

Agribusiness Today

Center for Agribusiness Officially Open

On June 3, 2019, President Mike Martin signed the application officially recognizing the Center for Agribusiness (CAB) as part of Florida Gulf Coast University.



CENTER FOR
AGRIBUSINESS

Upcoming Events

August 14

Citrus Celebration
(Alico Arena, FGCU)

August 19

First day of Fall Semester
(FGCU)

November 20

Farm-City Agricultural Forum
(Cohen Center, FGCU)

The CAB, a unit of the Lutgert College of Business, sets forth three goals:

- (1) Offer undergraduates students a "minor" in Agribusiness.
- (2) Conduct educational workshops on the business of agriculture to agribusiness professionals and to the southwest Florida community at large.
- (3) Engage in applied research projects that directly benefit agribusinesses in Southwest Florida.

Comments from the Chair

Matt Caldwell,



What a productive year this has been for the new Center of Agribusiness at FGCU. Our first meeting of the public Advisory Committee was in March, when I was in Tallahassee for the start of Legislative Session. The current Speaker of the

Florida House is a personal friend and I had a long-standing plan to attend his opening day as Speaker. But that left me attending our first meeting by conference

call and when Dr. Martin gave the sign, I became the new Chair without so much as an opportunity to protest! But in all seriousness, it is an honor to serve in this capacity and I look forward to helping the Center grow into the future.

Fritz Roka, Ron Hamel, and I have been meeting together monthly since that time to further develop the goals and strategies for the Center. There are many great ideas that have been discussed to better connect the Center with the wider public. We've already participated in the Annual Citrus Conference hosted by Florida Citrus

Mutual in June. The Center will be featured in the "Gulf Citrus" Celebration Event in August, and most importantly...creating "new" events during Farm-City week in November to engage the FGCU student body and faculty, and the wider Southwest Florida community.

But in pursuit of keeping the main thing the main thing, the conversations consistently steer back to how we grow enrollment and lay a foundation of long-term success for the Center. Part of that conversation requires understanding the role the Center should and must play at the University. And to understand that, we must understand the role that the University plays in our community, state, and world.

Since the founding of the University, there were two major innovations to which the institution was committed. First, that FGCU would not have a typical tenure system, but would maintain a private sector based employment structure. Second and most important to this discussion, was a commitment to interdisciplinary studies. The vision is that every graduate, regardless of their specific major, would have exposure to and develop an appreciation of, the other majors and the way that their specialty fits into the larger context of our community and the world, at large. In simple terms, this means business majors get exposure to environmental stewardship and education majors learn about supply and demand. But a major puzzle piece has been missing...and that is exposure to the role that agriculture plays in our region. For someone to graduate from FGCU and never learn how impactful agribusiness is in the local and state economy means that we have fundamentally failed to meet the goal of Interdisciplinary exposure.

The Center must engage the entire faculty and student body to educate them about the role agriculture plays in our region.

Another point to consider is what type of institution FGCU is within the State University System. It is not a

major research body or a land grant school. It is a regional university that must first and foremost focus on serving the interests and economy of the Southwest Florida region. Knowing that agribusiness is the foundation of this region, it is incumbent on FGCU to provide educational opportunities to serve this segment.

And so two principle questions, what does this Center look like and how can it complement a premier agricultural school, the University of Florida? Clearly the Center is not a research institution, working on complex questions of disease or breeding techniques. But what it can and should be is focused on the business applications of those lessons. For example, learning how to operate in an evolving and further urbanizing community. If you are a major agribusiness operator in Southwest Florida, but do not have a plan for future land management (conservation easements, water rights, land use and zoning, etc.), then you are not ready for the future. The Center should be developing graduates that fill that role; one that is essential to the future.

And the Center should be focused on the cutting edge of new opportunities. Take hemp, for example. The Center is not equipped to study seed selection or growing conditions, but it can address important business related questions. Once it is out of the field, where will it be processed? Who are the buyers? Where does the funding come from? What is the potential economic impact to the Southwest Florida agricultural community?

Preparing students for questions like these and many more is what the Center is about. I am very excited about what this Center can become for Southwest Florida and for FGCU. I hope that the pathway we are pursuing will make the University stronger and help produce graduates that more fully meet the needs of our community. I look forward to what the coming year will bring all of us.

FGCU Agribusiness Center Names Advisory Committee

Florida Gulf Coast University's (FGCU) Center for Agribusiness in the Lutgert College of Business recently formed its "first" advisory committee, featuring a "who's who" of Florida agriculture. The committee will advise leadership as the new Center becomes an important resource for the agriculture industry in Southwest Florida.

The new Center, under the leadership of Dr. Fritz Roka, and with the support of the Advisory Committee, will offer a "minor" in Agribusiness to FGCU undergraduates, and assist the agriculture industry with mid-level management training as well as with the development of business skills—accounting, management and human resources. Further, it will track and distribute information on the economic impact and sustainability of agriculture in the rapidly growing urban region of Southwest Florida.



From Left to Right: Mike Martin, Bernie Lester, Charlie Edwards, Miller Course, Hugh English, Dallas Townsend, Tim Cordes, Ben Hill Griffin, and Jamie Weisinger
Not Shown: Matt Caldwell, Joe Hilliard, Stacy Mellow, Russell Priddy, Ken Smith, and Katie Sproul

The FGCU Center for Agribusiness Advisory Committee members include:

- ◆ **Matt Caldwell**, an FGCU alumnus and former member of the Florida House of Representatives, where he chaired the House Agriculture and Natural Resources Appropriations Subcommittee. He was elected chairman of the new FGCU Center for Agribusiness Advisory Committee.
- ◆ **Dr. Tom Cordes**, former national coordinator of equine programs within USDA/APHIS Veterinary Services.
- ◆ **Miller Couse**, chairman of the board at First Bank in Clewiston, and the chairman, president and CEO of Pioneer Bankcorp, Inc. Couse previously served as the FGCU Foundation Board's treasurer, and has been engaged in the region's agricultural community for many years.
- ◆ **Charlie Edwards**, former chairman of the Florida Board of Regents, and early advocate and promoter for the creation of FGCU. Edwards has been a life-long supporter of the region's agriculture.

- ◆ **Hugh English**, former general manager and vice president of citrus operations for A. Duda & Sons, Inc. English served on the Florida Citrus Commission, and was inducted into the Florida Citrus and Florida Agricultural Halls of Fame.
- ◆ **Ben Hill Griffin, III**, former chairman of the board and CEO of Alico, Inc., and a major player in the creation of FGCU. Griffin was inducted into the Florida Citrus and Florida Agricultural Halls of Fame. He currently serves as the chairman and CEO of Ben Hill Griffin, Inc.
- ◆ **Joe Hilliard, II**, partner in Hilliard Brothers of Florida, LTD. Hilliard served as president of the Florida Cattlemen's Association, and on the board of directors of the Gulf Citrus Growers Association.
- ◆ **W. Bernard Lester**, former president of Alico, Inc., and a major proponent of FGCU. Lester served as executive director of the Florida Department of Citrus, and as secretary of the Gulf Citrus Growers Association. He was inducted into the Florida Citrus and Florida Agricultural Halls of Fame.
- ◆ **Stacy Mellow**, senior director of ranches and resource management at A. Duda & Sons, Inc. She is actively engaged in Duda family operations and initiatives nationwide.
- ◆ **Russell Priddy**, co-owner of JB Ranch, LLC in Collier County. Priddy is a former member of the FGCU Board of Trustees, and a board member of the John E. & Aliese Price Foundation.
- ◆ **Dr. Ken Smith**, president & CEO of Tarpon Blue, and former executive vice president and COO of Alico, Inc. Smith currently serves as a member of the FGCU Board of Trustees and is actively engaged in agricultural operations.
- ◆ **Katie Sproul**, CEO of Halstatt, LLC, and former co-president of the Barron Collier Companies, where she engaged in the family's agribusiness operations.
- ◆ **Dallas Townsend**, former county agent and extension director in Collier and Hendry Counties under the University of Florida, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (IFAS) Cooperative Extension Service. Townsend was inducted into the Florida Agricultural Hall of Fame in 2014.
- ◆ **Jaime Weisinger**, director of community and government relations at Lipman Family Farms, the largest field tomato grower in North America. Weisinger recently served on the Governing Board of the South Florida Water Management District. He will serve as vice chairman of the Center's Advisory Committee.

New Faculty Member Joins the Agribusiness Center



Dr. Alexandre Magnier began his tenure at FGCU's Center for Agribusiness on August 7, 2019.

Dr. Magnier comes to FGCU from the University of Missouri where he has been serving as the Program Director for the Economics and Management of Agrobiotechnology Center. The Center conducts research on the effects of food labeling on consumers and grower participation in specialty crop programs. Alex will teach many of the Agribusiness classes and help grow the Agribusiness Center both in terms of students and projects with agribusinesses in Southwest Florida. Alex earned his Ph.D. in Agricultural Economics from the University of Missouri and originally hails from the Cognac region of France.

The Director's Report

Fritz Roka



The FGCU Center for Agribusiness is in its infancy but is already running. We obtained official status in early June 2019 have been working to put in place the necessary infrastructure. Our external advisory committee includes a

“who’s who” of Florida agriculture, and on March 5th, we held our first meeting. Seven new agribusiness courses have been added to the FGCU course catalog. During the Spring 2019 semester 16 students participated in the Center’s first class, Sustainable Agriculture. The students took three field trips to visit citrus, vegetable, and livestock operations in Southwest Florida. In addition, 12 guest speakers visited the class to share their knowledge and insights about agricultural production issues in Southwest Florida. The next class, Principles of Agribusiness Management was taught during the 2019 Summer B term and attracted 12 students. With the hiring of Dr. Alex Magnier, we will be offering the full complement of Agribusiness classes starting in the Fall 2019. Students will be able to earn the Agribusiness Minor within two semesters.

The Center for Agribusiness will engage, not only with the academically strong Lutgert College of Business, but also with other FGCU colleges. Dr. Greg Tolley, Department Chair of Marine and Ecological Sciences, has invited the Center to be part of FGCU’s Water School,

and an emerging industrial hemp program will connect the Agribusiness Center with the Colleges of Engineering, Health Studies, and Arts & Sciences.

Farm tours and relationships with many agribusinesses in Southwest Florida, will help position the Center to facilitate constructive discussions around environmental quality, food safety, immigration concerns, and sustainable economic growth. We ran our first farm tour with the help of Lipman Produce and Consolidated Citrus on April 5th. More farm tours are being planned for the 2019/2020 academic year. In particular, we have been asked to organize farm tours for University Colloquium professors and students.

We have enjoyed considerable success in our first year. That success is due in large part to the vision of President Martin and energy of Ron Hamel, supposedly retired person who served as Gulf Citrus Growers’ Association Executive Director for more than 30 years. Many other folks have been working collectively to move the Agribusiness Center forward. Deans Beatty and Bhargava, and now Interim Dean Westley, are helping us navigate the FGCU administrative matrix. Drs. Tim Allen, Shelton Weeks, and Cathy Duff have been selfless in their efforts to help us put classes in place and start the student recruitment process.

It’s an exciting time to be at FGCU and to have an agribusiness program evolve from within the Lutgert College. I look forward to sharing move developments from the Center for Agribusiness.

Industry Partnership Committee

On June 28th, Fritz Roka and Ron Hamel convened a small group of agricultural managers to solicit their ideas on internships, farm tours, and industry educational programs. This group included Dan Casper (Southern Gardens Citrus), Ron Mahan (Tamiami Citrus), Paul Meador (Everglades Harvesting & Hauling), Arnie Sarlo (Tarpon Blue), Wayne Simmons (LaBelle Fruit Co.), Bob Newsome (Barron Collier) and Aaron Troyer (Troyer Bros). The group had a number of specific suggestions on how to boost student enrollment for the Agribusiness minor, included setting up "shadow days", creating case studies, and addressing area 4-H and FFA clubs. The group also stressed the needs for the Center to an active role in setting up farm tours and close collaboration with the FGCU Water School. We hope to meet with this committee periodically to help us implement the policy directives coming from our External Advisory Committee.

FGCU Center Planning Farm-City Week Events

Ron Hamel



The FGCU Center for Agribusiness is in the process of planning several activities and events as part of the 2019 Farm-City Week celebration. This year's Farm-City Week is scheduled for November 20-27, with Thanksgiving on the 28th.

Traditionally and nationally, Farm-City Week has been scheduled at harvest time, when many of the crops grown in the mid-west are brought to market.

In the "Sunshine State", Farm-City Week has been coordinated through the Florida Farm Bureau Federation (FFBF), and the FGCU Center has been in contact with that statewide agricultural organization in efforts to greatly enhance this year's program in Southwest Florida. According to the FFBF the week is used to celebrate and recognize the beneficial partnerships between rural and urban communities that make our food supply safe and plentiful.

"Farm-City Week programs and activities are focused on bringing the rural/farming and urban/city communities closer together, as well as showcasing the productive capabilities of farmers, growers and ranchers," says Dr. Fritz Roka, Director of FGCU's Center for Agribusiness.

"Since FGCU is a regional university located in the heart of one of Florida's most productive farming areas and also within one of the state's fastest growing urban areas...it is very appropriate that our university capitalizes on this nationally created, week-long focus on agriculture," Roka added.



farm-city
WEEK

Plans are currently underway for a major, on-campus "kick-off" event on November 20th, followed by a week of activities including farm tours and other venues which bring rural and urban folks together. As noted, the Center has reached out to the Florida Farm Bureau and the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services

staffs in efforts to collaborate on and enhance programming here in SW Florida.

“We are very excited and enthusiastic about our Center’s efforts to expand the Farm-City Week recognition here in

the region...and welcome input into our efforts. Please contact me or Ron Hamel, agribusiness consultant, to share your thoughts and ideas during the next couple of months while we are planning FGCU’s activities through our Center for Agribusiness,” said Roka.

FGCU’s AG Center Hosts GCGA “CELEBRATION” Event

FGCU’s Alico Arena will be packed with citrus and agricultural leaders from throughout Florida the evening of August 14th as the university hosts the Gulf Citrus Growers Association’s “Citrus and Agriculture Industry CELEBRATION” event.

This year’s “CELEBRATION” will mark the first time that FGCU’s Center for Agribusiness will serve as “co-host” for the event, which will bring over 400 citrus/AG leaders to the university campus to celebrate the importance of citrus/agriculture to our region and state.

FGCU President Mike Martin will serve as master of ceremonies for the event, and Congressman Greg Steube, representing Florida’s 17th District will be the keynote speaker. Matt Caldwell, Chairman of FGCU’s Center for Agribusiness Advisory Committee, will update attendees on the progress on the new AG Center.

Tickets to attend the “CELEBRATION” event can be purchased through the:

Gulf Citrus Growers Association

(Contact Bernadette Rashford 239-690-0281)

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