

March 2026

FSCJ 2026

C O M M E N C E M E N T

THURSDAY, MAY 7, 2026 AT 4 P.M. • VYSTAR VETERANS MEMORIAL ARENA

Commencement 2026

Commencement 2026 will be here soon! The event will take place on Thursday, May 7, at VyStar Veterans Memorial Arena at 4 p.m. To keep costs down, faculty and event volunteers are being asked to carpool due to the arena's significant increase in parking fees.

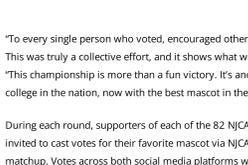
Before the in-person ceremony, we will host a single Grad Bash event on Saturday, May 2, from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. at the Deerwood Center. Grad Bash is a special day for us to connect with our graduates personally before they cross the stage at Commencement. There will be activities for graduates and their guests, entertainment and giveaways, and an opportunity for group photos with family and friends.

For more information, visit fscj.edu/commencement or contact commencement@fscj.edu.

fscj.edu/commencement

News and Updates

Manta Rays Voted Best Mascot Nickname in the Nation



Thanks to faculty, staff, students and community voters, FSCJ's Manta Rays defeated the Cuyahoga Community College Triceratops after receiving 55% of the votes in the Championship round of the National Junior College Athletic Association (NJCAA) Mascot Bracket Challenge. The Manta Rays remained in the top position over seven rounds, beginning December 2025 and continuing through the Championship that was held on March 5-6.

"To every single person who voted, encouraged others and proudly represented the Manta Rays, thank you. This was truly a collective effort, and it shows what we can accomplish when we move together," said Dr. A. "This championship is more than a fun victory. It's another reminder of who we are: the best community college in the nation, now with the best mascot in the nation to match."

During each round, supporters of each of the 82 NJCAA schools who entered the bracket challenge were invited to cast votes for their favorite mascot via NJCAA's Instagram Stories and X (Twitter) over a 24-hour matchup. Votes across both social media platforms were totaled to determine the winner of each round.

[Read More](#)

North Campus Welcomes Community for Multiple Events



As part of FSCJ's 60th Anniversary Celebration, North Campus hosted a Celebration of Health and Wellness in conjunction with the annual Give Kids a Smile community dental service event and the first Campus Discovery Day on Saturday, February 21. Feeding Northeast Florida also hosted a food drive.

One hundred Give Kids a Smile volunteers treated 90 children, providing cleanings, sealants, fillings and extractions. Cosmetology provided complimentary services such as haircuts, shampoo and sets, manicures and nail polish change. Visitors were able to attend Health Sciences Information Sessions covering Cardiovascular Technology, Dental Hygiene, Nursing, Physical Therapist Assistant and Radiography. In addition, Health Sciences Open Lab Tours included Cardiovascular Technology, Emergency Medical Services, Nursing, Physical Therapy, Radiography and Respiratory Care. FSCJ staff also hosted a College Application and Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) Assistance Lab for those in need of assistance.

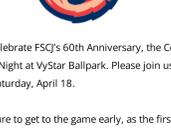
Feeding Northeast Florida provided 4,560 pounds of food, which student volunteers distributed to 188 households consisting of 628 people, including 69 senior citizens, 177 children, 62 people with disabilities, and 49 active-duty or veterans.

Attendees enjoyed the Art Gallery exhibit, "A Journey Through 60 Years of North Campus History," featuring historical photos and objects from the North Campus.

Volunteers included community members along with FSCJ students, faculty and staff. A special thank you to our partners, faculty and students for their dedication and support!

[View Photos](#)

FSCJ Night at the Jacksonville Jumbo Shrimp



To celebrate FSCJ's 60th Anniversary, the College and the Jacksonville Jumbo Shrimp FSCJ Jersey, Dr. Avendano will throw out the first pitch. Our Recruitment team will be there to speak with future students and Rayzor Ray will roam the ballpark to take pictures with fans. Stick around after the game to watch the fireworks.

FSCJ will be sitting in section 115 and 116. To purchase tickets in section 116, prices are \$23.50 on the Jacksonville Jumbo Shrimp [website](#). (After choosing your seat, select Individual Game Ticket from the dropdown menu.)

Want a chance to win free tickets? We are giving away two tickets to 25 employees who share the best video about why they love FSCJ and what FSCJ has provided to the community over the past 60 years. Send your video to communications@fscj.edu by March 27 for a chance to win.

[Buy Tickets](#)

Celebration of Student Success Nominations Deadlines Coming Soon



Faculty and staff are invited to select one to three students from the Summer 2025, Fall 2025 and Spring 2026 Terms for recognition through the Celebration of Student Success in the following categories: Academic Achievement, Inspirational Achievement, Outstanding Student Worker and Outstanding Student Leadership.

The schedule for each campus awards ceremony is as follows:

- Deerwood Center – Tuesday, March 31, 6-7:30 p.m., Academy Room, B1204
Deadline: March 13
- Downtown Campus – Thursday, April 9, 4-5:30 p.m., Auditorium, A1068
Deadline: March 26
- North Campus/Nassau Center – Tuesday, April 14, 6-7:30 p.m., Auditorium, C126
Deadline: March 31
- Kent Campus/Cecil Center – Thursday, April 16, 6-7:30 p.m., Room D120
Deadline: April 2
- South Campus – Thursday, April 23, 6-7:30 p.m., Nathan H. Wilson Center for the Arts, Lakeside Room
Deadline: April 9

Read more [here](#).

[Make a Nomination](#)

60th Anniversary Celebration Continues

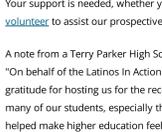
The 60th webpage includes a list of events and stories of how FSCJ has impacted individuals throughout the community. We'll be highlighting different stories of alumni, partners and friends of the College throughout the year, so be sure to share yours!



Check out this 2000-04 recap [video](#), part of a 12-part series created to highlight specific timeframes throughout the College's history. All 12 will be housed on the 60th webpage as they are finalized.

fscj.edu/60

Recruitment Update



Last month, Student Recruitment held the annual Principals and Counselors Meeting and its first Campus Discovery Day in conjunction with two other events at North Campus. Both events strengthened relationships and showcased our dedication to collaboration. Thank you to everyone involved!

The remaining Campus Discovery Days will be held on the following dates:

- Kent Campus, March 28
- Downtown Campus, April 25
- South Campus, May 30

Your support is needed, whether you wish to participate as a [program/resource representative](#) or as a [volunteer](#) to assist our prospective students. Contact the [Student Recruitment Office](#) with questions.

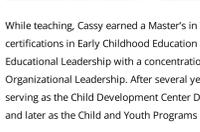
A note from a Terry Parker High School teacher after a campus experience at South Campus: "On behalf of the Latinos In Action class from Terry Parker High School, I would like to extend our sincere gratitude for hosting us for the recent campus tour. Our students truly benefited from the experience. For many of our students, especially those who will be first-generation college attendees, visiting the campus helped make higher education feel tangible and achievable. We appreciated the hospitality."

- Upcoming March Events:
- 12: College and Career Fair at Riverside High School
 - 25: Yulee High School recruitment visit
 - 25: FSCJ with Daniel Kids
 - 26: GEAR UP program and the I'm A STAR Foundation "Spring College Expo"
 - 31: Pepsi Jax Health & Benefits Fair

Connect with Student Recruitment - Whether it's a new initiative or one that's tried and true, we'd appreciate hearing your thoughts and/or having your participation. If you're interested in participating in recruitment events, please connect with us at fsjrecruitment@fscj.edu with the subject line "Dive into Manta Ray Nation."

[Read More](#)

Get to Know Your APC Colleagues: Cassy Petrecz



March's Administrative & Professional Collaborative (APC) spotlight shines on Associate Dean of Education and Human Services Cassy Petrecz. Joining the FSCJ team in mid-November, Cassy provides leadership for academic programs that prepare students for meaningful careers in education, social services and community-based professions.

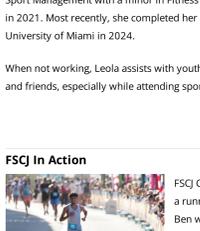
Cassy began her career in education while serving in the United States Air Force. During that time, she earned her Associate degree in General Studies and a Bachelor's in Psychology, along with a private teaching certification program that allowed her to teach elementary school.

While teaching, Cassy earned a Master's in Teaching with a concentration in Special Education, teaching certifications in Early Childhood Education and Special Education, an Education Specialist Degree in Educational Leadership with a concentration in Curriculum and Instruction, and a graduate certificate in Organizational Leadership. After several years in the classroom, Cassy joined the United States Navy, serving as the Child Development Center Director and Youth Director at Patuxent River Naval Air Station, and later as the Child and Youth Programs Installation Director in Italy.

Outside of work, Cassy enjoys spending time with her husband, John, and three children. They like traveling, discovering new restaurants, binge-watching their favorite TV shows and movies, and spending time outdoors.

[Read More](#)

Get to Know Your CEC Colleagues: Leola King



March's Career Employees' Council (CEC) spotlight features Administrative Assistant Leola King. She works behind the scenes with FSCJ Athletics to ensure everything runs like clockwork. Her responsibilities include assisting coaches and staff with administrative duties related to budget, travel, scholarships, and NJCAA eligibility and compliance. Leola oversees mascot operations, supervises student workers and manages the athletic vehicle fleet. She also serves on the Title IX Team and is participating in the Succession Planning program.

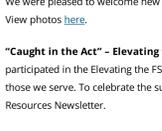
Leola began her journey with FSCJ as an intern in the Athletics Department, assisting with game management before moving into her current role.

After earning her Associate in Arts degree from FSCJ in 2019, Leola completed her Bachelor of Science in Sport Management with a minor in Fitness Management & Leadership from the University of North Florida in 2021. Most recently, she completed her Master of Education in Sports Administration from the University of Miami in 2024.

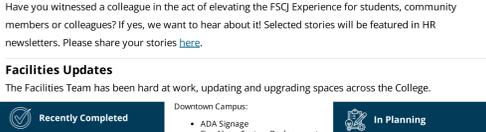
When not working, Leola assists with youth sports organizations and cherishes quality time with family and friends, especially while attending sporting events or traveling.

[Read More](#)

FSCJ In Action



FSCJ Cross Country Athlete Benjamin Hale was seen stopping to help a runner who collapsed during the Gate River Run. After assisting, Ben went on to lead his teammates to a sixth-place finish out of 122 teams. This storied program continues to do great things, and in case you missed it, they were recently named the #1 performing academic team in the nation by [U.S. Track & Field](#).



We were pleased to welcome new members of the FSCJ family during the latest New Employee Reception. View photos [here](#).

"Caught in the Act" – Elevating the FSCJ Experience Spotlight: Over the past year, employees have participated in the Elevating the FSCJ Experience workshop, which has helped improve connections with those we serve. To celebrate the success, we're starting a "Caught in the Act" spotlight in the Human Resources Newsletter.

Have you witnessed a colleague in the act of elevating the FSCJ Experience for students, community members or colleagues? If yes, we want to hear about it! Selected stories will be featured in HR newsletters. Please share your stories [here](#).

Facilities Updates

The Facilities Team has been hard at work, updating and upgrading spaces across the College.

Recently Completed	Downtown Campus:	In Planning
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Deerwood Exterior Library Canopy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ADA Signage Fire Alarm System Replacement Parking Lot Lighting Art Murals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Deerwood Center: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parking Garage Joint Repair Downtown Campus: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Warehouse Building VEIC Renovation Jr. Achievement ECC Design ATC Boiler Replacement Nassau Center: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wildwood Outdoor Retreat Center Renovation South Campus: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> New Burn Building
In Progress	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Kent Campus: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Barbershop Renovation Auditorium Seating Art Lab Furniture Nassau Center: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fire Alarm Replacement Barrier Arms Replacement North Campus: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Student Services Renovation Allied Health Program Renovation Signage Athletics Renovation Tower Stairwell Paint CEC Sign Pad Repair Scoreboard Screen Framing South Campus: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fire Alarm System Replacement Mens' Locker Room Renovation Fire Academy AHU Replacement 	

Upcoming Events

Next Call:
April 15, 2 p.m.

[Click here for previous call notes.](#)
They are also available via the myFSCJ OnPoint Quick Link.

Stay a Manta Ray!

Summer registration is open now!

60 YEARS OF IMPACT & INSPIRATION IN HEALTHCARE

APRIL 1, 2026
12:30-1:30 p.m.

Check out the full calendar to view more and access the form to submit your College-related events: fscj.edu/events.

[View More Events](#)

Quiz

Quiz winners will be selected at random from entries with all questions answered correctly. You have until 6 p.m. on the day the Newsletter is distributed to email your answers to newsletter@fscj.edu. Three winners will receive a Manta Messenger prize pack! Please note: Previous quiz winners are not eligible to win for six months.

- How many NJCAA schools entered the mascot bracket challenge?
 - 64
 - 7
 - 82
 - 16
- How many fans attending the April 18 Jumbo Shrimp game will receive a red replica Jumbo Shrimp FSCJ jersey?
 - 1,000
 - 2,000
 - 200
 - 500
- Leola King works in what FSCJ department?
 - Athletics
 - Human Resources
 - Purchasing
 - Instructional Research
- The Celebration of Health and Wellness event was held in conjunction with what two events?
 - Give Kids a Smile and Campus Discovery Day
 - Jumbo Shrimp Game
 - Campus Discovery Day
 - Give Kids a Smile
- What mascot did the Manta Rays beat in the final round of the NJCAA Mascot Bracket Challenge?
 - Thunderducks
 - Pterodactyls
 - Triceratops
 - Thunderbirds