

COLLEGE OF CENTRAL FLORIDA

FALL 2024

CONNECTION



ENGINEERING AN EAR

A unique collaboration

THE SCIENCE OF SPONGES

Student research discovery

OPENING DOORS

Support for scholarships

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On The Cover:

A new 3D model gives future physical therapist assistants a close-up look into the human ear.

Have a CF story to tell?



Scan the code for consideration in our next issue!



From left, Rep. Ryan Chamberlin, Dr. Jim Henningsen, CF president, and Sen. Stan McClain in front of the AdventHealth Center for Nursing, which opens in January 2025

There's a reason College of Central Florida students, faculty, staff and programs are top ranked – not just in Florida but on a national level. Our commitment to high-quality education has earned us the support of community partners, local industry leaders and champions in the state legislature.

At CF, we're leading the way in hands-on workforce education and in arts and sciences programs that give our students unparalleled access to modern resources and myriad support services.

From a potential breakthrough discovery of a new sea sponge species that will have global implications for the scientific community to a unique partnership in which the Engineering Technology program built a 3D teaching tool for the Physical Therapist Assistant program, this issue is packed full of interesting stories of collaboration among CF departments and between the college and our many community partners.

Thank you for all the ways you help CF remain our region's first choice for higher education.

James D. Henningsen, Ed.D., CF President

We transform lives and enrich our community by providing a supportive, high-quality learning environment that prepares individuals to excel in work and life.

Connection magazine is published twice each year by the College of Central Florida for alumni and friends of the college. The magazine's editorial staff strives to inform, engage and inspire readers through stories about the college's contributions to the community.

College of Central Florida offers equal access and opportunity in employment, admissions and educational activities. The college will not discriminate on the basis of race, color, ethnicity, religion, sex, pregnancy, age, marital status, national origin, genetic information, sexual orientation, gender identity, veteran status or disability status in its employment practices or in the admission and treatment of students. Recognizing that sexual harassment constitutes discrimination on the basis of sex and violates this policy statement, the college will not tolerate such conduct. The following person has been designated to handle inquiries regarding the nondiscrimination policies: Dr. Mary Ann Begley, Title IX Coordinator, Ocala Campus, Building 3, Room 116, 3001 S.W. College Road, 352-291-4410, or Compliance@cf.edu.

Students *Bring the Life*

CF students, including 2023-2024 Student Activities Board President Kinley Varner, took some time between classes to celebrate the updated game room in the Student Life building on the Ocala Campus in July.



Engineering an Ear

Future physical therapist assistants get a close-up look at the human ear, courtesy of the Engineering Technology department.

Sam Ajlani is a do-it-yourself kind of guy. When he needed to replace a part from his dishwasher, he made his own. When his car had a rattle in the dashboard, he manufactured a clear shim to fix the problem.

When the Engineering Technology department chair and associate professor heard that the Physical Therapist Assistant (PTA) program needed a 3D model of an ear to teach students about the body's vestibular system, he didn't hesitate.

"I know you're busy, but I thought it couldn't hurt to ask," PTA Program Manager and Associate Professor Dr. Lisa Joranlien wrote in an email

to Ajlani. "We study the vestibular system and we're thinking of getting a model to help students. I'll send you the 3D printer documents in case you might be able to help."

Ajlani enlisted Chris Kromke, an instructional assistant and CF Engineering Technology alumnus, to fire up their engineering-level precision 3D printer, and they turned the downloadable instructions Joranlien had found online into a larger-than-life reproduction. Just a few weeks after she sent the email, Joranlien said, the model "just appeared" at her office.

"I was so happy!" Joranlien remembered.



Sam Ajlani, Engineering Technology program manager and associate professor, with the department's precision 3D printer



Dr. Lisa Joranlien, Physical Therapist Assistant program manager, teaches PTA students using the new ear model

"A lot of our students aren't reading learners. Most of our PTA students say they're kinesthetic, visual learners."

-JORANLIEN

"We have students from any discipline," he said. "It's a hands-on club, so they're doing everything from wiring and mechanical to hydraulics and pneumatics, and part of it can be drafting and 3D printing if they want to do that. We're just doing it for fun, but we can 3D print something useful that they need."

The unlikely partnership between Engineering Technology and PTA is a win-win, Joranlien said.

"He's a team player," Joranlien said of Ajlani, whose go-above-and-beyond approach to working with students earned him the 2023 Dale P. Parnell Faculty Distinction Recognition from the American Association of Community Colleges. In 10 years at CF, he has modernized the program by adding the 3D printer and other cutting-edge technology.

Joranlien said the success of CF's PTA graduates is directly related to the interactive experience they get in the program.

"Our students get hands-on experience almost from day one," she explained. "They get patient interaction through our on-site clinic, so when they go out to the clinical sites they are confident; they know what to do. They've been able to make connections between what they learn in the classroom and direct patient care."

In 2023, CF's PTA students had a 100% pass rate on their national certification exam, and graduates from the program have had a 100% job placement rate for more than five years.

"They know their stuff," Joranlien said. "They have to know as much as they can to effectively treat patients and help our community, and local employers want to hire CF graduates."

In the Summer 2024 semester, she started using the model, which enlarges the human ear to about the size of the human head, in classroom instruction.

"A lot of our students aren't reading learners," Joranlien said. "Most of our PTA students say they're kinesthetic, visual learners. They have to know about the crystals in the ear and physical therapy intervention for somebody with a vestibular dysfunction – it's on their national certification exam."

In a recent class, Joranlien held up the model to demonstrate how tiny crystals move through viscous fluid, sweeping across hairlike follicles, affecting nerves in three semicircular canals in the ear – and how a

person turning their head causes the crystals to move. She explained that the body's vestibular system is one of three systems that affect balance. Since balance is one of the core issues addressed most commonly in physical therapy, graduates need to know about a condition called benign paroxysmal positional vertigo, or BPPV. The inner ear disorder occurs when microscopic crystals in the inner ear become dislodged and float through the ear canals. The disorienting vertigo it causes can lead to falls, especially in older patients, but it can be efficiently relieved with physical therapy.

Unfortunately for educational programs with limited budgets, commercially available 3D ear models sell for more than \$500, Joranlien said. When she saw that printable files were available to educators for free, she forwarded them to Ajlani to see if they could be 3D printed on campus.

The cost? \$35 in materials. As a bonus, Engineering Technology students got the experience of setting up the 3D printer for the job.

"We want to be collaborative," Ajlani said, adding that he has previously produced 3D models of the human heart and lungs for other Health Sciences programs, and he's figuring out how he can reproduce parts for the drone the Agribusiness instructors and students use at the Vintage Farm Campus.

Learning to 3D print is a fun project for students in the Engineering and Technology Club, Ajlani said, noting that students do not have to be enrolled in an Engineering Technology degree program to get involved – the club is open to any CF student.

"We have students from any discipline. It's a hands-on club, so they're doing everything from wiring and mechanical to hydraulics and pneumatics, and part of it can be drafting and 3D printing."

-AJLANI

The Science of Sponges

Two CF student researchers may have discovered a new species of sea sponge – impacting the global scientific community.

The infinitesimal sponges currently living in small, plastic food storage containers in the Science and Communication building on the Ocala Campus are getting a lot of attention. The microscopic organisms, which are a saltwater species, have already lived about a hundred times longer than they should – considering they've been transferred to a freshwater habitat. This kind of acclimation is unheard of in the world's simplest creatures, and the research currently being conducted by CF student Sofia Almodovar Montero and CF alumnus Kaden Ramirez has attracted the interest of the Smithsonian Institution and the international scientific community.

And, if the miniscule sample of these tiny creatures currently being tested for metagenomic sequencing at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C., is identified as a brand new species, it will be the biggest scientific discovery in CF's history. It also will have a global impact.

"This is new," explained Elena Amesbury, science department

chair and assistant professor of biological sciences. "It's a tremendously important addition to the scientific community to come up with something like this – a new species that was already classified as being another species. Any kind of speciation event is huge."

The research started nearly two years ago, in December 2022, when Almodovar, a first-semester Associate in Arts student, had the idea to use sea sponges as a biofiltration system.



Sea sponges seen through a microscope

Photo by Sofia Almodovar Montero



CF alumnus Kaden Ramirez and CF student Sofia Almodovar Montero

"Basically, marine sponges are filter feeding animals, which means they just eat the bacteria in the water that passes through them, so some species are able to purify water," she explained. "The idea was to use sponges in third world countries, which have a lot of bovine and fecal matter runoff that contains a lot of E. coli. There were already previous studies that had shown sponges could filter E. coli out of the water. So we wanted to take it a step further and implement that into a water system, which means adapting a saltwater sponge to freshwater."

Almodovar's passion for her project helped her recruit fellow student Ramirez as a research partner after they met at the CF

STEM Club and figured out they were both interested in marine biology.

Because the only available sponges for study were *Chondrilla nucula*, a saltwater species, the students began the process of trying to adapt them to freshwater. Half the samples acted as expected – they died within a day or two. But the student researchers couldn't believe what happened with the other half of the samples, which were supposed to be the exact same species. The marine sponges survived in a solution of only 70% saltwater with 30% freshwater – while still filtering fecal matter.

"They were supposed to die within the first three days," Almodovar said. "It's basically impossible to keep a sponge in captivity, because they need constant running water. When they filtrate their own water, they start producing ammonia and that makes them die. But these sponges were kept in those little containers for 10 months in the same water."

Because the atypical sponges released a pink-colored substance never recorded before, the researchers hypothesize that's a clue to explain how they're surviving in freshwater.

Almodovar, who will graduate with an Associate in Arts degree in December 2024, said they hope to have the metagenome test results before the end of the semester, and the pair hopes to wrap up their research and apply to publish their findings.

"Undergraduates don't usually get published," Almodovar admitted. "It's really hard. Usually it's Ph.D. students."

But the research team has already surpassed expectations for state college students. They presented their research to an international audience of scientists at the Ocean Sciences Meeting in New Orleans, Louisiana, in February 2024. And, in May, Almodovar received the Excellence Award for Outstanding Lightning Talk at the University of Georgia Marine Sciences Student Research Symposium after she and Ramirez gave a presentation on why they think their sponges are a new species and why it's so relevant to find out what's going on with the unusual mutation or evolutionary behavior. Winning an award was especially prestigious, since the two CF students were the only undergraduates attending a conference of mostly Ph.D. students.

"It was cool to be taken seriously," noted Ramirez, who earned an A.A. degree in May 2024 and hopes to study oceanography at California State University, Long Beach.

"We definitely think this has a future," added Almodovar, who would like to continue her studies in biology at University of Florida. "The sponges will be relevant, and this is definitely just the beginning of a long journey. You'll hear from us again."



"We definitely think this has a future. The sponges will be relevant, and this is definitely just the beginning of a long journey."

-ALMODOVAR

From Vintage to Futuristic

CF Vintage Farm Campus is on track to become one of the college's most high-tech training facilities.

In 2016, when the college was gifted the expansive, picturesque 103-acre farm located just a few miles from downtown Ocala and the CF Ocala Campus, administrators knew it would be an invaluable training site for our students. They saw the potential for the CF Vintage Farm to become the home of the Florida College System's only Agribusiness and Equine Studies programs. But what they couldn't predict was that the working farm, with its heritage crops and pastures and paddocks for horses and cows, would soon turn into one of the college's most high-tech facilities, giving students hands-on opportunities to train on the cutting-edge technology that is revolutionizing the agriculture industry.

In November, CF was certified as a National Institute of Food and Agriculture Non-Land-Grant College of Agriculture. That puts our community's college in an elite group of only three Florida educational institutions with this designation from the U.S. Department of Agriculture, alongside Florida State University and Florida International University. With new opportunities to apply for grant funding through the USDA, partnerships with education institutions including Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University and the University of Florida Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, and the steadfast support of industry leaders and state government, CF is poised to be the agriculture workforce education center in the Florida College System.

“*CF is positioned to be the top educational provider for agribusiness career training, talent development and applied research.*”

-HENNINGSEN

This year, the college drafted the CF Vintage Farm Plan for the Future, a five-year strategic plan that outlines the expansion of current facilities and programs to position CF as the premier deliverer of applied agribusiness and equine workforce training in the state.

“One of our priorities is to obtain funding to expand our training space with state-of-the-art facilities at the Vintage Farm Campus,” said Dr. Jennifer Fryns, vice president of workforce development and innovation. “The ever-growing numbers of students interested in agribusiness and equine careers deserve a simulation lab, vocational lab and additional on-site classroom space.”

Expanding the college's agribusiness training opportunities is responsive to the needs of local employers, explained CF President Dr. Jim Henningsen.

“With our area producing nearly \$400 million in agriculture exports each year and generating an economic impact of more than \$4 billion through our equine industry, CF is positioned to be the top educational provider for agribusiness career training, talent development and applied research,” Henningsen said.

Florida Commissioner of Agriculture Wilton Simpson, a lifelong farmer and Florida College System alumnus, supports hands-on agriculture education to ensure the future of our state's farms and crops for future generations.

“CF has been ahead of the curve each time they have accommodated their local communities to make sure that they're producing the workforce that is needed,” Simpson said. “You have this gem in Central Florida at CF that's growing our talent for tomorrow's jobs.”



The Hylío Spraying Drone, used for precision crop management, is one of the advanced technologies that give students real-world experience.

Leading the Way

Dedicated students, faculty and staff position the college as a leader in our community and beyond.

Florida Legislature Funding Supports Workforce Scholarships

This fall, CF was awarded \$1.2 million in **Open Door Grant** funding from the Florida Legislature. The allocation will allow the college to support student scholarships in all workforce programs, including Associate in Science degree and college credit certificate pathways in Health Sciences, plus noncredit programs such as the Commercial Driver's License (CDL) program offered through the CF Corporate College in partnership with Fleetforce Truck Driving School.

This year's allocation comes after CF efficiently distributed funds last year to support an unprecedented 685 students who do not qualify for a Pell grant, or who receive a small amount of federal or state grant aid.

“Local employers need these talented students to get to work, and scholarships like this help students complete their programs faster. Students currently enrolled in every Associate in Science program and many

college credit certificate programs may benefit from scholarships made possible by this grant,” said Dr. Jennifer Fryns, vice president of workforce development and innovation. “CF is in the midst of the largest workforce training expansion in our history, and we are so appreciative to be awarded these funds for the third year in a row.”

The Open Door Grant Program was created by the Florida Legislature in 2021 to create and sustain a demand-driven supply of credentialed workers for high-demand occupations and expand the affordability of workforce training and credentialing through the 28 schools in the Florida College System.

CF Students Win Third Place in National Robotics Competition

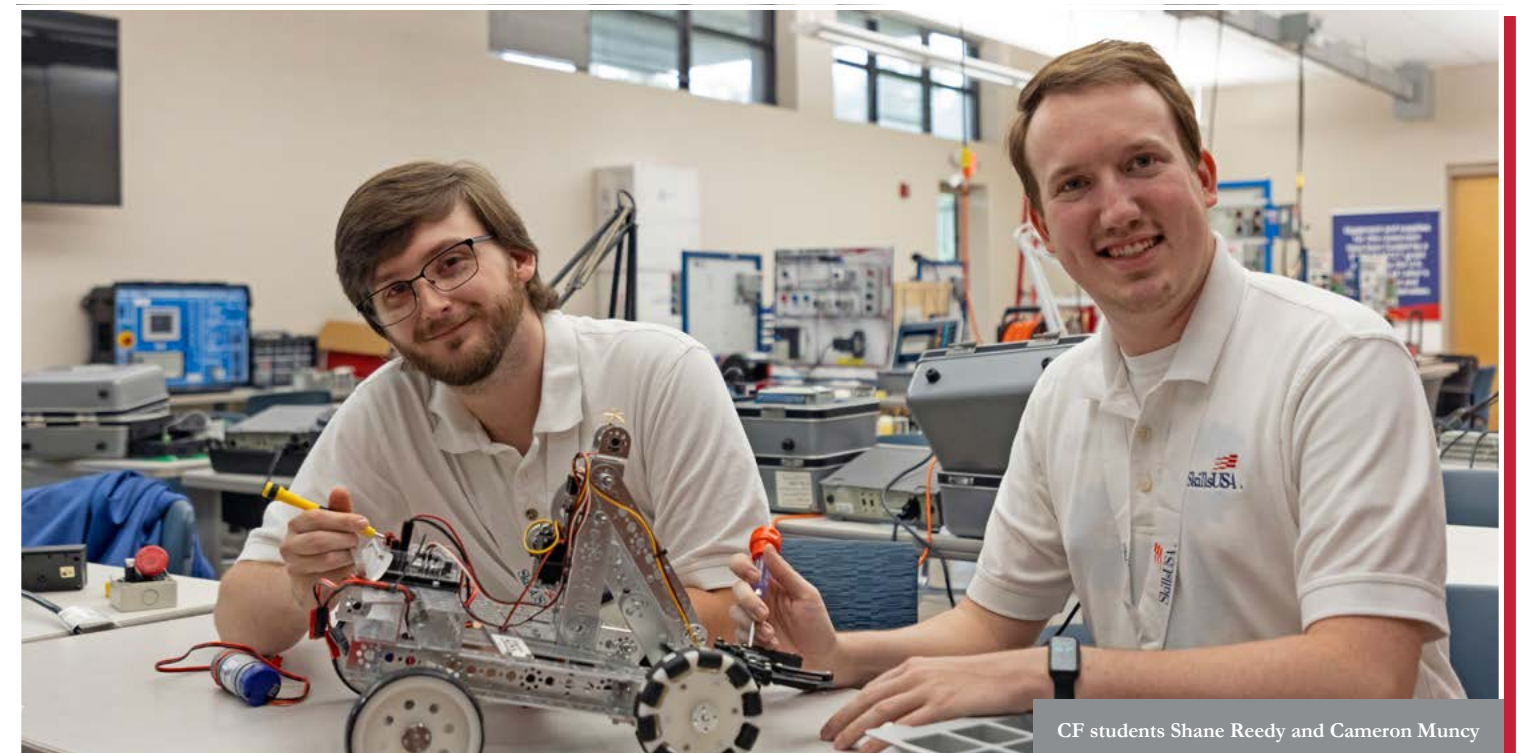
A CF team was awarded a bronze medal at the SkillsUSA National Leadership & Skills Conference, held in Atlanta in June.

CF Engineering Technology students **Cameron Muncy** and **Shane Reedy**, under the guidance of award-winning associate professor Sam Ajlani, built, designed and

constructed a robot for the SkillsUSA Urban Search and Rescue competition. During the event, they directed their robot to travel through a course designed to look like multifamily housing, searching for and removing simulated explosive devices.

“We are really excited to have represented our school on a national level and to have brought something back,” said Muncy, who expects to graduate in December and said he has “always been interested in cars and machines.” The CF team was the only Florida team to place in the Urban Search and Rescue category.

The SkillsUSA Championship, the premier showcase of America's most highly skilled career and technical education students, is one of the largest hands-on workforce development events in the world, and featured more than 6,000 state champions from across the United States competing head-to-head in 115 skilled and leadership competitions. CF students Justin Bowen and Daniel Francois also represented the college in this year's drone event.



CF students Shane Reedy and Cameron Muncy



From left, Ocala City Manager Pete Lee, Ocala City Councilmember Jim Hilty Sr., Ocala City Councilmember Ire Bethea Sr. and CF President Dr. Jim Henningsen with Dr. Lorenzo Edwards, front

Hampton Center Community Room Renamed to Honor Dr. Lorenzo Edwards

In June, dozens of community members gathered at the CF Hampton Center to celebrate the renaming of the community room for **Dr. Lorenzo Edwards**, who was honored by Dr. Jim Henningsen, CF president, Pete Lee, Ocala city manager, and Ire Bethea, Ocala city councilmember.

After earning an Associate in Arts degree in 1971, Edwards joined the CF staff in 1989, serving first as coordinator of project success and minority recruitment, then dean of minority affairs and handicapped services, and finally director of the Hampton Center before his retirement in 2003.

“Dr. Edwards played a vital role in enhancing the college’s support system for students, ensuring they had the resources needed to succeed,” said Dr. Jim Henningsen, CF president. “His influence shaped both the college and our community.”

CF Alumnus Awarded Fall Fellowship

Associate in Arts graduate **Hernan Gonzalez-Romero**, now a student at University of Central Florida, received a Washington Media Scholars Foundation Fall 2024 Media Fellowship. Passionate about

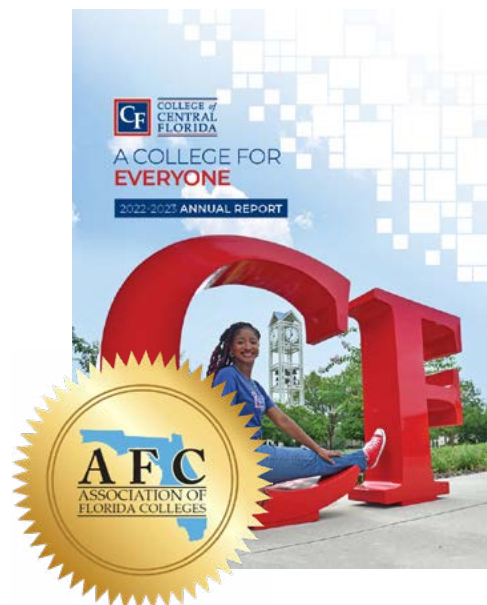


CF alumnus Hernan Gonzalez-Romero

global cooperation and making a meaningful impact in the political arena, Gonzalez-Romero was a 2023 Washington Center Advance Leadership Intern and represented the CF student body as a graduation speaker at the Spring 2024 commencement ceremony. The Washington Media Scholars Foundation connects deserving undergraduate students with senior-level executives from major media companies, providing hands-on experience, networking and financial support to students who pursue degrees in media, communications and public policy.

AFC Officers Deliver Hurricane Relief Supplies

A few days after Hurricane Helene’s historic landfall in September, four members of the College of Central Florida chapter of the Association of Florida Colleges (AFC) took two vans full of disaster relief supplies to the hard-hit coastal community of Cedar Key, just 30 miles from CF’s Jack Wilkinson Levy Campus in nearby Chiefland. After delivering the supplies, the executive board members found themselves in the right place at the right time: assistance crews in Cedar Key had a surplus of donated clothing, which they hoped to share with people in need just down the coast in Yankeetown, but no way to get the items there. The team didn’t hesitate to deliver the clothing to grateful staff at Yankeetown School.



CF Marketing and Public Relations Wins State and Regional Awards

The **CF Marketing and Public Relations** team earned seven 2024 Awards of Excellence, announced at the Association of Florida Colleges annual conference on Nov. 5 in Orlando. CF took four gold awards for the 2023 Annual Report, Connection magazine, interactive viewbook and best photograph in a printed piece. The team won a silver award for Connection magazine and bronze awards for the informational rack card wall in the Ewers Century Center and the promotional CF Dental travel toothbrush. The peer-judged statewide honors are awarded by the AFC Communications and Marketing Commission.

In October, the CF Marketing and Public Relations team was recognized with two Silver Medallion awards, announced at the National Council for Marketing & Public Relations District 2 conference in Lexington, Kentucky. Both Connection magazine and the interactive, digital CF viewbook earned second place in this competition honoring excellent work by colleges throughout the Southeast.

CF Nursing Receives National Recognitions

The CF Nursing program has received several national recognitions this year for quality education. The Associate Degree Nursing program was ranked the 2024 Best RN Program in Florida by RegisteredNursing.org. CF’s Bachelor of Science in Nursing program was ranked No. 3 for Best Online Nursing Programs in Florida by Research.com and was included on the U.S. News & World Report list

of Best Bachelor of Science in Nursing Programs, in which CF was ranked as the highest among Florida College System institutions.

“CF’s RN to BSN program provides a valuable education for registered nurses who are ready to take their career to the next level,” said Dr. Stephanie Cortes, vice president of health sciences. “We are supporting nurses who choose to pursue advanced clinical positions and nursing faculty positions as well as meet the need for more primary care nurses in our community.”

Newsweek Ranks CF as Top Online College



In October, the college’s online programs and degrees received national recognition in Newsweek’s America’s Top Online Colleges 2025 list.

At No. 35, CF ranked highest among the Florida College System’s 28 institutions, and placed above larger universities including University of Central Florida, University of Florida and University of Miami.

CF students can complete the following programs fully online: Associate in Arts, Associate in Science in Business Administration, Associate in Science in Early Childhood Education, and nine college credit certificates in areas such as business and education. Unique in Florida, CF offers Equine Studies students the opportunity to start their education journey with an Equine Technician college credit certificate offered completely online.

“The College of Central Florida has proved, once again, that we can meet our students where they are with flexible scheduling that does not sacrifice quality,” said Dr. Jim Henningsen, CF president. “By offering courses virtually, we can help learners access instruction by our highly ranked faculty, whether they are pursuing a degree that will prepare them to transfer to a university or a

credential that will help them achieve their career goals.”

State Grant Will Support Workforce Expansion

The Florida Department of Education awarded CF a grant of \$661,959 in October through the Workforce Development Capitalization Incentive (Workforce CAP) Grant Program. Funds will support the college’s Agribusiness Management programs at the Vintage Farm Campus, as well as other Business, Technology and Agricultural Sciences programs that prepare students for careers in environmental science technology and information technology.

The funding is part of a statewide initiative to create or expand workforce development programs that provide hands-on educational experiences in high-demand fields, providing more opportunities for Floridians to access high-wage jobs.

CF, Appleton Recognized with Community Choice Awards



Our community chose College of Central Florida once again as the Best College in the 2024 Official Community’s Choice Awards sponsored by the Ocala StarBanner. The CF Appleton Museum of Art was voted Best Museum. Dr. Tammi Viviano-Broderick, vice president of institutional effectiveness and college relations, accepted the honors at the awards gala on Oct. 16 at the Circle Square Cultural Center.

CF, Appleton Voted Best of the 352

Members of the community voted CF the Best College/University in the Best of the 352 competition. The CF Appleton Museum of Art was recognized as Best Museum and the Best Art Gallery in the Best of the 352 Things to Do category. The rankings were announced in June by North Central Florida Media.

Creating Opportunities

Endowments from a local health care provider will help CF students now and in the future.



From left: Chris Knife, vice president of institutional advancement and CEO of the CF Foundation; Dr. Stephanie Cortes, associate vice president of health sciences; Erika Skula, president and chief executive officer of AdventHealth Ocala; Michelle Stone, CF Foundation board chair; and Dr. Jim Henningsen, CF president

Future health care professionals in College of Central Florida's Health Sciences programs will benefit from scholarships and new program enhancements, thanks to a **\$3 million commitment from AdventHealth Ocala** to the CF Foundation.

"We are very grateful for AdventHealth's support and trust in our award-winning programs," said Dr. Jim Henningsen, CF president. "This is a game-changing gift that will ensure students now and in the future

have the best instruction and opportunities as well as have a lasting impact on our community."

The irrevocable pledge creates the AdventHealth Nursing Endowment and the AdventHealth Health Sciences Endowment. The nursing endowment allowed CF to apply for the Florida Legislature's Linking Industry to Nursing Education (LINE) matching grant, which, if funded again this year, could total \$6 million. The LINE fund was created in 2022 to alleviate the

statewide nursing shortage by providing matching funds for nursing education programs that partner with health care providers. The health sciences endowment will support students in high-demand health care fields including Dental Assisting, Dental Hygiene, Emergency Medical Services, Physical Therapist Assistant, Radiography and Surgical Services, plus new programs in Cardiovascular Technology, Diagnostic Medical Sonography Technology and Respiratory Care.

"At AdventHealth, we know the quality of instruction CF has, and we are excited to invest in the good work of creating new opportunities for students in these critical areas of need," said Erika Skula, president and chief executive officer of AdventHealth Ocala.

CF Health Sciences students consistently rank above average on career certification exams. This year's class of Associate Degree Nursing students achieved a 100% pass rate on the NCLEX-RN exam, and Radiography graduates attained a 100% pass rate on the national radiologic technologist certification exam. For the second year in a row, Surgical Services graduates earned a 100% pass rate on the Certified Surgical Technologist national exam.



Third-semester nursing students at the Wilton Simpson Citrus Campus

Opening Doors

Scholarships that cover 100% of tuition and fees are helping future registered nurses realize their dreams.

A new scholarship is making nursing school a lot more affordable for Citrus County residents. The Citrus County Hospital Board Nursing Scholarship covers 100% of tuition and fees for Citrus County residents accepted into CF's Associate Degree Nursing program. Through the inaugural round of scholarships, 44 students training to become registered nurses had their tuition completely paid for the Fall 2024 semester, collectively receiving nearly \$53,000 in funds.

"I am receiving scholarships that are making my tuition a lot more affordable," said **Aleigh Alexander**, a third semester nursing student at the CF Wilton Simpson Citrus Campus. "In my cohort, a lot of us are working double time, and it can be really hard to balance that work with schooling. So now with this scholarship, we're able to focus primarily on school. This is going to open so many more doors for us because we're able to 100% focus on our education and grow as future nurses."

Alexander, who has known she wanted to become a nurse since she had a monthlong hospital stay as a kindergartener, says the "fantastic nurses" who took care of her and helped her single mother through her illness inspired her career path.

Her Nursing instructors at CF are "top notch," Alexander said, adding that "our instructors welcome you in like family, and they really do take care of you."

"That's what sets the College of Central Florida apart from other nursing schools in surrounding areas," Alexander said.

The CCHB scholarship was made possible by an \$11.7 million endowment established by the CF Foundation in partnership with the Citrus County Hospital Board. To qualify for the scholarship, students must be Citrus County residents and complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid and the CF Foundation scholarship application annually.

"I want to become a nurse because I want to help people," said Julia Harrigan, a level one CF Nursing student. "This scholarship helps so much. I don't believe I would be able to attend CF without the scholarship."

CF anticipates supporting as many as 50 future registered nurses a year through the CCHB scholarship fund. The board established the scholarship to ensure Citrus County residents could participate in health care programs and contribute to the delivery of patient care in the local community.

"Now, more than ever, we see a need to recruit and train qualified health care professionals to meet the growing demands of our local communities," said Dr. Jim Henningsen, CF president. "This scholarship is a game changer for our Nursing program and the education opportunities it offers to our students."



CF nursing student Aleigh Alexander in the Wilton Simpson Citrus Campus nursing lab



"My cohort in the Associate Degree Nursing program was awarded the Citrus County Hospital Board Scholarship. To us, this means that school is now affordable. I'm able to focus primarily on getting my ADN because my tuition is paid."

-ALEXANDER

Awarding Innovation

The CF Foundation New Initiative Grant program has funded outstanding and transformative ideas for more than 30 years.



From left, faculty members Melissa Alling, Dr. Iain Grinbergs and Mae Sands with Chris Knife, vice president of institutional advancement and CEO of the CF Foundation

This fall, the CF Foundation awarded \$5,500 in New Initiative Grant funding to two groups of employees whose innovative ideas will advance the learning and work environment for the college community.

Evie Reakes and **Yeidi Rios**, who assist students in the Clifford B. Stearns Learning Resources Center, will facilitate a project to help enhance the group study experience for students. They will add a 55-inch interactive display monitor to one of the group study rooms, to which students can connect their personal devices, accessing another level of instructional support and collaboration

opportunities by viewing lectures and educational videos.

Melissa Alling, **Dr. Iain Grinbergs** and **Mae Sands**, who represent Communications faculty at the Citrus, Levy and Ocala campuses, are developing open source, online learning materials that give students and instructors a more affordable option than traditional textbooks. The new resource for Freshman Composition Skills II, a required courses for all Associate in Arts students, will be available through the CF Library, making it free and instantly accessible from any campus.



Crushing Goals and Transforming Lives

The new Dean of the Jack Wilkinson Levy Campus shares her own CF journey from student to administrator.



In 1999, when CF's Levy Center was just a small storefront next to the Save A Lot market in Chiefland, **Leah Gamble** started her higher education journey as a Paralegal Studies student. Five years after graduating from Chiefland High School, Gamble had a daughter starting elementary school and decided to make continuing her education a priority.

How did CF help you establish a firm foundation to start your higher education journey?

Gamble: Completing my A.S. degree in 2003 was my first step toward success. At that time, I had a major life challenge and became a single mom. I moved back home for a while, and at age 28, I decided to finish my A.A. degree. By the time I graduated from CF with my Associate in Arts degree, I had built back my self-esteem and confidence. That allowed me to pursue my lifelong dream of transferring to University of Florida. Having the opportunity to earn a Bachelor of Science degree in Psychology proved to my parents, to my daughter, and to myself that I could achieve anything.

How did earning a bachelor's degree in psychology lead you to employment at CF?

Gamble: Just before I would graduate from UF in 2008, I was waiting for my daughter

to finish her guitar lesson and I was talking to Kat Davis, who still works at the Levy Campus. She mentioned CF was looking for an adult education instructor and encouraged me to apply. When I stopped by a few days later to fill out an application, I was hired on the spot as a part-time instructor and started helping students transform their lives by earning a high school equivalency diploma.

How did you choose higher education as your career?

Gamble: I loved helping adult education students set goals. After two years as an adult education instructor, I became a transition specialist and helped students plan their college and workforce journeys. I earned a Master of Arts degree in counseling in 2011, and in 2012, I became the adult education enrollment coordinator. I got involved with recruitment, outreach, enrollment, retention, student services, testing, reporting data and daily operations

and started teaching college credit courses. Helping students achieve their dreams inspired me to complete coursework for a Ph.D. in human behavior.

How did your CF career grow and evolve along with the Levy Campus?

Gamble: In 2017, we went from a tiny, cramped space to the beautiful, new Jack Wilkinson Levy Campus, where we can serve more students in modern classrooms and be a gathering place to bring our community together. The next year, I moved into the position of manager of instructional services, and I knew I wanted to stay at CF until retirement. I was honored to be offered my dream position as dean in June 2024, and I am so excited to contribute to students transforming their lives at CF.

Leave Your Legacy

When you plan a gift to support the College of Central Florida, you help create brighter futures for our students and community. Whether you would like to put your donation to work today or after your lifetime, the CF Foundation staff can help you find an option that meets your needs and helps the college continue its mission of transforming students' lives and enriching our community.

"Anyone can make a charitable gift whether you consider yourself wealthy or not," explained Chris Knife, vice president of institutional advancement and CEO of the CF Foundation. "By simply including CF in your will, you can help ensure that students can achieve their educational goals."

Popular ways to give include these options: out-right gifts by cash or check, transfers of publicly-traded securities, gifts by will or trust, gifts from IRA required minimum distributions, or contributions from donor-advised funds.

"Generous planned gifts from friends and alumni of CF have helped make the college what it is today," Knife said. "Those gifts have funded scholarships, program support and enhancements, new technology and capital projects. Gifts can establish endowments that provide year-over-year support for various programs and initiatives – and it's a great way to leave a legacy."

By making a gift now or in the future, you not only enrich the college community, but you also create a personal and meaningful way to make an impact on generations to come.

For more information about including CF in your will, contact Traci Mason, mason@cf.edu or 352-873-5808, or visit our website at giftplanning.cf.edu.



Keep up with the CF Alumni Association on Facebook or online at www.CF.edu/Alumni.



‘Transformational Gifts’ Now on View

A new exhibition showcases more than 200 artworks recently gifted to the Appleton Museum.

Museum visitors now have the opportunity to view 200 new additions to the Appleton Museum’s permanent collection. These works, by artists from across the globe, are included in the “Transformational Gifts: Recent Acquisitions (2019-2024)” exhibition on view through Feb. 2.

The Appleton Museum of Art was built on gifts. Founded in 1982, the museum and its foundational collection were gifts to the Ocala community by Arthur I. Appleton. The City of Ocala donated the 44-acre site where construction started in 1984 and concluded in 1987. The museum’s opening highlighted selections from Mr. Appleton’s personal collection of more than 5,000 artworks, and these would comprise the museum’s first collections.

Over nearly four decades, the collection has grown substantially, with more than 24,000 objects and works of art now in the museum’s care — and most of them are gifts.

Over the last five years alone, 6,000 works were added to the collection, and around 200 were selected for the “Transformational Gifts” exhibition in the first-floor Edith-Marie Gallery. They represent artists from across Florida and as far away as Central and South America, Europe, Africa and Asia, spanning a timeline of more than 2,000 years that ends with modern and contemporary.

“Individually and collectively, these ceramics, paintings, photographs, prints, sculptures, textiles and other objects have stories to tell,” said Jason Steuber, Appleton director. “We hope that as you view these works, they will spark conversation and inspire creativity. We invite you to discover how gifts to the museum truly keep giving.”

APPLETON
MUSEUM OF ART
COLLEGE OF CENTRAL FLORIDA

(detail) “Frozen Lakes and Cliffs, The Sierra Nevada,” 1932 (printed 1970), Ansel Adams (American, 1902-1984), Gelatin silver print, 14.5 x 18.5 in., Gift of KNB Trust.

Caring for a World-Class Collection

The Appleton assistant director shares a behind-the-scenes look at artworks not currently on display.

It might surprise you to know that the paintings, sculptures and other works of art you see in the Appleton’s permanent collection have a whole other life behind the scenes. When the art and objects are not on display, the museum team is taking stewardship efforts to ensure that the collection can be enjoyed by everyone for many generations to come.

“When art is not on view in the galleries, it provides the perfect opportunity for us to work on documenting the collection,” explained Victoria Billig, assistant director. She noted that, after receiving private funding in August 2023 to purchase a large tabletop scanner, the Appleton team scanned more than 1,100 works over the next year. High-resolution images are used for many different marketing purposes, but also are attached to the digital record for each work of art. Images are taken with a camera, or depending on the size of the work, can be generated by using a scanner.

“Humidity- and temperature-controlled storage spaces serve as the perfect resting place for works when they are not being documented or exhibited,” Billig said. “However, sometimes special conservation efforts are needed to ensure the longevity of the items in the collection. This can be due to the natural aging processes of certain materials or exposure to the elements. For example, our outdoor sculptures are designed to withstand rain, sun and more, but over

time, the harsh Florida climate still takes a toll. In other instances, the museum may acquire artwork that was improperly stored or overexposed to light and humidity. As stewards, the Appleton makes restoring these items a priority so they can be exhibited and enjoyed by our visitors for a long time.”

A group of prints recently was sent to a professional conservator, who is an expert in bringing new life to works on paper. Included in the batch was a lithograph by Mexican artist Rufino Tamayo (1899-1991). After thorough examination, the conservator determined that the print was severely stained from light burn and acid (which forms naturally as paper ages) and exhibited remnants of pressure-sensitive tape on the back — all common issues

with works on paper. The conservator dry cleaned the front of the print to remove surface dirt and used special solvents to remove the tape from the back. The print was then bathed in filtered recalcified water to remove soluble acids, and through a six-step process, the staining was reduced.

“Although conservation can be costly and time consuming, it’s at the forefront of the Appleton’s mission to responsibly care for the wide variety of works in the collection,” Billig said.

From curating and displaying exhibitions to documentation and conservation, these efforts all shine a light on the Appleton’s world-class collection. For more information on how you can support these efforts, contact Steuber at steuberj@cf.edu.



Tamayo before (left) and after (right).

“Untitled (37/100),” ca. 1960, Rufino Tamayo (Mexican, 1899-1991), Color lithograph, 30 1/8 x 22 1/4 in., Gift of L. Haughey, Florida Institute of Technology 2021 transfer.

Best of Show, Stage and Screen

Our community comes together at CF to connect to the arts.



CF students Geovanni Jimenez and Sarah Dowlah in "Puffs"

Wizarding Wit

In a fast-paced farce, CF Theatre's production of "Puffs, or Seven Increasingly Eventful Years at a Certain School of Magic and Magic" satirized one of the most famous young adult fiction and film franchises. Onstage Oct. 24-27 at the Dassance Fine Arts Center, the cast of 29 students and four faculty members, directed by Assistant Professor of Theatre Nonalee Davis, brought to life familiar stories of young wizards from the point of view of the lesser-known Puffs house.



CF students Nathan Pierannunzi and Melissa Torres perform with the Patriot Blues Jazz Ensemble

Patriotic Program

The CF Patriot Blues Jazz Ensemble and Wind Symphony performed a Veterans Day concert on Nov. 6 in the Dassance Fine Arts Center. In addition to patriotic tunes and big band jazz, the musicians honored veterans in the audience with "A Tribute to the Armed Services," which incorporates the songs and hymns of the six U.S. military service branches. Associate Professor Allen Venezia, who directs the instrumental music groups, plans to make the free community concert an annual tradition.



CF Professor of Art Tyrus Clutter with "Sol y Luna"

Equine Impressions

The Webber Gallery's fall exhibition paid homage to Ocala's status as the Horse Capital of the World. Curated by the Florida-based 24 Hands Printmaking Collective and on view Sept. 30-Oct. 31, the artworks in "Equine Impressions" represented all forms of printmaking highlighting the beauty, spirit and grandeur of horses.

CF Professor of Art Tyrus Clutter loaned several historical works from his personal collection for the exhibition, including "Sol y Luna," a 1945 engraving by Mauricio Lasansky, one of the most influential printmakers of the 20th century.



CF Ira Holmes International Film Series Director Wendy Adams and Amanda Concha-Holmes

A Lasting Legacy

On Oct. 29, around 50 people gathered for a dedication of the Ira Holmes Classroom in the Humanities and Social Sciences building on the Ocala Campus. Dr. Jim Henningsen, CF president, recognized Holmes' extraordinary legacy of nearly 63 years of service to the college as a professor, division dean and founder of the CF Ira Holmes International Film Series and the CF Study Abroad program. Attendees shared memories of Holmes before a screening of "The Seventh Seal," the film he chose as a message of hope before his passing in July 2024.

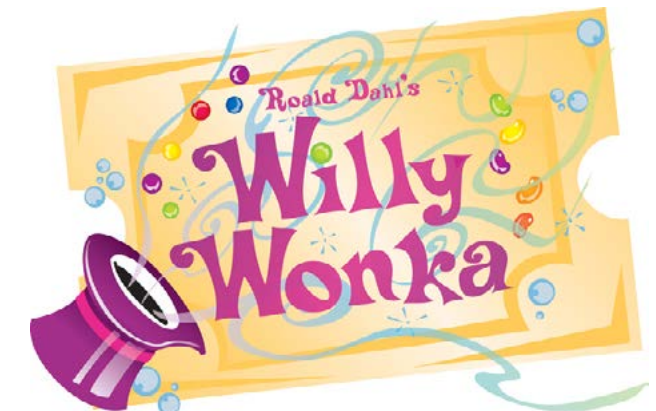
COLLEGE OF CENTRAL FLORIDA IRA HOLMES INTERNATIONAL FILM SERIES

Continues in 2025:

- | | |
|--|---|
| Jan. 19 Family-friendly matinee | March 11 "My Donkey, My Lover & I" |
| Feb. 11 "Hit the Road" | March 25 "Following the Ninth" |
| Feb. 25 "Some Kind of Heaven" | March 26 "A League of Their Own" |

Get more info at CF.edu/FilmSeries

LIVE on stage April 3-6, 2025



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In person with Oscar



Although his full name is Best Supporting Actor and he had a long, illustrious show jumping career in prestigious Wellington, Florida, the newest resident at the CF Vintage Farm is just a regular guy. Since arriving at the farm in October, the tall, handsome horse known as Oscar is easily making friends with everyone.

His deep chestnut color, striking white blaze and dark, expressive eyes make him a standout, but it's his easygoing temperament that made him an instant favorite with students and his next-stall neighbor, Ellie, the farm's other full-time equine resident.

"He's very sweet; he's just genuinely kind," said Marie Davidson, associate professor and program manager for equine studies.

The Selle Français, or French Warmblood, is well traveled, Davidson said, having been to all different kinds of show venues and "exposed to everything under the sun." That's what makes him a perfect training subject for students.

"He's experienced and very sensible," Davidson noted. "He's good natured and he likes people."

Oscar's kind heart is in proportion with his big size. At 17.2 hands, the chestnut gelding is nearly six feet tall at the withers, standing over seven feet tall.

Learning to handle a horse his size prepares students to work with a variety of sport horse breeds.

"He's the size of many of the horses students will see at big sport horse barns if they go to that type of job," Davidson explained. "It gives them a chance to get used to handling a bigger horse."

Students at all experience levels will be training with Oscar, learning to groom, do routine health care treatments and exercise routines and manage wounds. They learn to do all the stable care routines and apply tack for different disciplines, and there are often several students gathered around the horse to watch a therapeutic treatment demonstration or get hands-on practice.

For Oscar, the best part is being rewarded for a job well done with scratches – and carrots.