MISTAKING IT FOR AN ART GALLERY.

Modern oil paintings, landscape prints, antique African combs, aboriginal painting on bark and a large copper blue heron suspended in flight from the high ceiling of her living room serve as testaments to the love Sharp and her late husband, Thomas, shared for fine art, although she is quick to concede that he taught her a lot about it.

“My husband loved modern art,” says Sharp. “It took me a long time to be convinced.”

That he won her over is clear, particularly when it comes to the works of artist Gabor Peterdi, a Hungarian-born painter, printmaker, etcher, teacher and author, who became the Sharps’ neighbor and friend when they lived in Rowayton, Conn.

It is a number of his colorful works, along with several other pieces that Sharp has left in her will to Florida Gulf Coast University.

Although Sharp herself did not go to college, she never let that stop her from learning, whether it was in the art galleries she grew to love and volunteer in or on the trips she made, often on her own. On an excursion to Ecuador she was part of a group held hostage on a ship for more than 30 hours until the ship’s owner personally flew there and delivered money.

Throughout her life she purchased countless art objects.

“My husband and I didn’t always agree on what to buy,” she says. “He had a better eye than I did. Art has to speak to me. I have to have a connection to it.”

It’s not surprising with two art-loving parents that their daughter, Tyrrell, wound up studying art in college and living among the masterworks of Italy. And, with this planned gift to FGCU, Sharp hopes to help more students develop a deeper appreciation for art that speaks to them and to others.

An African comb, above, is part of the collection of Alice Sharp, right.
Cape Coral Kiwanis Foundation assists nontraditional students

The Cape Coral Kiwanis Foundation has established an endowed scholarship designed to help adults returning to college earn their degrees.

The organization established the Cape Coral Kiwanis Foundation Endowment Fund at FGCU, proceeds from which will be awarded annually to nontraditional students from Cape Coral with financial need.

Ron Kemper, a Kiwanis board member and chairman of the scholarship committee, says the group realizes there are older students returning to school after working for several years who need financial support.

“It’s gratifying to see that they understand they need to complete their undergraduate educations,” he says. “Some may have dropped out or had to leave for some reason but realized they need an educational foundation. These are the students we’re trying to reach.”

In addition to the endowed scholarship, the Kiwanis Foundation funds several other scholarships for nontraditional students at FGCU.

Among those are Sergio Pais, who is majoring in software engineering, and Ann McCarty Sickels, a communication major.

“I applied to Florida Gulf Coast University in hopes for a better future,” Pais writes in his thank-you letter to the Kiwanis Foundation. “I intend to repay this generosity. You have inspired me to give someone else a helping hand when they least expect it but need it most, to give them hope that their future can improve, too.”

Sickels, the 53-year-old single mother of three, one of whom graduated from FGCU, says that while she encouraged her children to pursue educations “I did not envision being able to finish my degree as well.”

She is looking forward to completing her bachelor’s and using it to help others.

“I now feel like I have the skills and abilities to move forward in my career,” she writes. “It is due to people like you that this is possible.”

In all, Kemper says, the Kiwanis Foundation currently supports scholarships for 55 students at a number of institutions, funding them primarily through proceeds raised at the organization’s thrift stores.

**Andersons’ gift of art valued at $114,000**

**WHILE VACATIONING ON MARCO ISLAND, BILL ANDERSON OF New Paltz, N.Y., toured the FGCU campus with his friend, Deran Soovajian. The informal visit eventually inspired both men to donate valuable portions of their art collections to the university.**

“I really liked the campus, and the people I met there had so much enthusiasm and pride for the university,” Anderson recalls. “I decided I wanted to donate my artwork along with Deran’s when he donated his.”

The 67 limited-edition prints that Anderson and his wife, Stacy, contributed are appraised at $114,700. Their gift, the latest in a personal quest to bestow their art collections to the university, can be used for educational purposes and decorative public display by FGCU.

The couple began collecting art about 15 years ago. While vacationing in places such as Cape Cod and Key West, they’d stroll through art galleries and make purchases when they saw something they liked.

One that caught their eye was “New York Going to Work” by Ralph Fasanella (1914-97), a former machinist, union organizer and gas station owner who achieved some renown as a self-taught painter of bustling New York street scenes. His celebrity blossomed when he appeared on the front of New York magazine in 1972, according to his New York Times obituary. The cover headline: “This man pumps gas in the Bronx for a living. He may also be the best primitive painter since Grandma Moses.”

“The piece by Fasanella is one of my favorites,” Anderson says. “I really like the colors, and he has so much detail.”

Another donated work is by Christine Picavet, a California-based painter of equine images.

“I love horses and grew up having them,” Anderson says. “This painting reminded me of Saratoga (Race Course), which I enjoy going to in upstate New York when I can get there during the racing season.”

‘New York Going to Work,’ a limited edition print by Ralph Fasanella, was donated to FGCU by Bill Anderson, above.

Judith M. Cassidy, senior director of Advancement, says the collection “is ideally suited to FGCU’s museum studies minor, giving students curatorial research, collections management and exhibition experiences as part of their course work. Additionally, for the enjoyment and inspiration of the greater community, many of these works of art will be displayed around campus.”

Bill Anderson photo, courtesy of Bill Anderson.
New canopy keeps kids dry at Family Resource Center

OMING TO AND GOING FROM THE FAMILY RESOURCE CENTER IS A MUCH DRIER AFFAIR THESE days for the 55 youngsters who spend the better part of their weekdays at the FGCU-run pre-school.

That's because there's now a large canopy at the front entrance that allows parents to pick up and drop off their young charges beneath its sturdy, dry structure, something that was sorely needed, according to center director Jan Piscitelli.

The children, ages 5 months to 5 years, have the members of Town & Gown and the Terra Cotta Golf Charities to thank for raising the funds required to construct the canopy over the entranceway.

"Over the years, thousands of kids and their families will be thankful for this structure," said Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost Ron Toll.

Linda Cardillo, then-president of Town & Gown, and her husband, John, spearheaded the two-year effort to raise enough money to build it. Town & Gown, a women's group that works to help the university, and the Terra Cotta Charities, based at Naples Golf Club, raised the funds.

While conceding that the project took longer and cost more than they'd anticipated when they began it, John Cardillo says it was worth it.

"We will always know that we've done something good for the university and for the children," he says.

Proud Eagle parent endows fund for First Generation students

To Dr. Frederic Barr, establishing an endowed scholarship fund seems like a natural extension of his support for Florida Gulf Coast University after his daughter, Kelsey, graduated magna cum laude last spring from the College of Education. It's also a way to pay forward the blessings his family has received.

"We've been contributing every year anyway," said the North Palm Beach plastic surgeon. "FGCU was the most positive experience that I could have hoped for for Kelsey and us. She feels the same way."

To help other students achieve similar success in higher education, Barr's gift will establish the Palm Beach Plastic & Cosmetic Surgery First Generation Scholarship in the name of his firm.

The university will request state matching funds through the First Generation program, which supports students who are the first in their families to pursue bachelor's degrees.

"I'm hoping other business people will see what a great thing it is to do and tell other people, 'Guess what? This young university really needs support,' " Barr said. "It's doing a great job, and I'm happy to have my name and practice out there to support Florida Gulf Coast University."

The family connection with the university may continue in another way. Barr's son, Robert, a high school senior, has been accepted at FGCU.

"We're looking forward to continuing the tradition," Barr said. "I don't think you can find a better place, public or private school, for what FGCU has to offer."
Ashley Coone
Management major a natural-born leader.

O BVIOUSLY BORN WITH A LEADERSHIP GENE, ASHLEY COONE (’05, MANAGEMENT) felt driven to start a nonprofit to ensure that at-risk students in DeSoto County have that advantage by nurture, if not nature.

Coone, 31, founded and directs Links2Success, a year-old nonprofit that coaches middle-school students to see the possibilities around them – and find their places in them. DeSoto County government, businesses and organizations have invested in Links’ leadership, career and educational programs for seventh-and eighth-graders. At the first Summer Leadership and Career Conference in July, 17 students chosen by grade point average and essays met local government officials, toured the health department, the hospital, the solar energy plant, a stockyard and a college. They learned about personal finance from a bank official and volunteered for a food bank and Habitat for Humanity.

It’s for kids like Jacob Cerna, who wants to become a chief animal control officer and “have an above-average life,” he says. Like Danaeshia Wilson, whose heart is set on being a trauma surgeon, and Mary Murphree, a marine biologist.

Coone wanted to be a teacher. And with Links2Success, she is.

As of June, she’s also executive director of the DeSoto County Chamber of Commerce.

In both roles, she has worked with the health department’s Lindsay Turner. “I’ve remained overwhelmed at all she has accomplished in DeSoto County,”

Ashley Coone is applying her education and experience to bettering her hometown.

Turner says. “She re-entered a tight-knit community, rallied its key stakeholders for their complete support of Links2Success, and networks more efficiently than I’ve ever seen.”

Coone honed that talent as an intern at the Naples Chamber of Commerce and working on former U.S. Rep. Connie Mack’s campaign. At FGCU, she co-founded the Young Republicans.

She may have learned the importance of nurturing youth from parents Bettye and Richard, who cared for hundreds of foster children in their Arcadia home. Ashley and her brother Richard, 34, also have two adopted younger siblings, Maria and Gabriel.

Still, Coone didn’t envision her professional life unfolding in DeSoto County. “I didn’t think I could be successful from here,” she says.

But while working at FGCU and in Naples, “I came home every weekend, she says. “And it became harder and harder to go back.”

Barbara Krell, executive assistant to President Wilson G. Bradshaw, recently celebrated 20 years with the university, and remembers Coone as a student making an appointment to meet then-President William Merwin.

“She really wanted to understand about the university, the president, what it takes to be a leader,” Krell says. “She was humble and willing to learn, and the word enthusiastic barely covers it. I was impressed by her and I still am.”

Coone earned a master’s in management from Webster University in St. Louis and helms a chamber of more than 300 members. And she still finds time to fit in even more good work. In November, Gov. Rick Scott appointed her chair of the Early Learning Coalition of Florida’s Heartland.

— Dayna Harpster
[WEDDINGS, ENGAGEMENTS AND BIRTHS]

‘02

Andrew Kunkle, (Computer Information Systems), and Angela Kunkle, ’04 (Communication), welcomed their first child, Alexandra Rose, on Sept. 17. She weighed 7 pounds, 10 ounces. Andrew is an IT manager at Algenol. Angela is the assistant director of student life at Edison State College. She graduated from Nova Southeastern University with a master’s of science in Student Affairs and Higher Education. They live in Fort Myers.

‘07

Jason Saxon, (Marketing), and Jamie Gallagher announced their engagement. Jason is a national sales manager for Saxon Fleet Services. An August 2014 wedding is planned. They live in Plymouth, Minn.

‘08

Justin Helmus, (Master’s, Business Administration), and Katrina Kouvatoss, ’12 (Marketing), got engaged Aug. 17. The couple live in Belleair, FL.

[NEWSMAKERS]

‘98

Gerd Franke, (Accounting), is a principal in the Naples office of Hill, Barth & King LLC (HBK).

Jennifer Sparrow, (Master’s, Curriculum and Instruction), senior director of emerging technologies and new ventures within IT at Virginia Tech University, was named a 2013 recipient of the EDUCAUSE Rising Star award. EDUCAUSE is an organization for managers of IT in higher education.

‘00

Brandon Rimes, (Management), is the host of “The Real Estate Quarterback Show” on the Real Estate Radio Network in the Tampa Bay metro area.

‘01

Karen Buckner, (Master’s, Social Work), was promoted to clinical director of children’s community services at the David Lawrence Center in Naples. She oversees children’s case management, prevention and education, therapeutic behavioral onsite services, the Behavioral Health Network, Wrap Around Collier and the new Community Action Team programs.

‘03

Laura Puerto, (Communication), secretary of the Southwest Florida Chapter of the Florida Public Relations Association, recently earned the designation of Accredited in Public Relations (APR). Puerto has served as the public relations specialist at Lee County Electric Cooperative for the past 10 years.

‘04

Brian Hamman, (Communication), has been appointed a Lee County Commissioner by Gov. Rick Scott. Hamman was previously the manager of market development for CenturyLink. (See story on page 7)

‘05

Samantha Scott, (Marketing), owner of Pushing the Envelope, was a speaker at the first American International Motorcycle Expo in Orlando. She facilitated three presentations for motorcycle dealers, addressed social media best practices and how to measure the effectiveness and success of social media.

Chris Trout, (Management), has joined Sun Cup Golf Center (formerly Daniels Drive Range) as director of instruction. Trout is a Class A PGA Professional who was an assistant professional at Cypress Lake Country Club for seven years.

‘06

Mindi Dunn, (Master’s, Accounting and Taxation), has joined the Southwest Florida Community Foundation as a controller. She is responsible for the financial and accounting operations of the foundation.

Steve Schram, (Political Science), is the women’s tennis coach at Nova Southeastern University. Schram is an active member of the U.S. Tennis Association and served as a Southern Section Board Member and Assistant Vice President in 2013.

Brad Smith, (Master’s, Environmental Science), is the lower Wabash and wetlands program director for the Indiana Nature Conservancy.

Pablo Urquilla, (Political Science), now works at the BB&T Center in Sunrise as event manager for all Florida Panther hockey games, concerts and events. Urquilla was previously with the Broward Center for the Performing Arts in Fort Lauderdale.

‘07

Vittoria Anello, (Psychology), graduated from the University of South Carolina with a Ph.D. in school psychology. He is a school psychologist in Columbia, S.C., specializing in working with students with autism and other low-incidence disabilities, as well as promoting school mental health initiatives.

Danilo Baylen, (Master’s, Elementary Education), received a Master of Library and Information Studies degree from the School of Library and Information Studies at the University of Alabama, Tuscaloosa as a Project Accessing Libraries for All.

Vanessa Covington, (Legal Studies), launched her first novel, “The End of the Rainbow,” a risqué thriller based on real events. Covington is the operations manager for Collins & Dupont.

Kirt Gallatin, (Legal Studies), joined MyGuru as a managing tutor and will expand the company’s services from Chicago to Florida. Gallatin earned his Juris Doctor at Northwestern University School of Law and previously practiced at a boutique litigation firm in Chicago, focusing on consumer class actions and arbitrations.

(continued on next page)

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‘08

Jonel Gomez, (Master’s, Nursing), has been selected by the Dermatology Nurses Association to develop a curriculum on advanced cosmetic dermatology as part of the organization’s new Advanced Therapeutics courses for dermatology nurses and nurse practitioners. She is scheduled to teach this course at the Dermatology Nurses Association annual conference in Orlando in May.

Jill Rhone, (Master’s, Social Work), is the dual enrollment specialist at Edison State College.

‘09

Alexander McMenemy, (Art), is a graphic designer at FASTSIGNS of Brandon.

Michael Radlovacki, (Elementary Education), is a sixth-grade math teacher at Marco Island Charter Middle School.

‘10

Melissa Gardiner, (Resort and Hospitality Management), was promoted to catering sales manager at Crowne Plaza Fort Myers at the Bell Tower Shops.

‘11

Ryan Fredericks, (Master’s, Accounting and Taxation), is a new member of Markham Norton Mosteller Wright & Company, P.A. tax team.

Megan McCoy, (Elementary Education), is a teacher at The Island School in Boca Grande.

Ryan Reynolds, (Finance), has earned his 2-15, Florida life, health and variable annuities license. He is an associate at Galt Insurance Group.

Kelsey Thompson, (Master’s, Accounting and Taxation), has been named one of the Business Observer’s 40 Under 40 for 2013. The exclusive list encompasses the next generation of leaders in Southwest Florida. Thompson is a certified fraud examiner at Markham Norton Mosteller Wright & Company, P.A.

‘12

Lindsey Bott, (Elementary Education), is a seventh grade math teacher at Marco Island Charter Middle School.

Luis Cuebas, (Communication), has been hired as assistant superintendent in the Naples office at FrontDoor Communities. He will oversee the daily operations of construction projects. Previously, he was a member of the guest services team at the Waldorf Astoria Naples. He has been a member of the U.S. Army and Florida Army National Guard for 10 years.

Cristina Encarnacion, (Accounting), is a new member of Markham Norton Mosteller Wright & Company, P.A. tax team.

‘13

Sarah Jane Burt, (Master’s, English), a content writer at CONRIC PR & Marketing/Publishing, presented a paper on the use of magic in the works of Shakespeare at the Sixteenth Century Society Conference in San Juan, Puerto Rico in October.

Cesar Cancino, (Marketing), created a website (http://gigcampus.com) to help college students earn income. The website works as a college classifieds. Students can sell items for free or list services such as tutoring and fitness training.

Nicholas Day, (Finance), joined CapitalRock Investments as a junior analyst.

James Nilson, (Civil Engineering), has joined Forge Engineering, a multi-disciplined engineering firm based in Naples.

Laura Reed, (Resort and Hospitality Management), has been named sales manager at The Naples Beach Hotel & Golf Club. She is responsible for sales efforts for small groups and the local market for the 125-acre beachfront resort.

Chris Sargent, (Civil Engineering), has joined Forge Engineering, a multi-disciplined engineering firm based in Naples.

‘14

ALUMNI ASSOCIATION CALENDAR

FGCU Alumni Weekend
February 6-8, 2014

2/6 THURSDAY

Paint and Pour: 8 p.m., FGCU main campus. Paint, pour and play at this step-by-step instruction on how to create an FGCU landmark – the clock tower atop the Cohen Center. Enjoy wine and appetizers as Vino’s Picasso provides the painting supplies.

2/7 FRIDAY

Eat and Greet: Noon, Campus Support Center lobby. Meet up with fellow Eagles at the Alumni Center for a catered lunch.

Rediscover Campus: 2 p.m., Welcome Center. Take a guided walking and bus tour of campus to see the latest in dining options, residence halls and high-tech classrooms.

Alumni Award Celebration: 6 p.m., Lutgert Hall Courtyard. Join us for a cocktail reception as the FGCU Alumni Association honors outstanding alumni with the Alumni of Distinction and Soaring Eagle awards.

2/8 SATURDAY

Alumni Basketball Scrimmage, 4 p.m., Alico Arena. Revisit the glory years of your favorite Eagle hoops stars and cheerleaders as they reunite for the annual Alumni Weekend exhibition game.

Alumni Avenue: 5 p.m., Outside Alico Arena. Take a walk on Alumni Avenue! It’s where all Eagles unite to celebrate old friendships and make new memories. There will be food by Pop’s BBQ, a beer garden, music, photo booth and much more. Students representing campus organizations will be on hand to welcome you, and Azul will make the rounds for photographs.

Basketball Game: 7:05 p.m., Men’s Basketball vs. University of North Florida. Wear your Eagle colors and watch the men’s basketball team take on UNF. During the game, Alumni Association members will gather with graduates from the classes of 1999, 2004 and 2009 as they mark reunions with cocktails and dessert in the Alico Arena Hospitality Suite. Meet President Wilson G. Bradshaw, former basketball players and, of course, Azul.
PUBLIC SERVICE RUNS IN MAISY PAGE’S BLOOD. ONE GRANDPARENT SERVED as a nurse and volunteered with St. Jude Children’s Research Hospital. Another worked with Nations Association and a third still volunteers with the American Red Cross.

With such strong role models, it’s small wonder that Page (’12, Master’s, Public Administration) sees service in her future as well.

A desire to make a difference motivated her to take part in the Clinton Global Initiative University, held at Washington University in St. Louis last April. Modeled after the summit that brings world leaders together to create global change, this annual gathering for college students has the same goal.

“I wanted to go because this is an event all about having an effect on the world,” she says.

From a service project to renovate a school in St. Louis to meeting leaders like Sen. Claire McCaskill, D-Mo., and Chelsea Clinton, it was a whirlwind of worthy activities.

Page returned home filled with inspiration, lots of contacts and dreams of starting an organization to help young women finish high school and head to college.

The Fort Myers resident views her FGCU experience as time well spent, too. As part of her capstone class, she started a chapter of She’s the First, an organization whose members sponsor girls’ education in developing countries, giving them the chance to be the first in their families to graduate from secondary school and break the cycle of poverty.

Page says FGCU encouraged students to follow their passion. “From research to a rough draft and final draft, I was really given a chance to see my work evolve over more than two years – I learned so much,” says Page, who earned her bachelor’s degree in International Relations and Affairs from Florida State University.

During her time at FGCU, she mentored young women at the Fort Myers PACE Center for Girls and, although her She’s the First chapter has gone inactive since she graduated, she continues to be involved with the international organization, helping girls in developing countries attend school through sponsorships. To fund those sponsorships she’s participating in five 5ks, including Run or Dye in November, with the goal of sending five girls to school in five countries.

While she’s an avid soccer player, running hasn’t come to her naturally, but raising money for the sponsorships “has given me a reason to motivate myself,” she says.

She hopes to raise $1,500 and she’s using a Razoo page (www.razoo.com/story/5k-To-Send-5-Girls-To-School) to accomplish that.

Now as she works toward her doctoral degree in education at Nova Southeastern University, Page keeps an open mind about her future. She can thank a family patriarch for that. “My grandfather pushed me to do what I was passionate about and encouraged me not to pigeonhole myself so quickly,” she says.

On her way to whatever awaits her, she says, “I want to help a lot of women with their dreams,” she says.

– Eric Butterman

Maisy Page now works as an instructor at the not-for-profit Heights Foundation in Fort Myers.
PHOTOGRAPHER JAMES GRECO CAPTURED A SHOT OF THE MAIDEN VOYAGE of Campus Recreation’s new Axis boat, complete with bright FGCU-themed graphics. The boat is used for activities such as tubing, wakeboarding, wake skating, waterskiing and other recreational pursuits. Students can sign up for 30-minute rides, which are funded through student activity fees. Greco shot this photo on North Lake (Lake Como) from a chase boat with FGCU Housing in the background. He used a Nikon D7000, 14 mm focal length, 1/1250, f8, ISO400.

PARTING SHOT is a forum for essays, photos and art that present a unique, personal perspective. Submit material for consideration to Pinnacle Editor Karen Feldman at kfeldman@fgcu.edu or call (239) 590-7093.
Melissa Wallace ('07, Nursing) spreads comfort and compassion at NCH North Naples Hospital. She is one of many FGCU alumni who are helping the Southwest Florida community and working for you. You can invest in our community’s future leaders by making a gift today.

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