



FLORIDA SOUTHWESTERN STATE COLLEGE

WORKFORCE EDUCATION

AY 24-25, Issue 5



Meeting Southwest Florida's evolving economic needs remains our priority at FSW. Through collaborative industry engagement, high-impact learning experiences, and responsive curriculum development, FSW empowers students to meet the demands of Southwest Florida's evolving economy. The following highlights showcase our recent initiatives that exemplify FSW's dedication to workforce education excellence.

- FSW Celebrates Nursing Excellence: Over 100 Future Healthcare Heroes Take Next Step Toward Patient Care
- Cultivating Southwest Florida's Future: FSW Celebrates 38 New Educators with Immediate Impact
- North Collier Fire Training Center Achieves 100% Paramedic Certification Pass Rate
- FSW Biology Students Dive Deep into Marine Science at Florida Keys Lab: Hands-On Research Inspires Future Marine Scientists
- Learning Beyond Borders: Education Students' Service Journey Through Ireland
- Creative Collaboration: Lee County's Digital Artists Take on Real-World Challenges at FSW
- From Page to Stage: The Memo' Showcases Program Excellence
- FSW's "BitBuccaneers" Make Impressive Debut at International Hacking Competition
- Setting the Table for Success: FSW's Etiquette Dinner Prepares Students for the Professional World
- Pathways to Success: FSW's Future Ready Teen Camps Launch This Summer





FSW Celebrates Nursing Excellence: Over 100 Future Healthcare Heroes Take Next Step Toward Patient Care

FSW's School of Nursing celebrated 100+ graduating nursing students during the spring pinning ceremony. This time-honored tradition honors nursing graduates as they transition from students to professional healthcare providers. The ceremony featured special recognition for three students who were awarded the prestigious Lynne Davis Nightingale Award named for Florence Nightingale noting outstanding academic achievement and clinical performance.



Geff Joseph



Taylor Mathe



Fiorella Orrick

"Our pinning ceremony is a proud moment for our entire college community," said Dr. Susan Holland, Dean for the School of Nursing. "These graduates have demonstrated exceptional dedication throughout their education, and we're confident they'll make a tremendous impact in our community's healthcare system."

Graduates pledged the Nightingale Oath and received their nursing pins from faculty. With the national boards (NCLEX-RN) scheduled for the coming month, these future nurses are in their final preparation phase. Our School of Nursing maintains a strong board exam success, with pass rates above the state average.

As Southwest Florida faces growing healthcare demands, these graduates will join a workforce crucial to serving our community. The pinning ceremony marked not just an academic milestone, but the addition of over 100 compassionate healthcare professionals ready to make a difference in patients' lives.

Cultivating Southwest Florida's Future: FSW Celebrates 38 New Educators with Immediate Impact



FSW's School of Education celebrated the pinning of 38 new educators with every graduate receiving an offer of local employment—a testament to Southwest Florida's urgent need for qualified teachers.

About half of the graduating class participated in the Early Bucs program, which allowed them to serve as classroom teachers while completing their final year of studies. This innovative program provided valuable hands-on experience and helped address teacher shortages in Southwest Florida.

“Our graduates have already proven themselves in the classroom,” said Dr. April Fleming, Dean of the School of Education. “The Early Bucs program gave them a head start, and now they're ready to make an immediate impact as certified teachers.”

Faculty members praised the class for their resilience and dedication, particularly those who balanced full-time teaching responsibilities, family, and the academic demands of completing their degree requirements.

With the continued teacher shortages, the timing couldn't be better. These 38 educators will fill critical positions across the region, bringing fresh perspectives and the latest educational strategies to local classrooms.

Our graduates aren't just getting jobs, they're filling essential roles in shaping the next generation of Southwest Florida students.





North Collier Fire Training Center Achieves 100% Paramedic Certification Pass Rate

In a remarkable achievement for emergency medical education in Southwest Florida, the inaugural class of paramedic students at the North Collier Fire Training Center has achieved a perfect 100% pass rate on the paramedic certification examination. This outstanding accomplishment highlights the effectiveness of the center's comprehensive training methodology and the exceptional dedication of both students and instructors. Program leader Ben Rhode worked closely with the students to implement the center's rigorous curriculum, resulting in this unprecedented success.

"This achievement is something we can all take pride in as we continue to develop emergency medical professionals across all our region," said Cassie Billian, M.A., EMT, Director of Emergency Services. "It's a wonderful reminder of the impact our collective work has on the students and communities we serve."

The North Collier facility represents the organization's commitment to expanding high-quality emergency medical training throughout the region. The success of this first graduating class establishes a strong foundation for future paramedic education programs at the location.



Local emergency response agencies are expected to benefit significantly from this new pipeline of fully certified paramedics entering the workforce, enhancing emergency medical capabilities throughout the North Collier area.

"I could not be more proud of all involved and the many ways our team comes together to make successes like this happen," added Billian. "Each person plays a vital role in preparing these students for their careers, and their dedication makes achievements like this possible."



FSW Biology Students Dive Deep into Marine Science at Florida Keys Lab: Hands-On Research Inspires Future Marine Scientists

Biology II students recently transformed from classroom learners to field researchers during an immersive experience at the Florida Keys Marine Laboratory, where they explored potential careers in marine science and environmental conservation.

Led by professors, Amanda Zirzow and Jordan Donini, students conducted biodiversity surveys in pristine marine ecosystems, documenting species in coral reef and seagrass habitats through guided snorkeling expeditions. The hands-on fieldwork provided firsthand exposure to scientific research methods used by marine biologists.

“Seeing our students' excitement as they identify marine species and collect data in the field is incredibly rewarding,” said Zirzow “ This experience bridges the gap between classroom theory and professional practice.”

Beyond data collection, students engaged directly with marine scientists who shared insights about diverse career paths in conservation, water quality management, and ecosystem monitoring. The marine lab experience exemplifies how FSW's science programs connect students with real-world applications, preparing them for careers that protect and preserve our coastal resources. For many students, this transformative experience solidifies their commitment to marine science careers.





Learning Beyond Borders: Education Students' Service Journey Through Ireland

This spring, a group of seven B.S., Elementary Education students, along with Dr. Joyce Rollins and Dr. Anne Angstrom, embarked on a transformative international service trip to Ireland. The journey provided students with a unique blend of cultural and academic experiences, starting with visits to iconic Irish destinations such as Dublin, Galway, the Burren, the Cliffs of Moher, and Glendalough National Park. These sites not only offered a deeper understanding of Ireland's rich history and landscape but also set the stage for the immersive educational experiences that followed.

A key highlight of the trip was the opportunity for students to spend several days in elementary classrooms in the Dublin suburbs, where they gained firsthand insight into the Irish education system. This hands-on experience allowed students to compare teaching methods and classroom environments in Ireland to those in the United States, enhancing their understanding of global education practices. The students also participated in a meaningful service project at Dunmore House, a facility for individuals with special needs operated by St. John of God. There, they painted a beautiful forest mural in an outdoor courtyard, providing a lasting gift that will be enjoyed by the residents and visitors for years to come.

This experience blended academic learning and service to the community, giving students valuable opportunities to apply their education in a real-world context. By engaging with both the Irish education system and the local community through the mural project, the students returned home with a greater appreciation for global education and the impact of service learning.





Creative Collaboration: Lee County's Digital Artists Take on Real-World Challenges at FSW

The School District of Lee County has joined forces with FSW for the third year to operationalize the Digital Lee Showcase, an innovative event bringing together creative young minds from across the district. The showcase welcomed over 50 high school students to FSW's Lee Campus, where they participated in a digital art and multimedia design challenge.

Students from several Lee County high schools worked collaboratively in small groups, tackling real-world design problems and developing complete campaigns within a single day. This fast-paced challenge provided an authentic creative industry experience while showcasing the students' impressive digital design skills and creative problem-solving abilities.

Beyond the competition aspect, Digital Lee served as an educational bridge, introducing participants to the range of digital arts and multimedia programs available at FSW. This career exploration component allowed students to connect their current creative interests with potential future educational and career pathways.

The partnership between the school district and FSW exemplifies our shared commitment to providing students with opportunities that blend practical skills development with career exploration in the growing digital creative industries.





From Page to Stage: The Memo' Showcases Program Excellence

The Black Box Theatre was abuzz with energy and laughter during the two-week run of our Theatre Program's production of "The Memo." Students delivered masterful performances of Václav Havel's absurdist satire, bringing to life the comedic yet thought-provoking story of bureaucratic inefficiency with remarkable skill. Under the direction of Professor Stuart Brown, the cast navigated the play's complex themes with impressive theatrical precision, creating an immersive experience that resonated with audiences. The production showcased not only the acting talents of our performers but also highlighted the technical expertise of our backstage crew, whose innovative set design and lighting transformed our Black Box space into a convincing 1960s office environment. This successful production exemplifies the high-quality performing arts education our program continues to deliver to the community.



FSW's "BitBuccaneers" Make Impressive Debut at International Hacking Competition

In a remarkable display of skill, determination, and cybersecurity expertise, FSW's all-female hacking team, the "BitBuccaneers," secured an impressive 7th place finish at the Wicked6 Cyber Spring Games. The team, consisting of Crystal Wernicke (FSW Program Specialist), Melissa Elizondo, Heather Henry, and led by FSW Professor Rushell Hopkins, competed against other teams from around the world in this rigorous three-day hacking tournament.

What makes the BitBuccaneers' achievement even more remarkable is that they competed at a significant numerical disadvantage. While most teams fielded between 8-10 members, FSW's squad consisted of just four dedicated women. This didn't deter the BitBuccaneers, who demonstrated exceptional teamwork and technical proficiency throughout the competition.

"We knew we were outnumbered, but we were never outmatched when it came to determination," said Professor Hopkins. "Each team member stepped up, often covering multiple roles that larger teams could distribute among several people."

The Wicked6 Cyber Games challenged participants with both offensive (Red Team) and defensive (Blue Team) cybersecurity scenarios. Teams were evaluated on their ability to protect their systems while simultaneously attempting to breach their opponents' defenses. Adding to the challenge, the competition restricted participants to Linux-based systems and command-line tools only. The prohibition of graphical user interfaces (GUIs) ensured that success depended on deep technical knowledge and command-line expertise rather than reliance on user-friendly tools.



FSW's BitBuccaneers secured an impressive 7th place in their debut at the international women's hacking competition. Their performance not only brought recognition to FSW but also highlighted women's growing presence in the traditionally male-dominated cybersecurity field. This accomplishment reflects the quality of FSW's cybersecurity program.

As cybersecurity threats continue to evolve globally, competitions like the Wicked6 Cyber Games play a crucial role in developing the next generation of security professionals. For the BitBuccaneers, this competition was just the beginning of what promises to be a bright future in the world of cybersecurity.



Setting the Table for Success: FSW's Etiquette Dinner Prepares Students for the Professional World

In a world where first impressions can make or break career opportunities, FSW's Career Connection Center recently hosted its signature Etiquette Dinner, welcoming 80 students to an evening of refined dining and professional development.

The three-course meal served as both a culinary experience and a practical classroom, where students learned essential social and dining etiquette skills. Beyond table manners, the evening incorporated networking opportunities and professional presence coaching. Students practiced introducing themselves, maintaining appropriate conversation, and presenting themselves with poise—skills that translate directly to interview scenarios and workplace interactions.

“These types of events are particularly valuable for students who may not have had previous exposure to formal dining situations,” explained Eli Tolli, Career Coordinator. “When students know how to conduct themselves confidently at a business lunch or dinner, they can focus on making meaningful connections rather than worrying about which fork to use.”

The event represents just one facet of FSW's comprehensive approach to career readiness. “At FSW, we understand that a well-rounded education extends beyond academic knowledge,” noted Carrie Bohling, Senior Internship Coordinator. “Events like our Etiquette Dinner provide students with practical skills that complement their degrees and give them an edge in competitive job markets.”

As students departed with newfound knowledge and confidence, many expressed appreciation for this investment in their professional development.





2025

FUTURE READY: **TEEN** CAREER EXPLORATION *Camp*

Hands-on experiences
led by industry experts.

Rising 9th-12th graders, are you ready to explore exciting careers, gain real-world skills, and build a resume that stands out? At Future Ready: Career Exploration Teen Camp, you can discover your interests and prepare for success!

LEE CAMPUS



FSW Lee campus, 8099 College Pkwy, Fort Myers, FL 33919

July 7-11

9a-4p

CEO Academy:
Launching Your
Entrepreneurial Idea

One hour lunch
break from 12-1pm

July 14-18

9a-12p

Speak Up! Public
Speaking & Media
Mastery

9a-12p

The Life Toolbox:
Enhance the Quality of
Your Everyday Life

July 21-25

9a-4p

Digital Defenders:
Ethical Hacking &
Cyber Security

One hour lunch
break from 12-1pm

9a-4p

Intro to
Bioinformatics
& DNA Technology

One hour lunch
break from 12-1pm

1p-4p

Global Summit: Model
United Nations &
Diplomacy

1p-4p

The Psychology of
Success

9a-12p

SAT Success Lab:
Crack the Test
Code

1p-4p

Launch Your Future:
College Application &
Planning

COLLIER CAMPUS



FSW Collier campus, 7505 Lely Drive, Naples, FL 34113

July 14-18

9a-12p

Exploring & Researching Biodiversity

9a-12p

The Psychology of Success

1p-4p

Crime Scene to Courtroom: Inside the World of Criminal Justice

1p-4p

Launch Your Future: College & Career Planning

Half days- \$199 per week. Full days- \$398 per week.*

*Limited number of full scholarships available. Register and apply by June 1st for consideration.

Scholarship Opportunities Workforce Programs

Articulated Credit Scholarship



Students who have earned industry certifications or articulated credit from one of FSW's five partnering technical colleges may apply for a scholarship covering first-semester courses in their aligned program of study.

- Gold Standard Articulation through earning of industry certificate
- Completion of articulated program from one of the 5 public technical colleges in SWFL



Transforming SWFL 2025



FSW was awarded \$125,000 from the Lee County Industrial Development Authority and \$100,000 from the Elsa and Peter Soderberg Charitable Foundation through the FutureMakers Coalition.

Transforming SWFL Supports:

- [GED Pathway Program](#)
- Second Look
- Last Mile & Gap Funding
- Workforce Pathways



FSW Direct Allocation Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act

Fall 2025 is the last semester for funding.

FSW was awarded a direct allocation of Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) funding to expand pathways to multiple in-demand industry certificates.



WIOA Programs

[Information Technology Support Specialist, CCC](#)
[Network Security, CCC](#)
[Cybersecurity, AS](#)
[Network Systems, AS](#)
[Architectural Design and Construction Technology, AS](#)
[Logistics and Transportation Management, CCC](#)
[Supply Chain Management, AS](#)
[Nursing, AS](#)
[Medical Assisting Specialist, CCC](#)
[Advanced Medical Assisting, AS](#)



Email Opportunity@fsw.edu with any questions.

FSW is an equal access, equal opportunity organization. More: www.fsw.edu/equity.