

## September 2026



### Convocation 2026

Thanks to everyone who planned, prepared for, volunteered during and attended Convocation 2026 on Thursday, August 27 in the South Campus Gymnasium. We closed our 60th anniversary celebration, looked ahead to our next 60 years and enjoyed a wonderful lunch together.

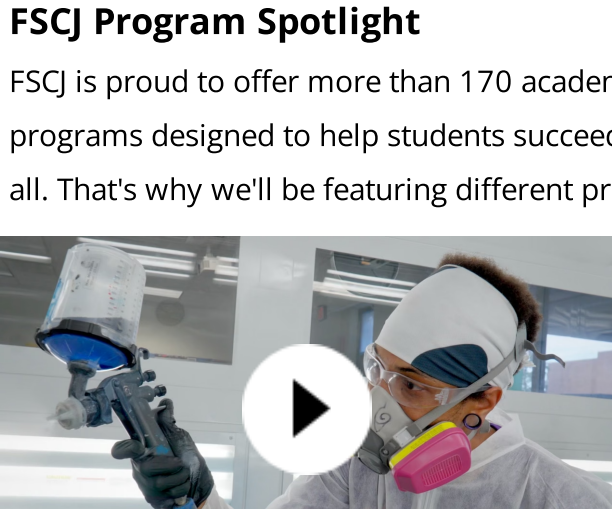
We are grateful for all who brought donations for the Career Closet and H.O.P.E. Food Pantry. Because of your generosity, the Career Closet and Food Pantry can now serve even more students!

If you missed it or just want to relive the day, you can watch the recording by clicking on the video above. Check out photos [here](#) or by clicking on the button below.

[View Photos](#)

### News and Updates

#### FSCJ Receives \$7 Million Grant for Cecil Training Institute



As you saw in Dr. A's email, Governor DeSantis was at our Cecil Center on August 31 to announce multiple Florida Job Growth Grant awards, including \$7 million for FSCJ's Cecil Training Institute. The investment will be used to expand workforce training at FSCJ and strengthen the talent pipeline for Northeast Florida's fastest-growing industries.

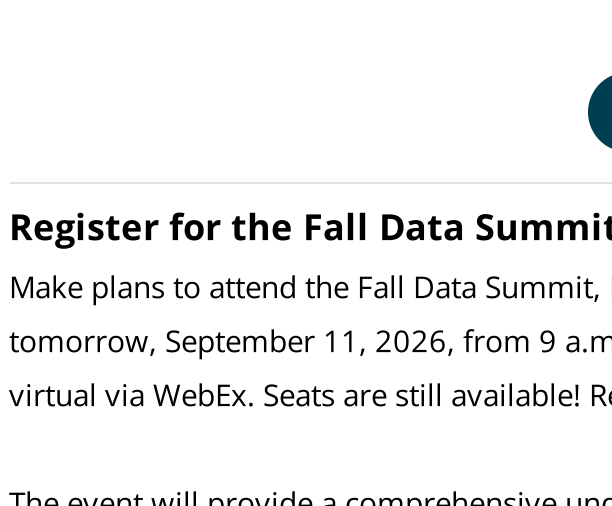
The institute will establish modern training facilities for welding, HVAC/R and become the future location for electrical, logistics and other complementary programs, preparing more than 1,000 skilled workers over the next decade and serving more than 1,250 students.

This Job Growth Grant reflects the confidence our state and community have in FSCJ's ability to prepare the workforce of tomorrow. The project directly supports community workforce development by creating pathways into high-demand, high-wage careers that are critical to the continued growth of Jacksonville's maritime, shipbuilding, aviation, aerospace, manufacturing, logistics and construction sectors.

[View Photos](#)

#### 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 Automotive Collision Technology Technician Career Certificate (C.C.) program, which provides the comprehensive training necessary to restore automobiles to like-new condition.

This program falls under our Transportation and Logistics Area of Study which includes the following degree programs:

- Logistics (B.A.S.)
- Automotive Service Management Technology (A.A.S.)
- Aviation Administration (Air Traffic Control) (A.S.)
- Aviation Maintenance Administration (A.S.)
- Aviation Maintenance Management (A.S.)
- Professional Pilot Technology (A.S.)
- Supply Chain Management (A.S.)

Want to see your program featured? Contact [communications@fscj.edu](mailto:communications@fscj.edu) with your program name and how you'd like to be included.

[Learn More](#)

#### Share Your First Memory

Think back to your first day working at FSCJ. As part of FSCJ's 60th Anniversary, faculty and staff are asked to share their first memory from their time working at the College.

## Share Your First FSCJ Memory

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](#)

#### Register for the Fall Data Summit

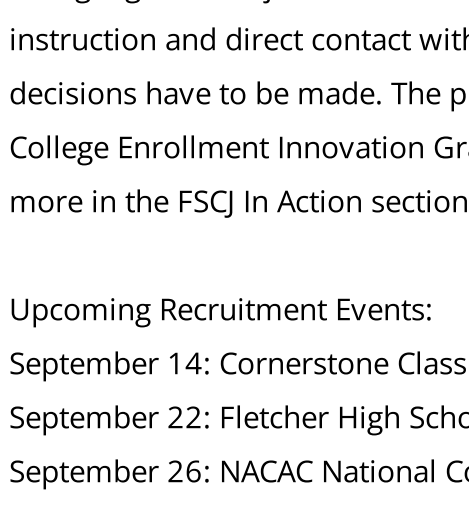
Make plans to attend the Fall Data Summit, Bridging Futures: A Data Summit on Dual Enrollment tomorrow, September 11, 2026, from 9 a.m. to Noon at the Advanced Technology Center, T-140, and virtual via WebEx. Seats are still available! Registration instructions are below.

The event will provide a comprehensive understanding of Dual Enrollment and its impact on student success. Attendees will learn about program requirements, eligibility, enrollment processes and best practices for supporting dual enrollment students. Sessions will explore strategies for strengthening partnerships with K-12 schools, improving access and completion, and leveraging dual enrollment as a pathway to college and career readiness.

To register:

- In-person session, ATC, T-140: [Click Here](#)
- Live online session: [Click Here](#)
- Alternatively, log on to [my.fscj.edu](http://my.fscj.edu). On the Employee Self-Service page, locate "Useful Links" and click on "myLearning." Select the "Learning Library" tab, search for "PD 2631 Fall 2026 Data Summit," click view sessions, and register for the in-person session or the live online session.

Your attendance counts for three non-credit hours of professional development toward the One Percent Salary Incentive. With questions, please email Dr. Jerrett Dumouchel at [jerrett.dumouchel@fscj.edu](mailto:jerrett.dumouchel@fscj.edu).



#### Community Wellness Summit Coming October 9

FSCJ Education and Human Services will host the seventh annual Community Wellness Summit on Friday, October 9, at Downtown Campus. Beginning at 8:30 a.m., the free, day-long event will feature breakout sessions related to wellness, integrated health care, behavioral and mental health, substance abuse prevention, intervention and treatment, trauma-informed practices, suicide prevention and other issues that affect our community.

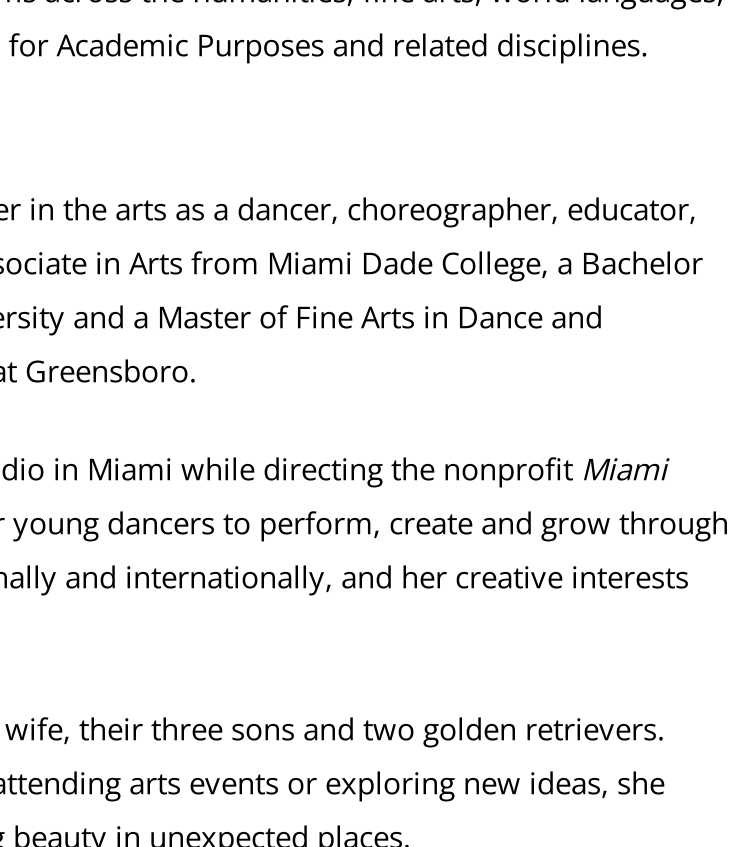
Six CEUs for full-day participation and a Certificate of Attendance will be provided. El Agave Azul Food Truck will be on-site for lunch purchases. With additional questions, email [hs.humaneservices@fscj.edu](mailto:hs.humaneservices@fscj.edu).

[Register Here](#)

#### 60th Anniversary Proclamation

On September 8, FSCJ received a proclamation from the City of Jacksonville, officially recognizing the College's 60th anniversary. Dr. Avendano, along with members of the District Board of Trustees, representatives from the Executive Leadership Team, 60th Anniversary Committee members and students gathered at City Hall to accept the proclamation.

[View Photos](#)



#### Recruitment Update

Next month, the Student Recruitment Office and the Office of Civic Engagement will host their annual Community Connections: Community Partner Event at Kent Campus. This event provides an opportunity for the two externally focused College offices to collaborate in bringing valued community partners to campus for meaningful conversations about collective impact and community engagement.

This summer, the two offices partnered with JAXUSA Partnership to host Director of Network Engagement and Communications for the Florida College Access Network (FCAN) Kim Krupa for a visit with the Earn Up Level Up summer camp initiative.

Here's an excerpt from an article about the camp: "Most of the work that goes into getting a Florida high school student to college happens during the school year. What about the summer? Level Up, a boot camp offered through JAXUSA Partnership's Earn Up initiative in collaboration with FSCJ, answers that question. Rising high school juniors and seniors spend a week on FSCJ's campus for career assessments, financial aid instruction and direct contact with recent graduates and local employers, months before senior year decisions have to be made. The program is one of 12 projects funded through FCAN's Post-High School College Enrollment Innovation Grant, a DeLuca Foundation initiative that launched in January 2025." Read more in the FSCJ In Action section below.

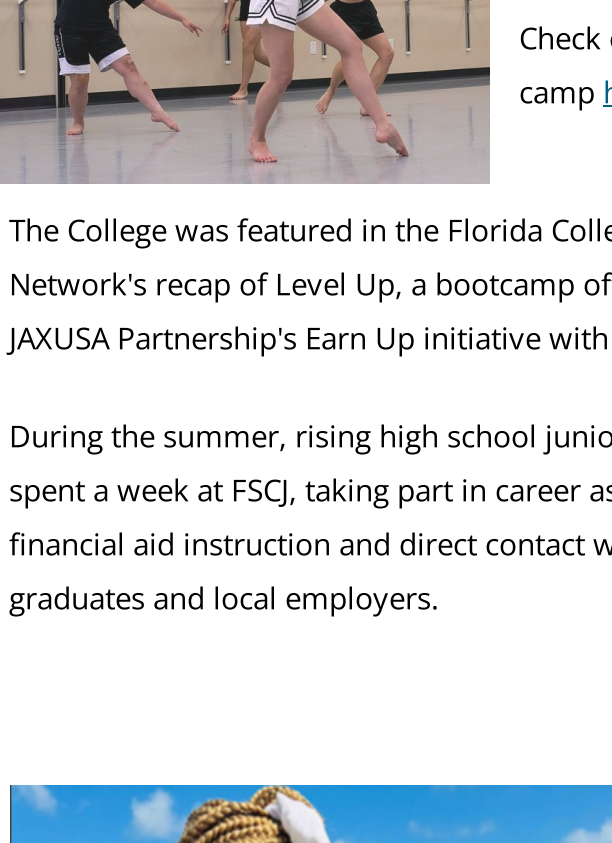
Upcoming Recruitment Events:

- September 14: Cornerstone Classical Academy visit at South Campus
- September 22: Fletcher High School Financial Aid Night
- September 25: NACAC National College Fair Jacksonville
- September 29: Yulee High School Financial Aid Night

Don't forget: College Open House is Saturday, November 14.

[Read More](#)

#### Get to Know Your APC Colleagues: Talani Torres



September's Administrative & Professional Collaborative (APC) spotlight shines on Dean of Arts & Sciences Talani Torres. She joined FSCJ in 2011, and has spent the past 15 years serving the College as a faculty member, interim dean and dean. Throughout her time at FSCJ, she has remained committed to supporting faculty and strengthening programs across the humanities, fine arts, world languages, English for Academic Purposes and related disciplines.

Before entering academic leadership, she built a career in the arts as a dancer, choreographer, educator, studio owner and nonprofit leader. She earned an Associate in Arts from Miami Dade College, a Bachelor of Arts in Psychology from Florida International University and a Master of Fine Arts in Dance and Choreography from the University of North Carolina at Greensboro.

For ten years, Talani owned and operated a dance studio in Miami while directing the nonprofit *Miami Children's Dance Ensemble*, creating opportunities for young dancers to perform, create and grow through the arts. Her choreography has been presented nationally and internationally, and her creative interests often explore the intersections of art and technology.

Outside of FSCJ, Talani enjoys spending time with her wife, their three sons and two golden retrievers. Whether she's walking on the beach, riding her bike, attending arts events or exploring new ideas, she remains inspired by creativity, connection and finding beauty in unexpected places.

[Read More](#)

#### Get to Know Your CEC Colleagues: Brittani Fisher



September's Career Employees' Council (CEC) spotlight features Senior Specialist Brittani Fisher. In her role, Brittani coordinates and supports customized training contracts between FSCJ and business and organizational partners. She enjoys the unique opportunity to support students while balancing the goals and expectations of both the College and its employer partners.

She earned a Bachelor of Arts in English with a concentration in Literature from the University of South Florida and a Master of Education in Higher Education Leadership Administration from Capella University.

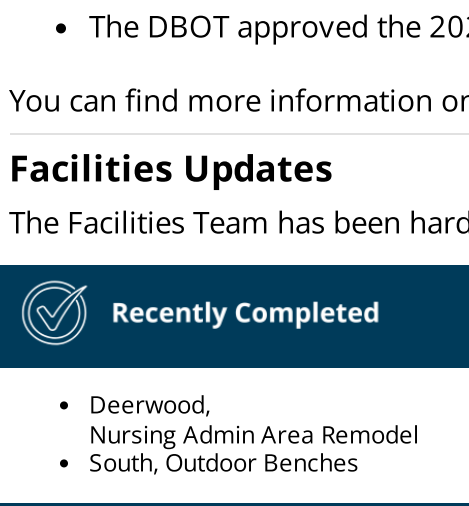
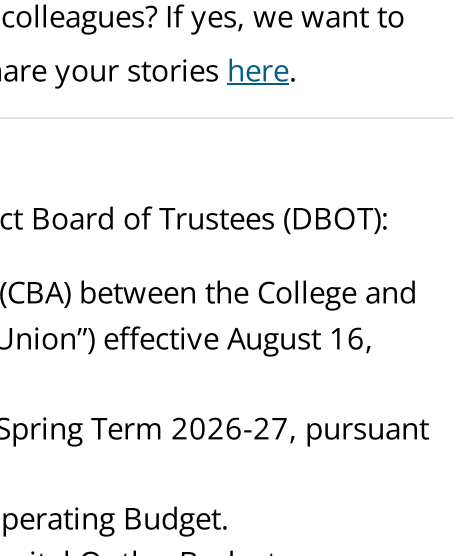
When she's away from work, Brittani enjoys spending time reading, cooking, taking a well-deserved nap and watching classic television—especially *The Golden Girls*. She serves as Board President of the Global Arts Parent Teacher Organization in Jacksonville, and also volunteers with Trinity Rescue Mission.

[Read More](#)

#### FSCJ In Action

The FSCJ Foundation presented the College with a special, one-time gift of \$175,000 originating from operational surplus funds.

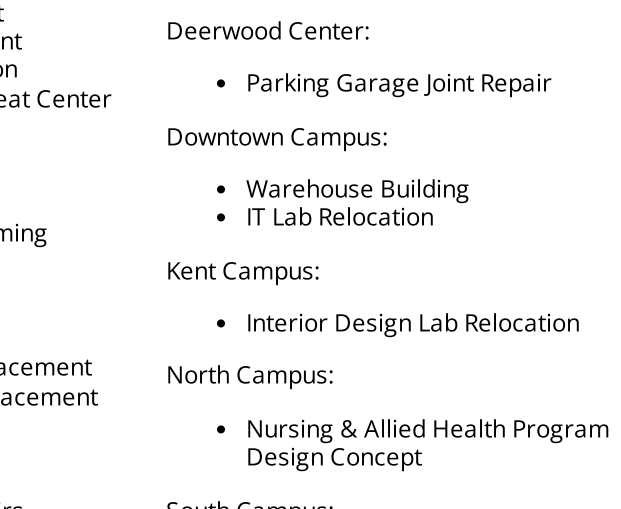
Pictured here are FSCJ President Dr. John Avendano and FSCJ Foundation Chairman Michael Corrigan. The proceeds will be used for innovation grants and campus beautification.



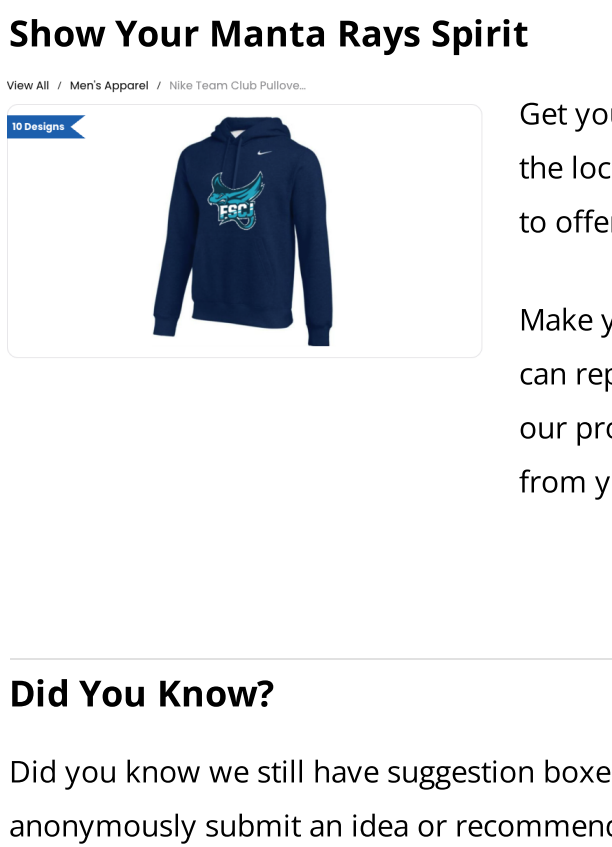
Each summer, FSCJ and Jacksonville Dance Theatre offer SHAPE/SHIFT Summer Dance Intensive, a program for professional and pre-professional dancers at South Campus. The program is led by FSCJ Professor of Dances and JDT Artistic Director Rebecca Levy.

Check out the great photos, taken by Trib LaPrade, during the camp [here](#).

The College was featured in the Florida College Access Network's recap of Level Up, a bootcamp offered through JAXUSA Partnership's Earn Up initiative with FSCJ.



[Read More](#)



One of our Honors Program alumni, Jessica Coleman, was pictured in the recent Community Collaborations newsletter. The photo shows Jessica planting trees in Puerto Rico as part of our first alternative spring break (ASB) program. During that trip, participants planted over 500 indigenous trees.

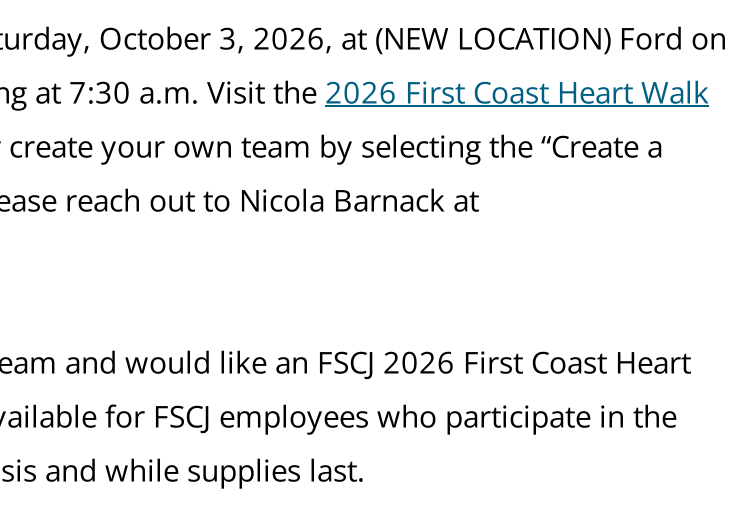
Study Abroad @ FSCJ, in partnership with Community Collaborations Inc. (our non-profit program partner), participated in the joint Chiefs' Landscape Restoration Partnership, a federal program co-led by the USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service and the U.S. Forest Service. The program focuses on soil regeneration for depleted areas of land, ecological corridors to reconnect forests, climate resiliency and food security efforts.

The following year, participants planted 750 trees, meaning FSCJ Honors students left a legacy of more than 1,250 new trees to support long-term agricultural, ecological and food security needs in Puerto Rico.

Since that first trip, FSCJ has completed three programs with CCI (two to Puerto Rico and one to Guatemala) and will be heading to Costa Rica in March of 2027. More than 50 Honors students have participated since it began in 2024.

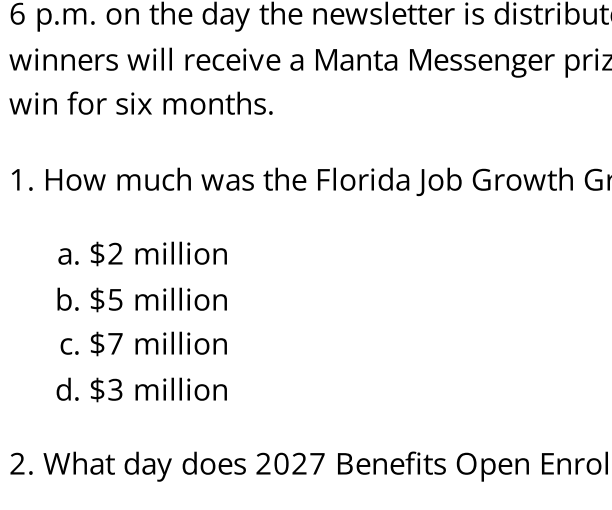
[Read More](#)

During the Tech Coast Conference, FSCJ was presented with a \$7,500 scholarship award in partnership with Keiser University. These funds will provide financial support and educational opportunities for students pursuing careers in high-demand technology fields.



"We are grateful to receive this scholarship support each year, as it directly benefits our students and helps reduce financial barriers while encouraging continued excellence in technology education," said Dean of Information Technology Sha'Kia Riggins.

The Tech Coast Conference brings together technology leaders, educators, industry partners and innovators from across the region to discuss emerging trends, workforce development and the future of technology.



The AI and Cybersecurity Stepping Stones course was a resounding success under the guidance of Tere Davenport! This innovative program provided high school students with a unique opportunity to explore the intersection of AI and Cybersecurity. Throughout the nine-week session, students engaged with curriculum developed by the Intel AI for Workforce program.

Students were guided through the fundamentals of AI and how these technologies are being used to mitigate modern cyber threats. They utilized industry-standard software, completing intensive labs in the CyberBit platform. Simulations allowed them to practice advanced techniques like malware analysis and threat hunting and identifying vulnerabilities in a real-world environment. For their final project, the students worked in groups to build their own cybersecurity assistant agents using Google AI Studio.

The students have successfully earned their Intel Digital Readiness Program Certificate of Completion, a globally recognized credential for AI readiness, and individual certificates from CyberBit, and are now well-prepared for future workforce demands in the technology sector.

#### Faculty and Staff Accomplishments

As part of the College's 60th Anniversary, the 60-Mile Challenge, led by Bryan Stewart and Rusty Gardner, took place between February 18 and August 19, 2026. During this time, 100 participants walked, ran, hiked or snowshoed 14,749 miles, with 54 participants reaching 60 miles!

The following participants received an FSCJ Manta Rays-branded water bottle for leading in the following categories:

- First to 60 Miles – Lauren Finch (1,213 total miles, 442 activities, and 374 hours and 18 minutes)
- Distance – Ken Hill (892.2 total miles and 414 hours and 27 minutes)
- Elevation – Daniela Marra (110,403.5 total feet)
- Activities – Samantha Lasic (362 activities)
- Time – Herschel Finch (285 hours and 47 minutes)

"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](#).

#### Board Highlights

Review the highlights of the September 8, 2026, meeting of the FSCJ District Board of Trustees (DBOT):

- The DBOT approved the successor Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA) between the College and the United Faculty of Florida – Florida State College at Jacksonville ("Union") effective August 16, 2026, through August 15, 2029, pending ratification by the faculty.
- The DBOT approved fee changes for specific courses to be effective Spring Term 2026-27, pursuant to Board Rule 6hx7-4.19.
- The DBOT approved Amendment No. 2 to the Fiscal Year 2026-27 Operating Budget.
- The DBOT approved Amendment No. 1 to the Fiscal Year 2026-27 Capital Outlay Budget.
- The DBOT approved the 2026-27 Carry Forward Spending Plan.

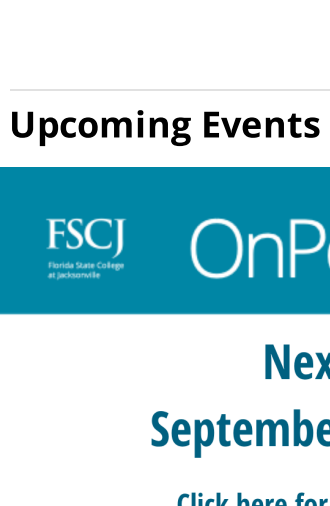
You can find more information on the Board of Trustees meeting on the [website](#).

#### 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"><li>Deerwood, Nursing Admin Area Remodel</li><li>South Campus Benches</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Students Services Carpet Replacement</li><li>Outdoor Benches and Tables</li></ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Cecil Workforce Training Hub</li></ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| In Progress                                                                                                       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Fire Alarm Replacement</li><li>Barrier Arm Replacement</li><li>Propane Tank Installation</li><li>Winterwood Outdoor Retreat Center Renovation</li></ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Deerwood Center: Parking Garage Joint Repair Design Concept</li></ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| Ongoing Collegewide:                                                                                              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>North Campus: Scoreboard Screen Framing</li><li>Building A Upgrades</li><li>South Campus: Fire Alarm System Replacement</li><li>Fire Academy AHU Replacement</li><li>Klin Repairs</li><li>Campsy Repairs</li><li>Boiler Replacement</li><li>Covered Walkway Repairs</li><li>CUP Plane Pump Unit Replacement</li><li>Fire Academy Flooring and Furniture</li><li>Wayfinding Monument Entrances</li><li>Athletics Laundry Renovation</li><li>Landscaping Near Bookstore</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Downtown Campus: Warehouse Building</li><li>IT Lab Relocation</li><li>Kent Campus: Interior Design Lab Relocation</li><li>North Campus: Nursing &amp; Allied Health Program Design Concept</li><li>South Campus: New Burn Lab Upgrades</li><li>Science Lab Upgrades</li></ul> |
| Cecil Center:                                                                                                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Electrical Lab Renovation</li></ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| Downtown Campus:                                                                                                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Fire Alarm System Replacement</li><li>Coffee Cafe Remodel</li><li>ATC Boiler Replacement</li></ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |

#### 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!

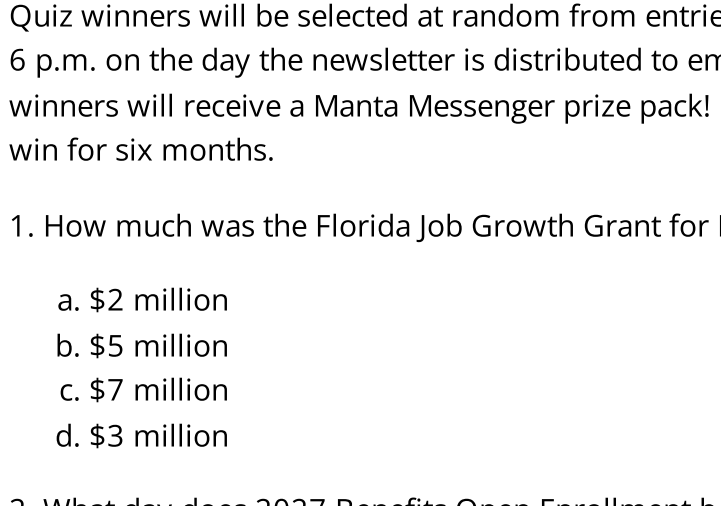
[Masock Shop](#)

#### Did You Know?

Did you know we still have suggestion boxes located at each campus and center? This is where you can anonymously submit an idea or recommendation for consideration. Click on the button below for the maps to find your nearest suggestion box.

[Suggestion Box Maps](#)

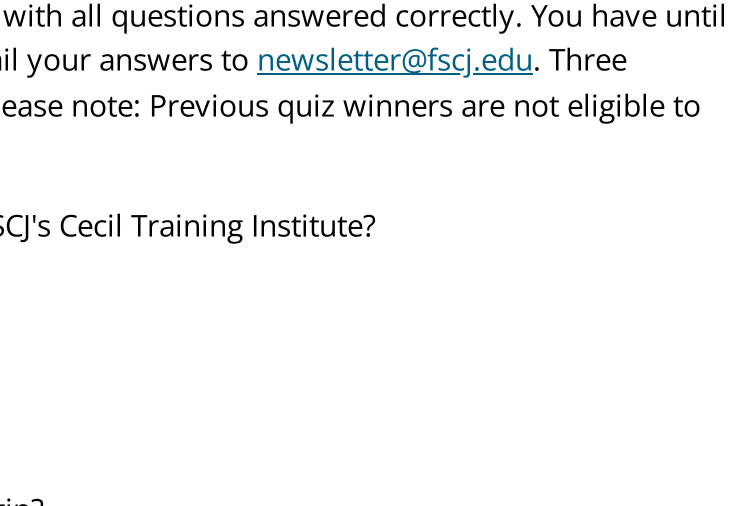
#### Upcoming Events



**Next Call:**  
**September 16, 2 p.m.**

[Click here for previous call notes.](#)

They are also available via the myFSCJ OnPoint Quick Link.



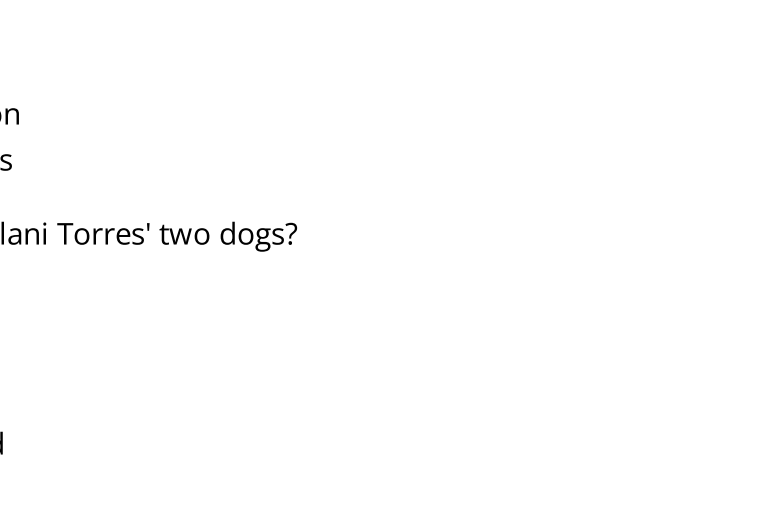
**5th Annual Global Education Conference**

**Building Global Partnerships**  
October 12, 2026

FSCJ South Campus, Wilson Center

8:30 a.m. - 1 p.m. (Post Registration)  
9:30 a.m. - 1 p.m. (Registration)  
1:30 p.m. - 4:00 p.m. (Lunch & Networking)

[Learn More and Register](#)



**2027 BENEFITS OPEN ENROLLMENT**

Monday, October 12 through Friday, October 30, 2026

#### First Coast Heart Walk

The 2026 First Coast Heart Walk will take place on Saturday, October 3, 2026, at (NEW LOCATION) Ford on Bay – Downtown Jacksonville, with festivities beginning at 7:30 a.m. Visit the [2026 First Coast Heart Walk webpage](#) to see a list of current teams you can join or create your own team by selecting the "Create a Team" link on the page and following the prompts. Please reach out to Nicola Barnack at [nicola.barnack@heart.org](mailto:nicola.barnack@heart.org) for assistance.

If you donate to support your respective Heart Walk team and would like an FSCJ 2026 First Coast Heart Walk t-shirt, please complete this [form](#). T-shirts are available for FSCJ employees who participate in the walk and are available on a first-come, first-served basis and while supplies last.

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

1. How much was the Florida Job Growth Grant for FSCJ's Cecil Training Institute?

- \$2 million
- \$5 million
- \$7 million
- \$3 million

2. What day does 2027 Benefits Open Enrollment begin?

- October 31
- October 30
- October 3
- October 12

3. What is a key topic for the Fall Data Summit?

- Dual Enrollment
- Student Parents
- Continuing Education
- Workforce Programs

4. What is the breed of Talani Torres' two dogs?

- Labrador Retriever
- Golden Retriever
- Jack Russell Terrier
- Australian Shepherd

5. How many participants reached 60 miles during the 60th Anniversary 60-Mile Challenge?

- 60
- 54
- 100
- 58