THE WATER SCHOOL
AT FGCU CHANGING THE TIDE OF FLORIDA’S WATERS
FLORIDA HAS A WATER PROBLEM

Wetlands are too dry, uplands are too wet and water quality overall is declining. Situated in the midst of critical fresh and salt water systems that fuel the state’s economy and well being, the scholars at The Water School at FGCU are uniquely positioned to take on these pressing issues. We’re taking an interdisciplinary look at water-based issues, not just from the perspective of the health of our waterways, but also how that water impacts the health of the surrounding ecosystems, the state’s economy and the people who rely on it for life and leisure. By taking a leading role in this vital issue, we will be a catalyst for change in our community, our state and throughout the world.
After 21 years now, we’ve reached a level of maturity in terms of our curricular programs, our research capacity, our people. It’s really about making our communities better, making our communities healthier, making our communities stronger, making our communities more prosperous.”

- Greg Tolley, Ph.D., Professor of Marine Science, Chair, Department of Marine and Ecological Sciences

No matter where you are in Florida, you’re never far from a body of water. And, west or east, you’re a mere 75 miles from the Gulf of Mexico or the Atlantic Ocean.

Tourism, growth, development, agriculture and recreation all depend on healthy Florida ecosystems and aquatic environments. That’s why Southwest Florida needs experts who can focus on the key impact areas, study the issues and problems from multiple perspectives, identify emerging issues, help find sustainable solutions and train next-generation experts to take the reins.

The comprehensive nature of The Water School at FGCU will allow us to focus on key areas critical to our water-driven world: Climate Change, Natural Resources, Ecosystem Health, Health and Well-Being, Restoration and Remediation.

With 400 acres of protected habitat and LEED-certified buildings, FGCU is an environmental lab with sustainability at the core of its mission. Our award-winning initiatives in education, energy production, research and sustainable practices make us one of the nation’s greenest campuses – the perfect place to develop The Water School at FGCU. (fgcu.edu/thewaterschool)
Southwest Florida’s environment is complex and delicate. Knocking just one element off balance can lead to unexpected consequences that take decades to repair.

Today, we’ve become more adept at predicting these problems, but are still often left searching for comprehensive solutions.

THE WATER SCHOOL AT FGCU WILL:

- **Be a comprehensive center for learning and research** using a holistic approach that not only focuses on the environmental sciences, but also draws in the social sciences, business and engineering.

- **Include state-of-the-art research and learning facilities** housed in one building where students will receive the professional preparation they need to tackle real-world problems.

- **Bring together all water-focused faculty** from the marine and ecological sciences, biology, engineering and business fields.

- **Integrate our off-campus facilities** that provide access to the Gulf of Mexico, estuaries, rivers and the Everglades.

- **Draw in our local, national and international partners** and open the doors to new partnerships.

- **Conduct outreach and education programs** in our local communities so that we help create a more water-literate society.

- **Allow FGCU to claim its rightful place** as a leading, independent source of environmental and scientific knowledge.

- **Take the lessons we learn here** and apply them throughout the state, nation and world.

“There are 50 voices at least with something to say about the water issues in Florida. It’s a mish-mash of different things. But in my mind, an overall picture of the water problems needs to be established. One that isn’t political. We need a qualified source of information and someone you can trust so that we can develop solutions. FGCU can be that.”

- David Bath, Sanibel Island resident FGCU donor
VESTER MARINE AND ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCE RESEARCH FIELD STATION (1)

In 2007, Norm and Nancy Vester donated more than $1 million to FGCU, which enabled the university to buy the Bonita Beach Plantation Resort. Today, the facility serves as an easy-access point to Estero Bay and the Gulf of Mexico and is an important base of operations for studies of Southwest Florida’s coastal and watershed habitats. It’s used by FGCU faculty and students, as well as researchers from throughout Florida and the U.S. It has also hosted researchers from 15 foreign nations.

THE KAPNICK CENTER AND EVERGLADES WETLAND RESEARCH PARK (2)

Working with the Naples Botanical Garden, we have developed the Kapnick Center, a joint-use facility for teaching, research and outreach located at the Garden. The facility is home to FGCU’s Everglades Wetland Research Park, whose faculty, staff and students focus on restoration science through ecological engineering.

EXISTING WATER RESEARCH SOURCES

The university has several research programs dedicated to water issues. The Water School will serve to tie these all together.

The economic impact of water in Southwest Florida is huge, from recreational use to just sustaining life here. Climate change, natural resources, human health, ecosystems and restoration and remediation — every choice we make in every one of these areas has a cost.”

- Shelton Weeks, Ph.D., Department Chair of Economics & Finance and Lucas Professor of Real Estate
The issue of water is not just the water itself. It’s what the water enables us to do. It’s about an integrated opportunity for us to think about water and health, water and policy, water and economics, water and engineering. It’s about something that brings the entire region together.”

- Michael V. Martin, Ph.D., President, Florida Gulf Coast University

THE COASTAL WATERSHED INSTITUTE (3)
This Institute has laid the groundwork for the development of our interdisciplinary approach. It began in 2004 as an interdisciplinary group of FGCU researchers, graduate students, undergraduates and community partners with a collaborative focus on watershed-related concerns and their impacts on the coastal environments of Southwest Florida. The Water School at FGCU will take the concept and scope even further.

THE ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION AND OUTREACH PROGRAM (4)
This partnership with the Conservancy of Southwest Florida includes a faculty position whose appointment is split between FGCU and the Conservancy. Through it, we have created the Environmental Education Alliance of Southwest Florida, a network of environmental educators from FGCU’s five-county service area who come together to share innovative ideas, best practices and more.

ROOKERY BAY NATIONAL ESTUARINE RESEARCH RESERVE FACULTY LIAISON (5)
FGCU has a long history of collaboration that includes education, outreach, a graduate fellowship and undergraduate internships.
Service learning and civic engagement are already key parts of the FGCU experience for our students and for our academic staff. The Water School at FGCU will continue this important university tradition. The school will also build on two decades of proven academic excellence in water-related research and initiatives, and in business, health, engineering and outreach expertise. Another key facet of The Water School at FGCU will be partnership and cooperation – not only across disciplines inside the university, but well beyond our borders. We’re fortunate to count on key partnerships and know that they will grow. Regional partnerships include:

- Conservancy of Southwest Florida
- Naples Botanical Garden
- Rookery Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve
- Sanibel-Captiva Conservation Foundation Marine Lab
- Estero Bay Aquatic Preserve
- South Florida Water Management District
- Florida Department of Environmental Protection
- Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission

"I think we really need to make people aware that water is important and why it matters. There’s no question that as the climate is changing, it is going to affect everybody’s life."

- Leslie Fogg, Naples resident, FGCU donor

IMPACTING OUR COMMUNITIES
Protecting the future of our water resources is a shared and interconnected responsibility.
People need a better understanding of the water issues that we face and they need a place where they can go for information with the confidence that it is science-based and factual.”

- Malcolm S. Wade, Jr., Senior Vice President, U.S. Sugar
Drawing on expertise from all disciplines across the University will focus our resources on regional water needs and provide students with hands-on, high-quality educational and training experiences. They will graduate with solid foundations that will lead to high-skill, high-pay STEM careers – careers that generate solutions for our most vexing ecological challenges.”

- Bob Gregerson, Ph.D.
Dean of the College of Arts & Sciences