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DONORS
AND *Shakers*



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7 Alex Fells and Darrell Jensen are new members of Foundation's Board of Directors.

SFSC's Veronica Molina Receives First Generation College Scholarship

Veronica Molina, a Hardee Senior High School graduate, has been awarded a scholarship through the First Generation Scholarship Program, covering up to 60 credit hours of college tuition.

The First Generation Scholarship Program supports the efforts of higher education through scholarship funding for first generation students who aspire to attend a Florida college or university. A student is considered "first generation" if neither of the student's parents earned a college degree at the baccalaureate level or higher. This scholarship was made available through a partnership between the SFSC Foundation, Inc. and the Florida Prepaid College Foundation.

"It's with extreme excitement that we announce Veronica Molina as the recipient of our First Generation Scholarship," said Jamie Bateman, executive director of institutional



Jamie Bateman and Jerry Donna, SFSC's director of Financial Aid, present a two-year first generation scholarship to Veronica Molina.

advancement at SFSC. "This is the first time the SFSC Foundation was able to award a full two-year tuition scholarship for a deserving student. We are grateful to our donors who support our College. It's because of them that we are able to match funds when they are offered by the state and grant students like Veronica the chance to make her dreams come true."

Molina's goal is to become a physical therapist. She plans to complete prerequisites at SFSC and, eventually, transfer to Polk State College for the physical therapy program. The child of migrant

workers, Molina began working in the fields after school and on weekends at a young age.

"Working in labor motivated me to continue my educational goals toward a better life," she said. "I choose to follow this career goal because I am a compassionate person, and I enjoy helping others. Becoming a physical therapist will allow me to assist those who are injured and help them recover."

If you are interested in funding a scholarship for an SFSC student, call the Foundation at 863-453-3133 or email foundation@southflorida.edu.

Students Begin Year Focused on Goals and Expectations

DONORS CAN BE ASSURED THAT THEIR GIFTS ARE HELPING A NEW GENERATION REALIZE THEIR DREAMS.

Recently South Florida State College celebrated earning gold status for the second year in a row from the Florida College System. Being considered for this achievement takes a great deal of effort on our part. Our hard work and determination earned us a score of 39.64 out of 40 points. This proves how amazing SFSC really is.

But why do we do what we do?

This can be answered in one word: students. Our students are the reason we plan, the reason we work diligently to achieve competitive goals, and the reason we exist.

Recently my youngest graduated from high school, which opened an array of possibilities for her as she combed through each option and carefully chose the direction she wanted to go. Ultimately, her final decision landed her at SFSC. Yes, I was happy!

Why did she become one of the many first-year students who chose SFSC? (No, it's not because I work here.) I asked her and three of her peers. Here's what they had to say:

"What I want in a college is to have comparable learning facilities at a place where I can get a quality education that will help me pursue a better career."

— Anthony

"I'm expecting to learn how to be more confident in reaching out for help from others, and I hope to learn confidence and organization from my instructors. I chose SFSC because it offers the courses I need to get the degree that I want."

— Jayda



are teachers who are hands-on with their students and make sure each one is learning the topics they're teaching. SFSC is helping me reach my goal of becoming a registered nurse by offering the courses that I need and having experienced teachers who know the material." — Frank

"A college that is going to support me while I move forward in my future is important. I want to learn the criteria for my career and the ways that will help me get prepared for adulthood. Plus, I want to make a lot of new memories and friends that I will carry with me forever." — Taylor

These students are grateful to have SFSC as their college of choice for higher education, but they are not alone. When you support South Florida State College, you are investing in the lives of students. You are making a difference in the future generations of citizens and leaders. I encourage you to look on page 4 and learn how donating stock or including a charitable gift in your will or living trust can help us carry out our mission! You may also contact the SFSC Foundation to learn more about our wonderful College. We are proud of SFSC and are eager to share more on why we believe we are No. 1!

Go Panthers!

Jamie Bateman
Executive Director,
Institutional Advancement



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DONORS AND Shakers

is produced semiannually by the South Florida State College Foundation, Inc., to inspire charitable contributions in support of South Florida State College. The SFSC Foundation raises awareness of the value of an SFSC education and promotes student success through scholarships, facilities development, and program support. By supporting SFSC, the SFSC Foundation endeavors to enhance the opportunity for students in our district to obtain a college education.

Dr. Patrick and Mercedes Carruthers

College Supporters Sponsor Scholarship for Students

DONOR SPOTLIGHT

Dr. Patrick and Mrs. Mercedes Carruthers have been members of the Highlands County community for nearly 30 years. They have been long-standing and committed supporters of South Florida State College where Mrs. Carruthers proudly served on the Foundation Board of Directors for more than a decade.

The Carruthers' have always possessed a deep and genuine interest in the education of young people and to make a difference in the lives of students who have been historically underrepresented in college enrollment. Their commitment for these students lead them to sponsor a scholarship. Since its inception, this scholarship has provided additional support for a number of deserving students in our community.

The Carruthers' both received their formal education in Jamaica. Dr. Carruthers attended medical school at The University of the West Indies, and Mrs. Carruthers studied nursing at the UWI School of Nursing. The couple first met on the campus of the University, and immigrated to the United States in 1979 to join their parents. They have always been immensely grateful to be a part of the beautiful patchwork of immigrants who continue to compose the great American narrative.

Dr. Carruthers is a diagnostic radiologist who has served in nearly all of the hospitals in Highlands County. He assumed ownership of the



Mercedes Carruthers (left) and Dr. Patrick Carruthers (right) are world travelers who believe in the value of education. In this photo, they interact with a wombat while visiting a wildlife preserve.

Highlands Breast and Imaging Center as a solo practitioner in 2000.

Mrs. Carruthers was very actively involved in the education of their children when she worked as a stay-at-home mother. Soon after their youngest child left for college, she joined the staff at her husband's office where she served as office administrator. Their three sons all went on to earn advanced college degrees and currently serve in the health care sector.

After their retirement from the medical practice in December 2017, the Carruthers have enjoyed spending much of their time visiting their children, grandchildren, in addition to gardening, church activities, reading and fulfilling a passionate love of learning through travel. Recently the couple visited numerous countries around the world, from the splendors of Southeast Asia to the magnificent continent of Africa.

DR. AND MRS. CARRUTHERS BELIEVE THAT EDUCATION, HARD WORK AND AMBITION PAVE THE WAY FOR SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC MOBILITY. THEY HOPE TO PASS ON THOSE VALUES TO A FUTURE GENERATIONS THROUGH THEIR SUPPORT OF SFSC.

Ultimately, education, hard work, and ambition paved the way toward the Carruthers' opportunity for social and economic mobility. These same virtues were instilled in their children and wish the same for all. With their decision to continue their long-standing support to the College, they strive to pass on the principles of humanitarianism to their children, their grandchildren, and generations beyond.



GOLFERS: RAISE MONEY FOR SFSC ATHLETICS AND TRY FOR THE \$1 MILLION PRIZE!

2nd Annual Million Dollar Hole-in-One Golf Shootout

Sun 'N Lake Golf & Country Club | Sebring, Florida

QUALIFYING: Jan. 17-19 SHOOTOUT: Jan. 20

Tax Reform Act Impacts Charitable Giving

You may be wondering how you will be affected by the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act of 2017, which was enacted last December. It is the most significant tax legislation since the Tax Reform Act of 1986, and it affects businesses, individuals, and, to some extent, gifts to charitable organizations, like the SFSC Foundation.

This is an excerpt from “The Tax Cuts and Jobs Act: Charitable Strategies for 2018,” which appears on the Pentera blog (pentera.com/blog). It explores charitable strategies to consider this year.

■ **Increase your charitable gifts** so you can benefit from itemizing your deductions. If the total of your itemized deductions is going to be close to the new higher standard deduction amount (\$12,000 for single filers and \$24,000 for married couples filing jointly), you might consider giving more to charity in 2018 so that your income-tax charitable deduction helps you exceed the standard deduction amount and you can itemize and receive the tax benefits of doing so.

■ **Make gifts of appreciated securities.** You can still save capital gains taxes by giving appreciated securities that you have owned for more than a year.

■ **Make retirement-plan gifts.** A simple and smart way to make a charitable gift is through retirement-plan beneficiary designations. While your loved ones are subject to paying income tax on retirement-plan gifts they received, charities such as the SFSC Foundation are not. Your gift can help loved ones save taxes by giving them other assets and making retirement-plan gifts to charity.

■ **Make an IRA rollover gift.** Those over the age of 70 ½ who have not yet taken the required distribution from their IRA might ask their IRA administrator to make a direct tax-free transfer to charity.

■ **Make a gift that costs nothing now.** A bequest in your will or trust continues to be a way to make a significant gift that costs you nothing now. There are many ways to design your bequest to best meet your family priorities and charitable objectives.

Khao Hlee Lor: Take Stock Graduate Finds Purpose as Special Education Teacher

TAKE STOCK IN CHILDREN SCHOLAR SPOTLIGHT

My Take Stock in Children experience was a blessing. To this day, I still believe I attended college because of the opportunities my scholarship provided for me. When I received my scholarship, the reality of college became solid and real. I realized it can actually be a part of my future and not just another dream.

I attribute a big part of my success to my Take Stock support system. They were my foundation from middle school to after college. I had a lot of questions about college, some of which I did not know how to phrase out loud. Yet, they sat, listened, and answered every one. I had the benefit of Take Stock personnel, who I turned to with questions about graduation requirements, college applications, financial aid, and resources for academic success. Then, I had my designated mentor that I met with weekly for concerns and celebrations pertaining to school. Joann McCray continued to monitor, encourage, and support my education through college.

I attended the University of Florida with my Take Stock scholarship and stayed there for four and a half years. My scholarship played a role in avoiding student loans during my undergraduate years. In December 2015, I graduated with my bachelor's degree in elementary education. I fell in love with what I was learning, so I decided to continue my education another year. In December 2016, I graduated with my master's degree in Special Education, complete with endorsements in reading and English for Speakers of Other Languages.

The spring following college graduation, I worked as a substitute teacher for a few months until the



Joann McCray (left) mentored Khao Hlee Lor through Take Stock in Children.

end of the school year. Then, I could not decide if I should stay where I was or return home to start my teaching career. After much discussion with my mentor, I decided to return home. It felt right.

I accepted a fourth grade teaching position at Zolfo Elementary School. Last year, I taught my first inclusion class, a model for students with disabilities to learn alongside their nondisabled peers in a general education class. I love working with the students and other colleagues who share the same passion as me, which is to see these students succeed.

If it had not been for my Take Stock scholarship and my mentor, I do not think I would be where I am today. They turned my dream of attending college into a goal, and together we built steps that I could take to achieve that goal. Now, I have come full circle. I am back where I first started with Take Stock, and I am working with students to build goals for themselves. I hope I can continue to keep this cycle going for generations to come.

To become a Take Stock mentor, call Irene Castanon at 863-784-7343 or email castanoni@southflorida.edu.

SFSC Alumna **Jazmin Caton** Receives Doctorate

Jazmin Caton, an SFSC alumna and the first person in her family to graduate with an advanced degree, has been awarded a doctorate in Higher Education



Administration and Policy from the University of Florida (UF).

“Education was always a priority in terms of expectations that my parents and family set for me and I adopted that for myself,” Caton said.

While completing a genealogy project in a fourth grade class for gifted students at Sun ‘n Lake Elementary School, Caton was required to interview family members and write a reflective piece on her personal goals. “I said that when I grew up, I was going to have a doctorate in education and open a school,” she said. “I’ve accomplished one of those two goals.”

While attending Sebring High School, Caton participated in SFSC’s dual enrollment program that allowed her to take classes that applied toward high school and college graduation. Her decision was partly influenced by her father, Eddie Cuencas, the program specialist for the Panther Youth Partners program at SFSC.

After receiving her Associate in Arts degree from SFSC, Caton earned a Bachelor of Science in Public Relations from UF in 2009. Along with working in a part-time public relations job, Caton served as an orientation leader at UF and a peer mentor, student leader, and house manager for the Southern Scholarship Foundation, which provided her with a housing scholarship. She has since been appointed to its board of directors.

As an undergraduate, Caton made the leap from public relations to working on a Master of Science in Family and Child Sciences from Florida

ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT

State University (FSU).

“I learned that I have a natural affinity for the work of public relations specialists — seeking out and cultivating relationships to disseminate information about organizations,” she said. “But I wanted to gain more expertise in a discipline. I was drawn to nonprofit organizations and programs that help people. I wanted to be able to become an expert in human development.”

She then entered graduate school at Florida State University (FSU) and was soon presented with an opportunity to work for the FSU Autism Institute on a research project. “It was a grassroots program and hadn’t been operating long. We made major gains in research funding and communication awareness to identify key messages. The State of Florida started paying more attention to us. My experience there helped me understand why people are who they are and why they become who they become. And I was able to use my skills in strategic communications — taking messages from our research and communicating them to the appropriate audiences.”

“When working from research, one of the greatest challenges is providing the results of that research to the people who need it most,” Caton said. “Facing that challenge influenced me to want to be a leader in the administration of programs and projects that have critical information and services to offer people who need them most.”

Caton sees the doctorate as a convergence of her knowledge base in human development and her skill set in strategic communications. “I was chasing opportunities to lead others and provide management and coaching. Receiving a doctorate in higher education administration felt like the landing place for those goals. I felt that being in an institution of

higher education or a support program of higher education was how to get to the goal of helping people in the way that has great return for them and the community.”

Caton has taken her passion for human development and communications beyond the academic world. She plans to rewrite her doctoral dissertation for a new audience. It’s titled, “They Already Have So Many Labels: Defining Homelessness in the Context of Higher Education” and it focuses on homelessness among college students. “A recent study showed that 14 percent of community college students and 9 percent of university student are homeless,” Caton said. “My purpose was to explore the issue more specific to higher education—taking a closer look at how students and institutions understand, define, and support this issue of homelessness within this context.”

Now, she is working on a research project that explores childcare access within the community college system and the U.S. Department of Labor’s initiatives to increase access for students who are responsible for children. “Our case study will explore the implementation of this initiative and what these programs look like two years after receiving funding. We’re looking at practices at institutions that are promising for students who need access to child care. Lack of adequate child care can be a barrier to the completion of a parent’s education and a hindrance to their children’s future education as well.”

As a means of giving back to the Highlands County community and the high school they graduated from, Caton and her husband, Tyler, created a \$500 annual scholarship that is awarded to two Sebring High School swim team seniors. The Catons attribute their success to their involvement with the swim team and Tyler’s mother, Patricia J. Caton, a teacher and coach.

SFSC Earns **Gold Status** for Second Year

For the second year in a row, SFSC has been awarded gold status from the Florida College System (FCS). SFSC was one of five FCS institutions out of 28 to earn gold for 2018-19.

"It is thrilling that SFSC received this prestigious recognition for two consecutive years," said Dr. Thomas C. Leitzel, president of SFSC. "The rating puts SFSC among a group of elite Florida colleges and affirms the commitment to excellence in student services combined with quality learning initiatives led by committed members of the faculty."

The FCS uses a Performance

Funding Model to determine whether its institutions receive gold, silver or bronze. Using a 40-point scale, the FCS evaluates each institution on retention rates, completion rates, job place/continuing education rates, and entry-level wages. This year, there were five gold, 18 silver, and five bronze colleges. The points are distributed based on Improvement and Excellence, with comparisons between last year's and this year's data. SFSC scored 39.64, making it the second highest-ranked FCS institution in the state.

"At SFSC, we are honored to be a gold status college once again," said

Tami Cullens, chair of the board of trustees for SFSC. "This speaks well of our commitment to serving the students in our district and the dedication of our administration, faculty, and staff in making a difference in the lives of all who attend this great institution."

For 2018-19, the Florida Legislature and governor allocated \$60 million of general revenue to performance funding. Gold category colleges will receive their proportional share of the State's funding and a point-proportional share of the funds that would have been available to the bronze-status colleges that scored 29.01 points and below.

Alumni Association Plans **Lunch Bunch Meetings**

FROM THE ALUMNI ASSOCIATION CHAIR

I am looking forward to serving as the new chair of the SFSC Alumni Association. I was in the last graduating class of South Florida Junior College in May 1984. I



returned to South Florida Community College when a librarian position opened in August 1996. Did you know that quite a few current college employees are SFJC, SFCC, or SFSC graduates?

Much had changed between 1984 and 1996. The library was in a totally new building, and the bookstore was no longer sharing a small building with vending machines. It was now sharing space with a real cafeteria (Kelly's Korner) where I used to have English classes. There have been even more changes since 1996 – three college presidents, seven new buildings, numerous renovations, a new name,

three baccalaureate degrees and many new alumni!

Since returning to SFSC, I have served in many roles on campus as librarian and student activities/athletics advocate. While a student at SFJC, I participated in SGA, was co-editor of the student newspaper, and was a member of the Brain Bowl Team and the Tau Epsilon Chapter of Phi Theta Kappa. Upon returning to SFCC in 1996, I was recruited to be a coach for the Brain Bowl Team and an advisor for PTK. I strongly touted the importance of student activities and athletics as part of college life, being a strong supporter of both. I continue to encourage our alumni to participate in the various events on campus and cheer on our future alumni. Volleyball season has started, as well as Cross Country.

The Alumni Lunch Bunch is one way to participate. We'll start the new year with our first Lunch Bunch on Sept. 7 at the Magnolia Street Seafood and Grill in Arcadia, followed by Mater's Steak House on Sept. 21 in Wauchula. The Highlands location ends the month on Sept. 28 at Sonny's BBQ in Sebring.

I look forward to meeting many of you at college events, athletic events

and the lunches, as we exchange stories and ideas on how make our Alumni Association strong and how to continue to support South Florida State College.

Lena D. Phelps, Chair
SFSC Alumni Association

Lunch Bunch Schedule

The SFSC Alumni Association has scheduled Lunch Bunch meetings in all three counties! SFSC alumni are invited to come and network or just get to know fellow alumni. Lunches will be held from 11:30 a.m.-1 p.m. Mark these dates on your calendars, and watch your emails each month for the locations:

- **DeSoto Alumni Lunch Bunch:** First Friday of each month, beginning Sept. 7.
- **Hardee Alumni Lunch Bunch:** Third Friday of each month, beginning Sept. 21.
- **Highlands Alumni Lunch Bunch:** Last Friday of each month, beginning Sept. 28.

New Directors Join Foundation's Board

Alex Fells and Darrell L. Jensen have been elected to serve three-year terms on the SFSC Foundation Board of Directors. Both represent Highlands County.

"Darrell and Alex are assets to our community, and we are thrilled they made the decision to join our board," Jamie Bateman said. "We sincerely appreciate our dedicated group for continuously looking for ways to help advance the College and working with our community to create awareness and support."

Fells is the vice president of asset management for Legacy Communities in Sebring. Previously, he was founder and president of Florida Heritage Apparel. While in high school, he was a student in SFSC's Dual Enrollment Program and received his Bachelor of Science in Diversified Agriculture from Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College in Tifton, Ga.

He follows in the footsteps of his



Alex Fells



Darrell Jensen

mother, Tami Cullens, who served on the board, 1997–2018, and his grandmother Eileen Sachsenmaier, a charter member of the board who served 1984–87.

"I joined the Foundation to continue my family's legacy with SFSC," Fells said. "It is also time for me personally to start giving back to the community, and I could not think of a better place to start."

Darrell Jensen, CPA, is the chief financial officer of Heacock Insurance Group in Sebring. He received his Associate in Arts degree from SFSC in 1991 after serving in the U.S. Air Force. He earned his Bachelor of Science degree in accounting from Webber International University and an MBA with a concentration in accounting from Florida Southern College. He also serves on the MidFlorida Credit Union Board of Directors.

"I am honored to serve on the SFSC Foundation board, supporting the College that helped me many years ago," Jensen said. "I began college classes at SFSC, and they enabled me to become a CPA and have a successful career here in Highlands County. I would like to see everyone have the opportunity to pursue their educational goals and be able to prepare for a career in their chosen field."

Four Endowed Chairs Selected

Funding through the SFSC Foundation has made it possible for four SFSC faculty to receive endowed teaching chairs.

Darlene Saccuzzo, dental education professor, was appointed as the Highlands County Health Facilities Authority (HCHFA) Endowed Chair in Dental Education. Dawn Pisarski, nursing professor, was appointed as the HCHFA Endowed Chair in Nursing Education. The Norm and Laurie Stephens Endowed Teaching Chair went to Bob Sconyers, dental assisting professor, and the Carol Emery Endowed Chair in Mathematics went to Cheryl John, developmental mathematics professor.

Recipients of endowed teaching chairs receive \$5,000 per year for two years. Half goes toward equipment, professional development, or to attend a conference related to the faculty member's discipline of study. The other half is a salary stipend.

Saccuzzo is using part of her award to offer new technology that delivers intense one-on-one instruction to dental education students. Pisarski's award will send two or three SFSC nursing faculty to the American Holistic Nurses Association annual conference, where they will learn best practices for incorporating self-care into daily life.

Sconyers will attend a conference about the latest in dental materials and equipment and will purchase cutting edge technology for the classroom. Johns is using her award to develop math boot camps for students to take prior to taking the diagnostic testing required for placement into college mathematics courses.

Endowed teaching chairs at state and community colleges are modeled after research chairs at universities. "This program gives us a way to show appreciation for excellence in teaching," Jamie Bateman said.

Thank You

TO OUR 2018 GALA SPONSORS!

A big thank you to Cowpoke's Watering Hole, our 2018 Gala Event Sponsor! We also thank our Platinum sponsors: State Rep. Ben Albritton, Florida Hospital Heartland Medical Center and the Thakkar Family Foundation.

ROTARY SCHOLARSHIP



Sunrise Rotary Club President Matt Griffin and Rotarian Sharon Schuler present a check to Jamie Bateman on Aug. 30 to fund the club's scholarship.



CHECK OUT OUR NEW LOGO!

SFSC Foundation, Inc.
13 East Main Street
Avon Park, FL 33825

On the Calendar

Foundation Events

MONDAY, NOV. 26, 2018 | 6:30 P.M.

Jacaranda Jubilee

The Hotel Jacaranda

THURSDAY, DEC. 6, 2018 | 11:30 A.M.

Christmas Luncheon

Hotel Jacaranda

THURSDAY-SUNDAY, JAN. 17-20, 2019

2nd Annual Million Dollar Hole-in-One Golf Shootout

Sun 'N Lake Golf & Country Club

Black Friday. Cyber Monday.

#GIVINGTUESDAY

November 27, 2018

Board Meetings

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Nov. 13, 2018, 6 p.m | The Hotel Jacaranda

Jan. 15, 2019, Noon | SFSC Highlands Campus, Board Room

March 19, 2019, 6 p.m. | The Hotel Jacaranda

May 14, 2019, 6 p.m. | The Hotel Jacaranda

EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETINGS

Oct. 9, 2018, Noon | The Hotel Jacaranda

Feb. 12, 2019, Noon | City of Wauchula Conference Room

April 16, 2019, Noon | The Hotel Jacaranda

SFSC Events

THURSDAY, DEC. 13, 2018

Fall Commencement

Alan Jay Wildstein Center for the Performing Arts
SFSC Highlands Campus