FSCJ Employees First Memories



Sixty Years of Excellence in Education and Service

FSCJ
Florida State College at Jacksonville

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In 2026, as part of FSCJ's 60th Anniversary, employees were asked to share their first memory from their time working at the College.

(Listing is alphabetized by employee's last name.)

Toni Abbott - Hired in March of 2011 as an Administrative Assistant I for the Maintenance Department at South Campus

FIRST MEMORY: Being taken on a walking tour of South Campus by Richard Dowling, Supervisor of Campus Plant Services, was quite a welcoming experience. I showed up dressed for an office job in a dress and two-inch heels, completely unaware that my future work wardrobe would consist of jeans and a polo shirt in the Maintenance Department. By the time we made it from Building H to Building R (the Gymnasium), my feet had filed a formal complaint and were threatening to resign.

Amber Arroyo - Hired in January of 2017 as a Library Assistant I at the Downtown Campus

FIRST MEMORY: My first memory of working at the College was being trained by the wonderful Jennifer Grey. She spent my first day introducing me to how the library works and also walking me around the campus to meet everyone in all the departments. Most of what I know about how library systems work is because of the time that Jennifer spent teaching me over my first months at the College, and I am happy to have her as a reliable colleague and friend to this day.

Dr. Jametoria Burton - Hired in February of 2006 as an Adjunct Librarian at Deerwood Center

FIRST MEMORY: My first memory of working at the College was when it was still called FCCJ. I was hired as an Adjunct Librarian serving both Deerwood Library partially during the week and Kent Library during the weekends. They were traditional libraries at that time. Working at Deerwood Center was very unique because the Deerwood Center was a former shopping mall. My first big project was working on the Architectural, Design and Planning Committee for FSCJ's first Library Learning Commons, which opened at the Deerwood Center in the spring of 2009. I remember the waterfalls and the escalators were still in operation. The last business left was a restaurant in the middle of the building, which provided a unique place for students and faculty to take their class breaks. I worked for Dr. Patty Adeeb, Executive Director of Deerwood Center, whose family owns Beach Diner.

Lori Cimino - Hired in August of 2005 as a Professor of American Sign Language at South Campus

FIRST MEMORY: I remember being hired into a full-time faculty position after being an adjunct faculty for a few years. On my first day of work, I did not have an office, so I was sitting at a student desk in the M2 office area at South Campus near other faculty offices. Fortunately, I did have a laptop issued so I got right to work!

Mary Dumbleton - Began as a part-time employee in 1987 but became a full-time employee in July of 1988 when she was hired as the Downtown Campus Learning Resources Clerk

FIRST MEMORY: My first memory was going to Human Resources in the Administrative Building (back then it was referred to as the "CAB" Building) to be processed as a new employee, when a fire drill happened, so we all had to go outside. My first memory of working at Downtown Campus was the friendly staff who welcomed me, especially Patricia Barrett and Robert Flornoy. Also, the phones with "hold" buttons.

Jefferson Everett - Hired in November of 2014 as a Continuing Education Program Coordinator at Downtown Campus

FIRST MEMORY: On my first day on the job, I stopped by McDonald's to grab some breakfast. As I was getting ready to walk into the Urban Resource Center, I went to throw my breakfast bag in the trash when one of the custodial workers stopped me! He refused to let me put the bag in the trash can and kept telling me, "GIVE IT TO ME!," I explained that there was nothing left in the bag, mainly because I didn't realize he was a custodial worker. However, he was very adamant that I hand the bag to him rather than put it in the trash. I later found out that the custodial worker, Mr. Leroy, apparently did not like people putting trash in the trash can while he was standing there, especially after he had just emptied it! It was definitely an interesting way to start my first day!

Kaelin Guerrero - Hired in February of 2022 to be an Accounting Specialist I at Downtown Campus

FIRST MEMORY: It was my fourth day working at FSCJ and I attended one of Dr. Avendano's Q&A with Dr. A sessions at the Advanced Technology Center. I remember sitting there tearing up at how much passion and care he had for the institution and its employees. I was amazed that I was just a few feet away from the college president and was able to see how truly down-to-earth he was. That left quite an impression on me, and I feel the same way four years later! I knew at that moment that this was and would continue to be a people-centered place to work, and that those in leadership were genuine and wanted everyone to be heard and feel important.

Kelly Herndon - Hired in April of 2016 as an Academic Tutor for Adult Education at Cecil Center

FIRST MEMORY: I interviewed for my first FSCJ position on my birthday. My phone kept vibrating during the interview because of friends and family wishing me a happy birthday, and the interviewer and I just tried to ignore it. I finally explained to her what was happening, and she was so excited that I had chosen to spend part of my birthday interviewing at FSCJ. I have often said since then that becoming part of the FSCJ family is one of the best birthday gifts I have ever received.

Rachael Hormis - Hired as the Assistant Director of Financial Aid at the Urban Resource Center in July of 2021

FIRST MEMORY: When I started in the time of COVID, I was fully remote. I was very impressed at how welcoming everyone across the College was. While we were not in person together, I could feel their smiles and kindness. Blessed was how I felt then and that feeling has never left me. Thank you for inviting me into the FSCJ family. Happy 60th FSCJ! Sixty looks good on you! :)

Eric Jenkins - Was hired in August of 1987 as a Student Assistant in the North Campus Audio Visual Department

FIRST MEMORY: I saw a new world, a world that I had only seen in movies and read about in books, and I stepped into that world with some fear and trepidation, but also some hopeful joy anticipating the new freedoms that I would finally be able to embrace and enjoy.

Emma Kearley - Hired in May of 2025 as an Academic and Career Advisor at South Campus

FIRST MEMORY: The thing that stuck out the most at the end of my first day at FSCJ was how nice everyone was and how much everyone loved working at FSCJ. I heard nothing but wonderful things about working at FSCJ and all the great things I could look forward to as a new employee. I was so impressed by the number of people who have been at FSCJ for more than 20 years and the number of people who left FSCJ and have returned because they love working here. It made me feel like I made the right choice and after being here more than a year I couldn't agree more!

Dora Cecilia (Cecy) Mezzich Kress - Hired in August of 1988 as an Advisor I in what was then the Foreign Languages Lab at Kent Campus

FIRST MEMORY: The creation of the World Languages Lab to work closely with instructors to support student success and enhance language learning. The World Languages Lab was the first lab created to support students. Until 2017, full-time employees with a master's degree were given the opportunity to teach as adjunct instructors, and between 2004-2017, I worked as a Spanish Adjunct Professor at Kent Campus and South Campus. By doing so, I was able to further support World Languages students, gain firsthand instructional experience, and better align lab services with classroom needs.

Lisa Reinhard - Hired in August of 2007 as an Adjunct Professor of Reading at North Campus

FIRST MEMORY: I remember getting to my classroom at the North Campus early, way before class was scheduled to begin, and I wrote a whole whiteboard full of information and instructions. When the students arrived, I began class by introducing myself and then started pointing to things on the whiteboard. The students had puzzled expressions on their faces, and I thought maybe I was talking too fast or that maybe those were their "listening faces." Shortly after I began, a male student raised his hand, and when I acknowledged him, said, "Ma'am uh---we can't read cursive." Everything I had written was in cursive! So, we had a good laugh about that, and I erased it all and just wrote the basics as I mentioned different parts of the class curriculum. That was an icebreaker for sure!

Kerry Roth -Hired in September of 2002 as a Recreation Coordinator in Student Activities at North Campus

FIRST MEMORY: On my first day working at Florida Community College at Jacksonville in 2002, the first assignment I received from BJ Hausman, the Collegewide Student Activities Director, was to preview the album "The Rising" by Bruce Springsteen. The North Campus September 11th Remembrance Ceremony was scheduled to take place later that week and BJ wanted to make sure that the album was appropriate to play prior to the start of the ceremony. As I listened to Bruce Springsteen, I remember thinking this higher education gig might not be so bad. Little did I know at the time, but twenty-three years later, I am still working for the College.

Bryan Spohn - Hired in July of 2004 as a Professor of Biology at Kent Campus.

FIRST MEMORY: When I moved into my office, Dr. Lourdes Norman offered to get me a hot dog. I thought that was the most neighborly initial work experience I ever had.

Bryan Stewart - Hired in October of 2006 to be a Program Manager at Downtown Campus

FIRST MEMORY: My first day at (then) FCCJ was filled with equal parts anticipation and anxiety. I was hired as a Program Manager for the Military Education Institute. However, my supervisor was a retired Commander, and I was working with three fellow retired Navy Senior Chiefs, so I was in great company! The College had just been awarded a multi-million-dollar contract to provide Navy curriculum to Sailors utilizing contracted civilian instructors at Naval Station Great Lakes in Chicago and Naval Air Station Pensacola.

Our team of three was sent to Great Lakes a couple weeks later to conduct turnover from San Diego City College who had that contract for many years prior. We spent a couple weeks managing the turnover then setting up operations as FCCJ. It was exciting to start something new with the College and maintain that close connection to the Navy, having just retired a few months prior.

We stayed in Great Lakes for a couple of months ensuring all was working properly with remote assistance from our home team in the URC. Periodically, we would host folks from the College, introducing them to the new administration and contract faculty. When it was decided everything was running smooth, a couple of us were sent back to Jacksonville to redeploy to Pensacola and set up operations there, again taking over from San Diego City College. This went on for about six years with our team here and there continually managing operations until, like most contracts, it was awarded to someone else.

Cynthia Robinson-White - Hired in April of 2022 as the Associate Director of the Center for International Education (now the Office of Global Learning) at Downtown Campus

FIRST MEMORY: Welcomed and supported! I remember how welcoming and supportive everyone was on my first day. Different people checked on me throughout the day, making sure I knew where everything was or how to ask for something I needed. Celeste from IT was wonderful getting me set up in my office and making sure everything worked just right. At one point I remember sitting in my chair and just reflecting on how thankful I was for the opportunity and for this new chapter of my life. In that moment, I knew this was a place I could call home and would be happy to stay until retirement.

Donnetta Williams - Hired in June of 2025 as an Instructional Support Specialist at Kent Campus

FIRST MEMORY: My sister came to visit me at work while I was still in training. My sister has been with the College for about 20 years now.

Gwendolyn Williams - Hired in October of 2013 as a Plant Service Worker at Kent Campus

FIRST MEMORY: How sweet and compassionate Ms. Susan was then and now. You are truly missed here at the Kent Campus.

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