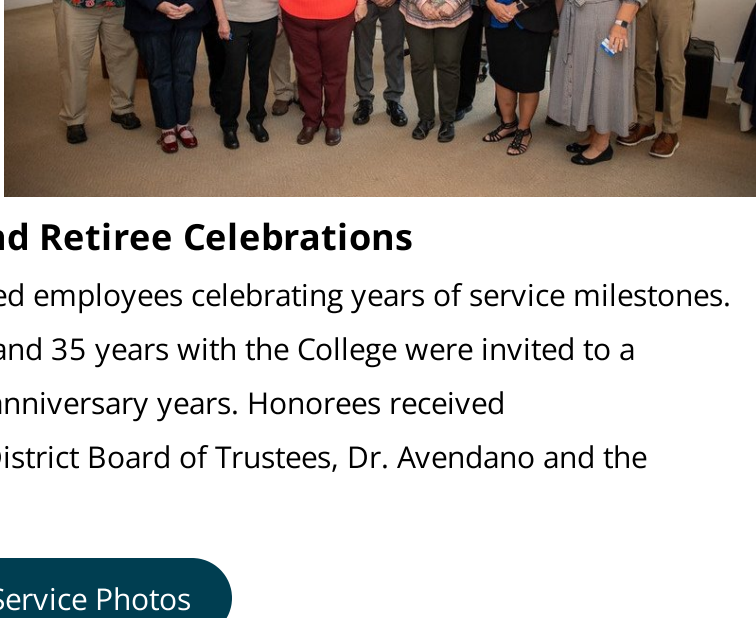


October 2026



2026 Years of Service and Retiree Celebrations

On September 17, members of the FSCJ family honored employees celebrating years of service milestones. Faculty and staff who had reached 10, 15, 20, 25, 30 and 35 years with the College were invited to a breakfast and time with colleagues to celebrate their anniversary years. Honorees received commemorative gifts and a certificate from the FSCJ District Board of Trustees, Dr. Avendano and the Executive Leadership Team.

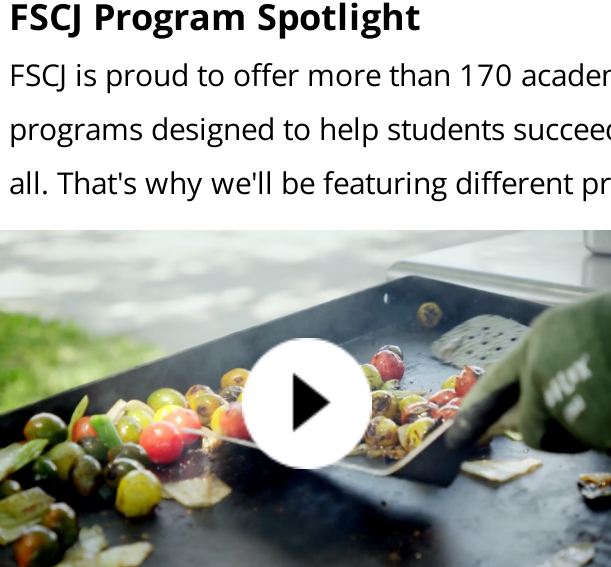
[View Years of Service Photos](#)

On October 7, our retirees gathered at Epping Forest Yacht Club for a luncheon to honor their time with the College and wish them well as they enter their retirement. This year's honorees accumulated a total of 230 years in service to FSCJ. We thank them for their contributions and wish them all a wonderful retirement!

[View Retiree Photos](#)

News and Updates

Join Us for Q&A with Dr. A



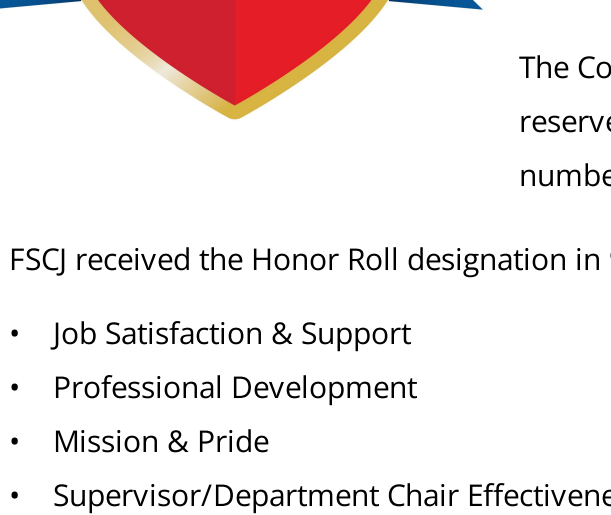
You are cordially invited to an open conversation with College President Dr. Avendano. This is an opportunity to ask any questions you may have about the College and current initiatives at FSCJ.

All forums will be held at 2 p.m. The remaining dates/locations are as follows:

- Thursday, October 15 - South Campus, Lakeside Room
- Wednesday, November 4 - Kent Campus, D120
- Wednesday, January 20 - Nassau Center, Nassau Room, T-126
- Wednesday, January 27 - Cecil Center, Auditorium
- Thursday, February 4 - Downtown Campus, ATC T140/141
- Thursday, April 1 - Deerwood Center, B1204

FSCJ Program Spotlight

FSCJ is proud to offer more than 170 academic programs for our students and many more supplemental programs designed to help students succeed. With our breadth of offerings, it's tough to know about them all. That's why we'll be featuring different programs in our Manta Messenger newsletter.



This month, we're highlighting the Associate in Science (A.S.) in Culinary Management program. Its mission is to educate, train and develop students for employment in production line and supervisory positions in the culinary arts industry.

This program falls under our Culinary and Hospitality Area of Study, which includes the following programs:

- Culinary Management (A.S.)
- Hospitality and Tourism Management (A.S.)
- Culinary Arts (T.C.)
- Food and Beverage Management (T.C.)
- Guest Services Specialist (T.C.)

Want to see your program featured? Contact communications@fscj.edu with your program name and how you'd like to be included.

[Learn More](#)

60th Anniversary T-Shirt Quilt

As part of the 60th Anniversary Celebration, FSCJ Financial Aid Advisor B. Angie Goode used her quilting skills to create a quilt from shirts that FSCJ employees traded in during Convocation. It will be on display at different locations throughout the College soon.

Thank you, Angiel! This quilt will be a treasured keepsake for the College.



Share Your First Memory

Think back to your first day working at FSCJ. Faculty and staff are asked to share their first memory from their time working at the College. Complete this [form](#) with your first memory to be displayed on the [FSCJ 60th Anniversary webpage](#).

Once compiled, memories will be stored in the [FSCJ Archive](#) for future members of the FSCJ family to see.

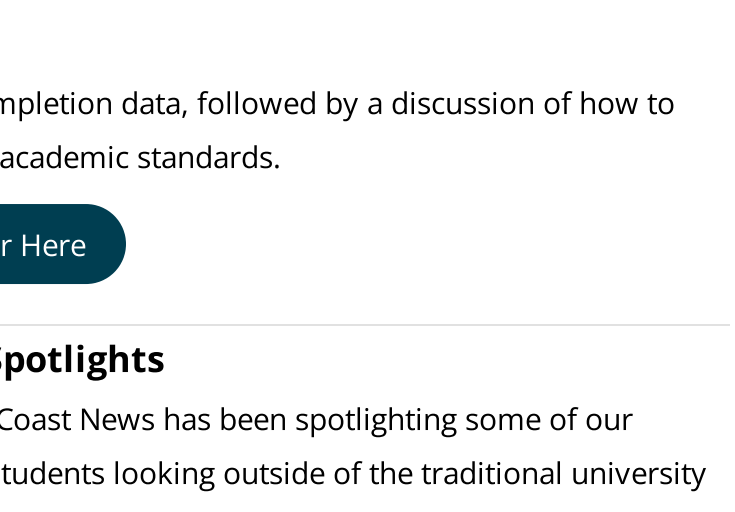
[Submit the Form](#)



2027 Benefits Enrollment Now Open

The 2027 open enrollment period allows employees an opportunity to review benefit plan options and select their insurance(s) for the next plan year, effective January 1, 2027. All eligible employees who want any of the benefits offered through the State Group Insurance Program may enroll in the available plans now through October 30.

Contact benefits@fscj.edu with questions.



[Learn More](#)

Talkin' Tassel - Fall Data Roadshows Continue

There are two more opportunities to participate in the Fall Data Roadshow.

- Downtown Campus, A1058, October 15, 2-3 p.m.
- Nassau Center, T126, October 19, 2-3 p.m.

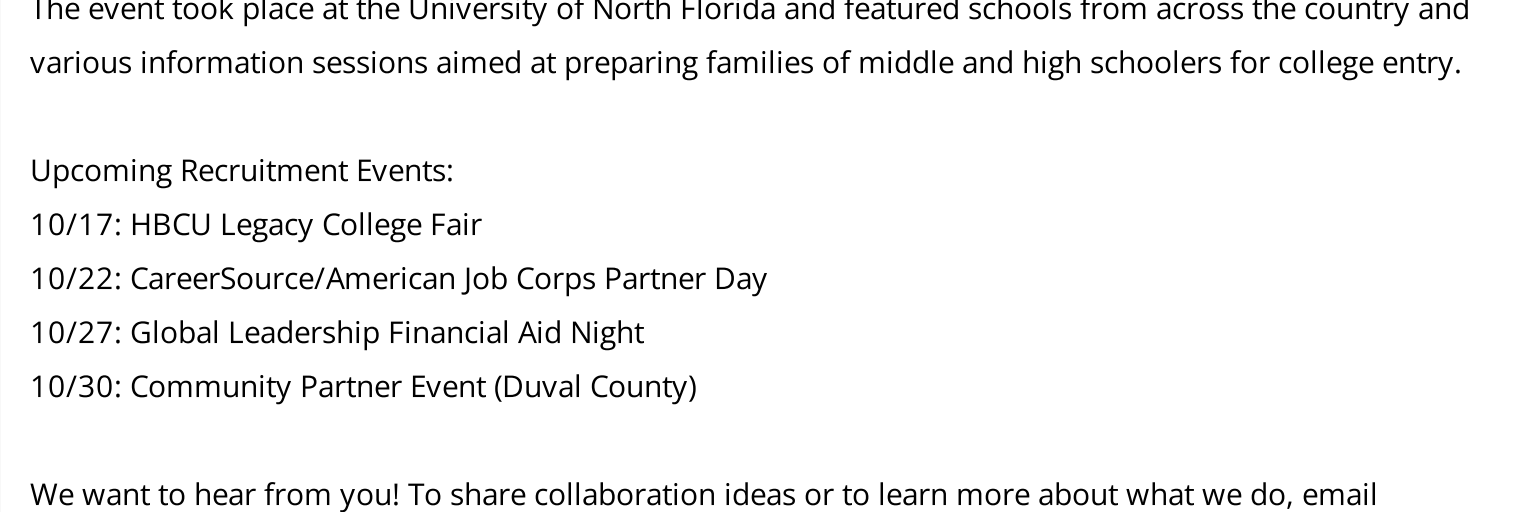
Each one-hour session will review persistence and completion data, followed by a discussion of how to improve graduation rates without decreasing rigor or academic standards.

[Register Here](#)

First Coast News: "Bypassing Tradition" Spotlights

You may have seen where Jeannie Blaylock with First Coast News has been spotlighting some of our programs through "Bypassing Tradition," a series on students looking outside of the traditional university pathway and achieving their goals at FSCJ.

In case you've missed them, check out the recent highlights:



Recruitment Update

The College Open House returns next month, and this time we're hosting it on the Downtown Campus! This is our chance to welcome our community of learners and showcase what has made FSCJ special for more than 60 years. If you're part of an academic program, this is your chance to connect with prospective students. If you're part of a student affairs office, this is your opportunity to showcase resources, services and support systems. Click on the button below to find answers to your questions and sign up to help [here](#).

National College Fair - Kudos to the Student Recruitment team for their leadership and support of the annual National Association of College Admission Counseling (NACAC) National College Fair Jacksonville. The event took place at the University of North Florida and featured schools from across the country and various information sessions aimed at preparing families of middle and high schoolers for college entry.

Upcoming Recruitment Events:
10/17: HBCU Legacy College Fair
10/22: CareerSource/American Job Corps Partner Day
10/27: Global Leadership/Financial Aid Night
10/30: Community Partner Event (Duval County)

We want to hear from you! To share collaboration ideas or to learn more about what we do, email fscjrecruitment@fscj.edu with the subject line: Dive Into Manta Rays Nation.

[Read More](#)

Get to Know Your APC Colleagues: Alvin Davis



October's Administrative & Professional Collaborative (APC) spotlight shines on Director of Student Life & Engagement Dr. Alvin A. Davis.

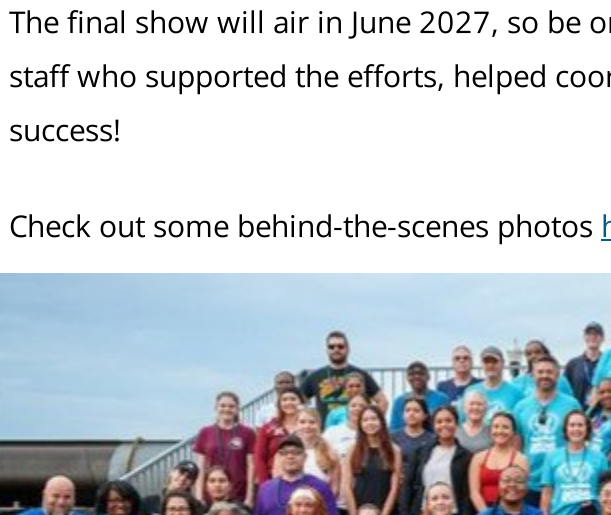
Dr. Davis provides strategic leadership, decision-making, and resource and expenditure management and allocation for Collegewide initiatives. This position advances FSCJ's mission by implementing a unified vision that enhances campus life, ensures effective use of resources and fosters student belonging across all locations.

Originally from Chicago, Dr. Davis has served in leadership roles with the Florida Department of Education, Florida A&M University, Edward Waters University and several nonprofit organizations. Most recently, he served as Director of Bands at Edward Waters University. A former Florida Teacher of the Year and National Teacher of the Year finalist, Dr. Davis has been recognized for his commitment to educational excellence, innovation and student success. He is passionate about creating an inclusive campus environment where every student feels connected, supported and empowered to succeed.

Outside of work, he enjoys spending time with his wife and children, serving his church and community, mentoring future leaders and making music.

[Read More](#)

Get to Know Your CEC Colleagues: Francis Walton



October's Career Employees' Council (CEC) spotlight features Health Sciences Academic and Career Advisor Francis M. Walton.

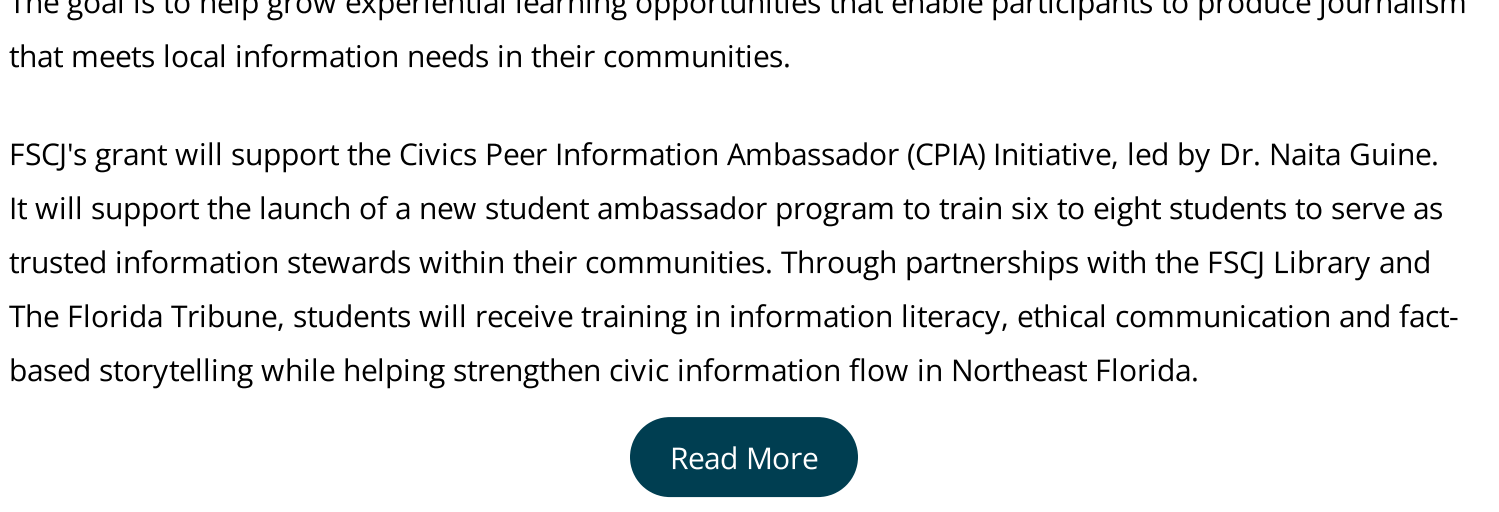
As a First Year Experience (FYE) advisor and instructor, she plays an important role in welcoming students and helping them develop the skills they need to succeed. Francis guides students in learning strategies for persistence, resilience and high achievement while connecting them with FSCJ's community. Her favorite part of the job is watching students discover their own potential.

A lifelong learner, Francis earned a bachelor's degree in Social Science from Jacksonville University and a master's degree in Business Management and Leadership from Webster University. She is currently pursuing a Doctor of Education in Human Services at Nova Southeastern University, with plans to graduate in spring 2028.

Outside of FSCJ, Francis volunteers as a mentor with Take Stock in Children. When she's not working or studying, Francis enjoys spending time with her daughter, family and friends. As her daughter prepares to begin college this fall, she's making the most of every opportunity to create lasting memories together. She also enjoys journaling, creating custom journals, reading, exploring new local restaurants and attending live concerts.

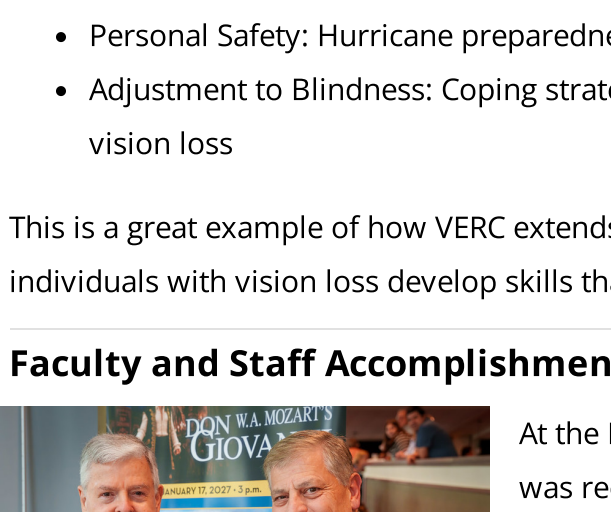
[Read More](#)

FSCJ In Action



On September 21, FSCJ hosted a ribbon-cutting ceremony to mark the official opening of Florida's first advanced semiconductor workforce training lab developed by Festo Didactic, a global leader in technical and industrial education. Supported by a \$2.3 million State of Florida capitalization grant, the cutting-edge installation features Festo's Semiconductor Learning Factory, designed to close the critical STEM and semiconductor skills gap in the United States.

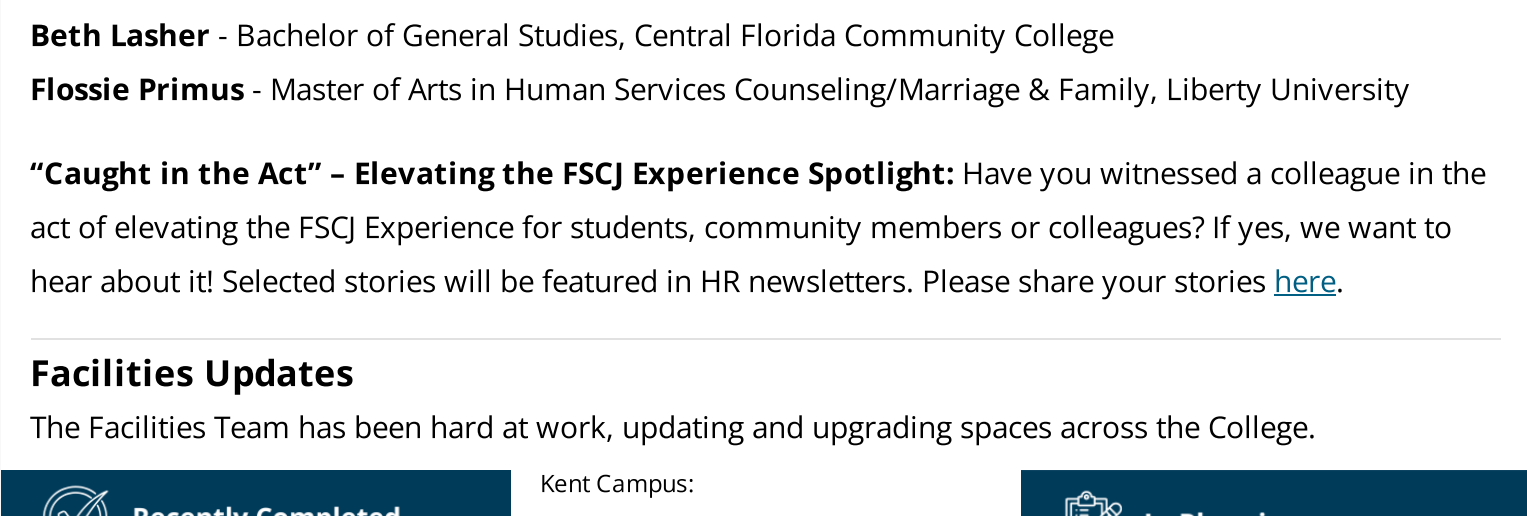
[Read More](#)



Last week, Amazon Prime's "The College Tour" dodged raindrops with the Marketing and Communications team to capture footage of some of our students and learning spaces for FSCJ's feature episode. Students and alumni from our automotive, culinary arts and hospitality, nursing and dental programs, to name a few, talked about their experiences that brought them to the College and encouraged viewers to learn more about their programs.

The final show will air in June 2027, so be on the lookout for more details. Thank you to all the faculty and staff who supported the efforts, helped coordinate and set up the spaces and made this shoot a great success!

Check out some behind-the-scenes photos [here](#).

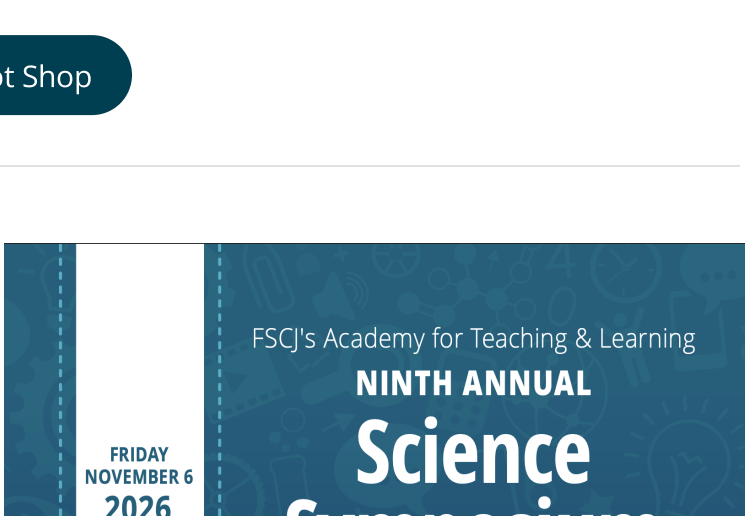


More than 200 FSCJ students and employees signed up to participate in the First Coast Heart Walk on Saturday, October 3 at Ford on the Bay. The College beat its goal of \$3,500 by raising \$4,080.44 for the American Heart Association to help fund CPR training and heart health research while honoring survivors, remembering loved ones and having fun along the way.

FSCJ was represented by 13 teams, with Ctrl-Alt-Defeat-Heart Disease leading the way with \$1,770.02 raised, followed by FMS Cheer in second with \$659.05 and FSCJ's APC in third with \$433.80 raised. For the number of participants who signed up to join a team, FSCJ Athletics led the way with 101 team members. Followed by the Fightin' Manta Rays with 31 and Ctrl-Alt-Defeat-Heart Disease with 19 team members. A huge thank you to Anna Alomar-Kissounal, Jameria Burton, Maggy Dartiguenave, Jessica Eaton, Rusty Gardner, Robert Grayson, Monica Franklin, Tera James, Carla Jenkins, Gabriel Nanao, Pete Snell, Jerry Thor and Terence Wright for serving as Team Coaches!

[View Photos](#)

FSCJ's Legal Studies Association held its first meeting of the Fall Term, where they welcomed five recent alumni (front row); the Legal Studies Board is in the back row).



Thanks to our special guests who shared their experiences and the success they found in their new careers!

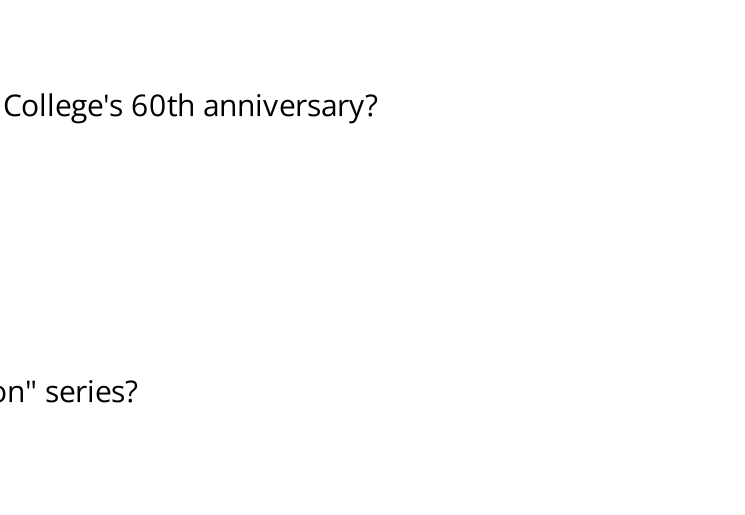
FSCJ is one of four recipients of the 2026-27 Community College Experiential Journalism Grant (CCJG). This new initiative is a collaboration between the Scripps Howard Fund and the Journalism + Design Lab at The New School, which supports innovative community college programs across the U.S. that train students and community members to get, share and act on reliable local news and information.

The CCJG grants provide one-time awards of up to \$15,000 to help community colleges strengthen and expand existing community journalism programs. The grants, made possible by the Scripps Howard Fund, are specifically designed to support colleges in the Journalism + Design Lab's Civic Info Challenge cohort. The goal is to help grow experiential learning opportunities that enable participants to produce journalism that meets local information needs in their communities.

FSCJ's grant will support the Civics Peer Information Ambassador (CPIA) Initiative, led by Dr. Naita Guine. It will support the launch of a new student ambassador program to train six to eight students to serve as trusted information stewards within their communities. Through partnerships with the FSCJ Library and the Florida Tribune, students will receive training in information literacy, ethical communication and fact-based storytelling while helping strengthen civic information flow in Northeast Florida.

[Read More](#)

FSCJ's Vision Education and Rehabilitation Center (VERC) provided weekly classes throughout September at the Nassau County Council on Aging, helping individuals who are blind or visually impaired develop practical skills to support greater independence and confidence in everyday life.



Participants received instruction in several areas, including:

- Orientation and Mobility: Safe travel techniques, white cane skills and navigating unfamiliar environments
- Independent Living: Accessible household organization, medication management, meal preparation and adaptive techniques
- Personal Safety: Hurricane preparedness, emergency planning and recognizing potential scams
- Adjustment to Blindness: Coping strategies, self-advocacy and building confidence while adjusting to vision loss

This is a great example of how VERC extends its services into surrounding communities, helping individuals with vision loss develop skills that promote independence and improve quality of life.

Faculty and Staff Accomplishments

At the FSCJ Artist Series' 61st season kick-off event, Dr. Mitt Russos was recognized for his years of service to the College, the Artist Series and the community. In honor of his dedication and contributions, the series will now be branded the FSCJ Artist Series sponsored by VyStar Credit Union: A Dr. Milton A. Russos Legacy.

[View Photos](#)

Earned Degree Recognitions

Congratulations to the following employees who recently received a degree and submitted a [request for earned degree recognition](#)!

Shakura Jackson - Bachelor of Science in Human Services, Walden University
Beth Lasher - Bachelor of General Studies, Central Florida Community College
Flossie Primus - Master of Arts in Human Services Counseling/Marriage & Family, Liberty University

"Caught in the Act" - Elevating the FSCJ Experience Spotlight: 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	Kent Campus:	In Planning
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Downtown, Coffee Cafe RemodelCecil Electrical Lab RenovationNassau Fire Alarm ReplacementSouth VHS Repair: Canopy Repairs; Fire Academy AHU Replacement; CUP Plant Pump Unit Replacement	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Student Services Carpet ReplacementOutdoor Benches and Tables	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Cecil Center:<ul style="list-style-type: none">Cecil Workforce Training HubDeerwood Center:<ul style="list-style-type: none">Parking Garage joint RepairDowntown Campus:<ul style="list-style-type: none">Warehouse BuildingIT Lab Renovation
In Progress	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Barrier Arm ReplacementPropane Tank InstallationWillowood Outdoor Retreat Center RenovationHVAC Upgrades	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Kent Campus:<ul style="list-style-type: none">VyStar Military and Veterans Service Center RenovationNorth Campus:<ul style="list-style-type: none">Histology and Medical Lab Technology Design/ConceptNursing & Allied Health Program Design/ConceptSouth Campus:<ul style="list-style-type: none">New Burn BuildingScience Lab Upgrades

Show Your Manta Rays Spirit

Get your Manta Rays merch now! In partnership with Baker's Sports, the local uniform provider for FSCJ's Athletics teams, we are pleased to offer t-shirts, hoodies, a special baseball jersey and more.

Make your selection and customize it with different designs so you can represent FSCJ and our athletics teams. You'll also be helping out our program, as FSCJ Athletics will receive a portion of the proceeds from your purchase!

[Mascot Shop](#)

Upcoming Events

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.

- Fill in the blanks. For the _____ consecutive year, FSCJ has been named one of the best colleges to work for, according to Great Colleges to Work For®.
 - Fourth
 - Tenth
 - Third
 - Second
- What date does 2027 Benefits Open Enrollment end?
 - October 31
 - October 30
 - January 1
 - December 31
- What did Angie Goode make to commemorate the College's 60th anniversary?
 - An original song
 - A cake
 - A sculpture
 - A t-shirt quilt
- What news station featured the "Bypassing Tradition" series?
 - First Coast News
 - Action News Jax
 - News4jax
 - WJCT
- Where is today's Q&A with Dr. A?
 - South Campus
 - Kent Campus
 - Nassau Center
 - Cecil Center