

FIRE SCIENCE GRADS

The Herald-Advocate, May 9, 2019



COURTESY PHOTO

South Florida State College graduated 12 students from its Firefighter Minimum Standards program on Monday, April 29, at the Highlands Campus in Avon Park. Receiving their certificates were (from front left) Alexis Taylor-Randall, Justin Newman, Jennifer Bodden-Evans, Abigail Castillo and Deanna Ferris; (back) Timothy Christensen, Erving Cruz, Adele Cassista, Christopher Dunfield and James Bialkoski; and (not pictured) Steven Lawless and Gary McDaniel. The Firefighter Minimum Standards occupational certificate program is for applicants who want to pursue a career in fire service but have limited fire training and experience. Cadets enroll in the Firefighter I course, often with the expectation of continuing through to Firefighter II training. Minimum Standards training is required for volunteer firefighters. Firefighter II is required to be employed as professional firefighter in Florida.

Forum To Help Growers Move From Citrus To Olives

By JENNIFER McCONKEY
Of The Herald-Advocate

Citrus greening has been a major concern for citrus growers in the Heartland area, and three local groups have been working together to find a new specialty crop not affected by the disease.

That crop is olives.

The results of a research project will be presented at a free forum next Friday, May 17, by the three organizations: South Florida State College, the Hardee County Industrial Development Authority and the Florida Olive Council.

While the event is free, space is limited, so make sure to RSVP by Tuesday by contacting Kendall Carson at 784-7230 or kendall.carson@southflorida.edu.

The Spotlight on Olives Forum will begin at 9 a.m. with registration and a tour of the IDA's olive research plot at 1422 Old Bradenton Road in Bowling Green.

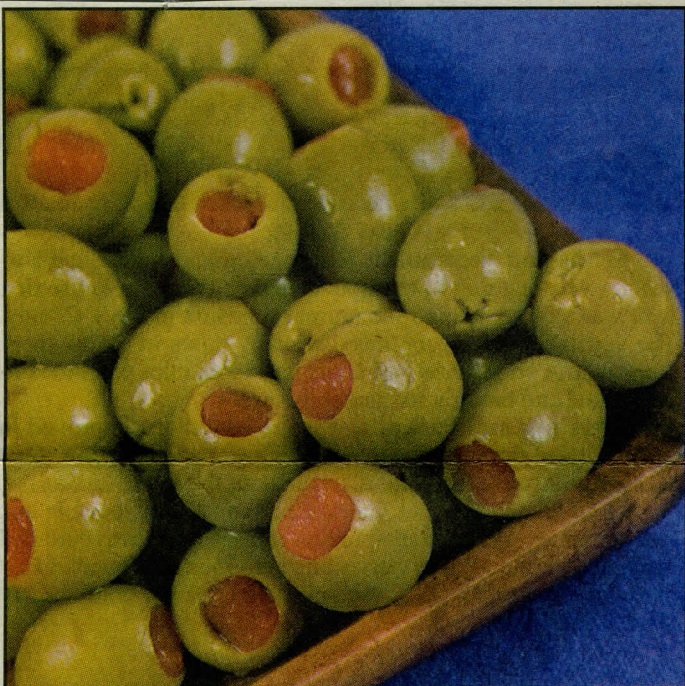
From there, the group will move to SFSC's Hardee Campus at 2968 U.S. 17 N. in Bowling Green for a free working lunch and a presentation. You will need to provide your own transportation.

Attendees will learn about the "From Orange Juice to Olive Oil" project, which

SFSC and the IDA have been working on since the beginning of last year with the aid of a \$150,102 U.S. Department of Agriculture Specialty Crop grant.

The project involves evaluating the success of different varieties of olive trees and recommending farming techniques for commercial farmers. Research is scheduled to continue through the end of the year.

The forum should be over by about noon.



Local groups have been researching how to help farmers succeed at growing olives in addition to or in place of traditional citrus crops.



METRO IMAGES

Oranges and other citrus have been the main crops for many area farmers, but greening has led many to look at other options.

SPECIAL TO HIGHLANDS NEWS-SUN

SFSC commencements close out academic year

AVON PARK — South Florida State College marked the end of the 2018-19 academic year with its spring commencement held in two ceremonies Tuesday in the Alan Jay Wildstein Center for the Performing Arts.

During the 4:45 p.m. ceremony, the college honored the recipients of the Bachelor of Applied Science in Supervision and Management (BAS-SM), Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN), Associate in Science, Advanced Technical Diploma, Career Technical Certificate, College Credit Certificate, Occupational Credit Certificate, and State of Florida

High School Diploma.

Honored during the 7:45 p.m. ceremony were those earning the Bachelor of Science in Elementary Education (BSEE) and the Associate in Arts.

In all, 351 students crossed the stage wearing academic regalia adorned with an assortment of colored cords and sashes signifying individual achievement.

Opening the ceremonies, Tami Cullens, chair of the SFSC District Board of Trustees, said to the graduates, "South Florida State College has provided you with some of the most transformative experiences you may ever have and, surely, will never forget. SFSC is a place that has changed your life and those

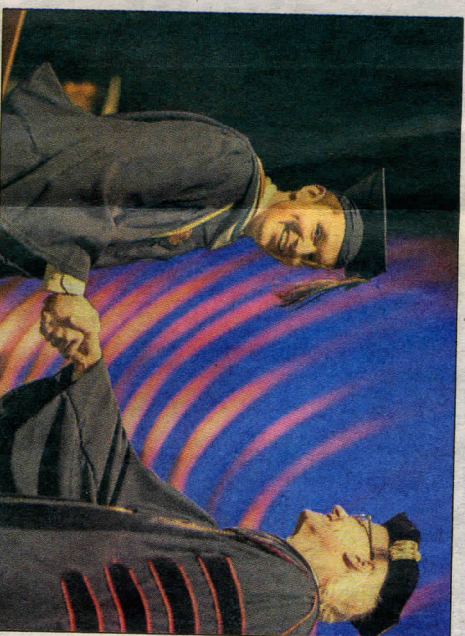
around you forever."

Mishel Mandujano Manriquez came to the United States from Mexico as a teenager, speaking not a word of English. She has earned her BSEE, graduating with a 4.0 GPA, and delivered the Commencement speech during the early ceremony.

"I'd like people to take my story as an example that anything is possible if you really want it," she said to fellow graduates. "It doesn't matter where we come from, what we look like, or how many obstacles we have to face.

"Remember, never take no for an answer, go out there and chase

SFSC | 5A



COURTESY PHOTO

Brandon Rosenbaum, who earned his Bachelor of Science in Elementary Education, receives congratulations Tuesday from Dr. Thomas C. Lettzel, South Florida State College president.



COURTESY PHOTO

From left: Dr. Timothy Wise, dean of student services, presents an appreciation plaque Tuesday to Mishel Mandujano for serving as student commencement speaker for South Florida State College's 4:45 p.m. ceremony.

SFSC

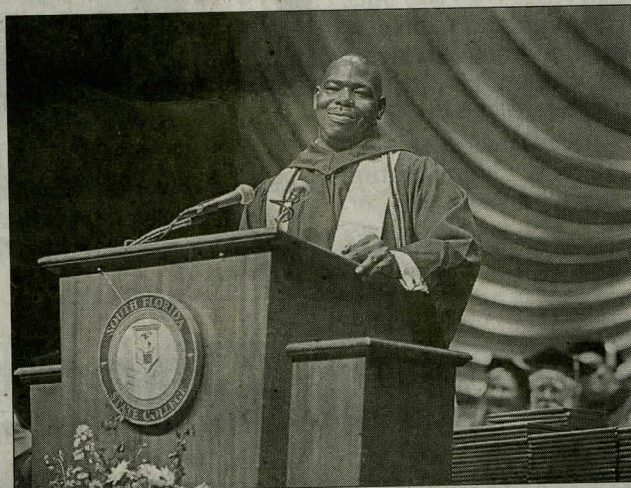
FROM PAGE 1A

your dreams, because there is no limit to what you may become," she said.

The 7:45 p.m. ceremony featured Jocquas Walker as its speaker. Walker, who graduated with his associates degree, plans to continue his education and work toward a bachelor's degree in criminal justice. At age 32, he suffered a stroke.

"If you learn anything from my story, be open to new people who add a piece of wood to the fire inside you," he said. "Don't be afraid of vulnerability, because weakness provides an opportunity to develop and rebuild strength.

"Even if life presents you with unfortunate circumstances, standing in faith and considering the things we have overcome in the past, our tests should prove that we are built for this journey called life," Walker said. "In the words of Optimus Prime from 'The Transformers:' 'Let's roll out!'"



COURTESY PHOTO

Jocquas Walker served as student commencement speaker Tuesday for the 7:45 p.m. South Florida State College commencement ceremony.

Richard Hitt, Dr. Theresa James, Cindy Kinser, Dr. Maday Leon, Claire Miller, Tasha Morales,

Asena Mott, Ricardo Pantoja, Colleen Rafatti, Tina Stetson, and Kendra Wellnitz.

Walker garnered two standing ovations.

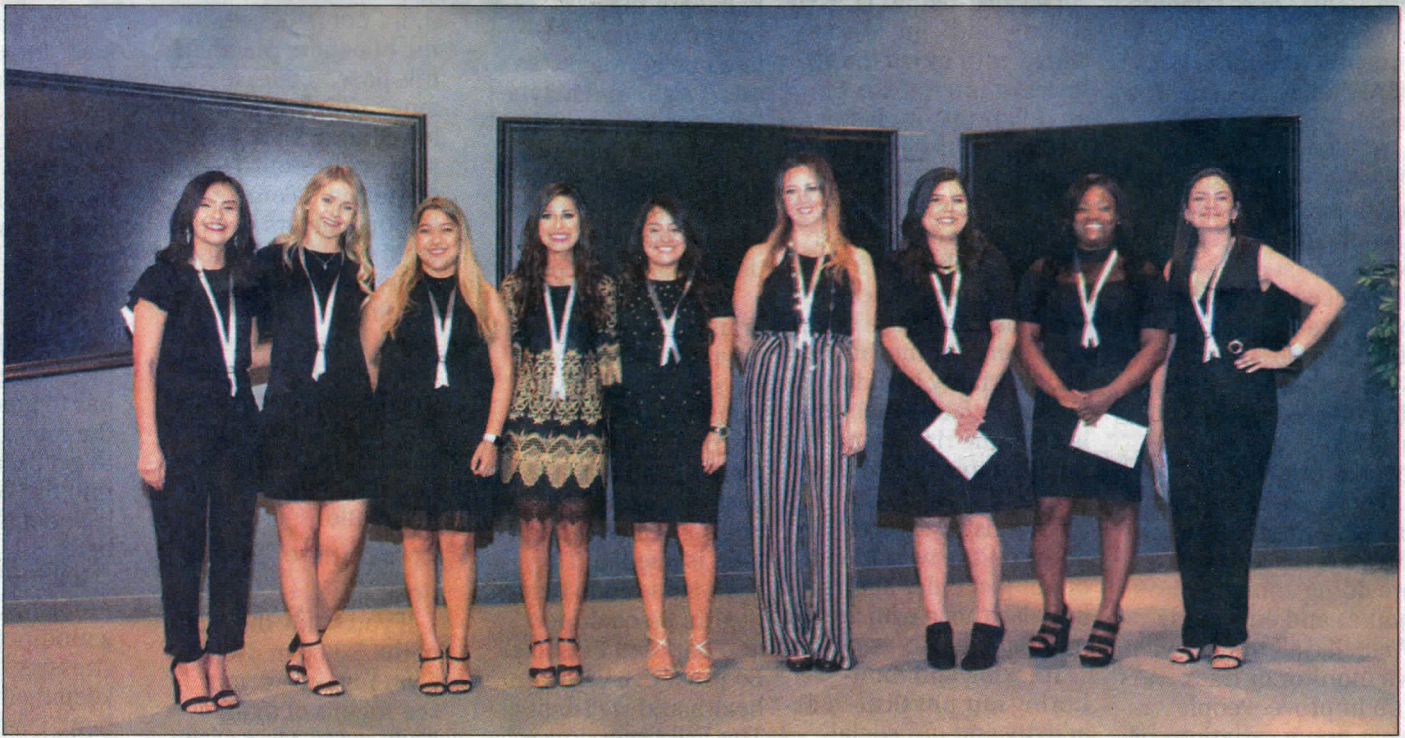
Earlier in the ceremonies, Dr. Thomas Leitzel, college president, addressed the graduates.

"In 2013, a tattoo of a semicolon became fairly popular. The semicolon stands for something unfinished in a sentence," he said. "It, literally, means 'get ready, something else is coming.'

"For our graduates, the semicolon is a reminder that your story does not stop tonight. Your story and your impact in our regional and global community continues," Leitzel said.

Leitzel also acknowledged the upcoming retirements of Dr. Christopher McConnell, professor of biology; Dr. Kristina Lewis, professor of English; Dr. Cherie Stevens, professor of computer science; and Enrique Ramos, professor of tutoring and learning. They were each recognized for their long years of service to students and SFSC.

Dr. Charlotte Pressler, director of SFSC's Honors Program, recognized nine Honors Program graduates for academic



COURTESY PHOTO

The nine graduates of SFSC's dental hygiene program are, from left: Rebeca Alaniz, Stephanie Bennett, Melissa Escobedo, Raquel Maldonado, Areli Mendiola, Ashley Mercer, Nancy Rodriguez, Alishia Sledge and Sandra Vargas.

Dental Hygiene graduates honored at pinning ceremony

Special to Highlands News-Sun

AVON PARK — Two years of study came to fruition on Friday, May 3 in a pinning ceremony for nine women who met the requirements to graduate from the South Florida State College (SFSC) dental hygiene program.

Along with College faculty, administrators, relatives, and friends, the graduates gathered in the SFSC University Center to accept their dental hygiene pins and affirm their commitment to serving their patients with the highest standards of oral health care.

The graduates are Rebeca Alaniz, Stephanie Bennett, Melissa Escobedo, Raquel Maldonado, Areli Mendiola, Ashley Mercer, Nancy Rodriguez, Alishia Sledge, and Sandra Vargas. They earned Associate in Science in Dental Hygiene degrees.

Mercer received two student awards for achieving the highest GPA and for outstanding professionalism. Escobedo received the award for clinical excellence. Sledge earned the award for providing outstanding patient education.

Dr. Sidney Valentine, vice president for academic affairs and student

services, congratulated the graduates for mastering a challenging program. "I hope it's been challenging, because that's what it should be," Dr. Valentine said. "We pride ourselves on our programs at South Florida State College and particularly our health science programs. I can assure you that graduating from SFSC will pay off in the long run."

Dr. Michele Heston, dean of health sciences, commended the graduates for choosing a career "in which every day you have the opportunity to make a difference in someone's life. As a dental hygienist, you will wear many hats—the teacher and the taskmaster, but always the advocate for your practice and your patients. You have received a great education, and I have every confidence you will be successful as you begin your professional careers."

Speaking on behalf of the faculty, Dr. Deborah Milliken, chair of dental education, assured graduates that their education would be the foundation for the decisions they make as dental hygienists. "You will make choices that reflect your understanding of

professional ethics and your moral fiber. You will make choices that affect the well-being of your patients and yourselves. We stand here as your teachers confident that you are prepared to make those choices."

Dr. Milliken's words were echoed by Candy Velez, the keynote speaker, who graduated from SFSC's dental hygiene program in 2013 and is the Highlands and Okeechobee county representative to the Florida Dental Hygiene Association. Velez encouraged graduates to be leaders in their practices and make sure their patients get the dental care they need. "Patient education and oral assessments are things your office doesn't necessarily bill for or will ever be able to. If you ever feel that you are compromising those standards, I encourage you to step up and be a leader in your practice and advocate for your patients."

In her final address to her classmates, class president Raquel Maldonado reminisced about the journey they had shared and the lasting friendships they formed. "Ladies,

DENTAL

FROM PAGE 1B

the time has come where we carry on with our life as registered dental hygienists," Maldonado said. "I'm very proud of everything we have accomplished."



MARC VALERO/STAFF

The adjunct faculty of South Florida State College have voted against unionizing. Votes were tallied at the office of the Public Employees Relations Commission on April 30.

SFSC adjunct faculty vote against unionizing

By **MARC VALERO**
STAFF WRITER

AVON PARK — By a two to one vote, South Florida State College adjunct faculty voted against the unionization effort by the Service Employees International Union (SEIU).

The votes were tallied at the office of the Public Employees Relations Commission (PERC) on April 30.

A total of 115 ballots were received, with only 37 voting in favor of the SEIU unionization effort (with nine challenged ballots and one void ballot), according to SFSC. The final vote was 68 against and 37 in favor of the SEIU.

The college issued the same statement it offered during the union voting, which took place in April, "SFSC highly values our adjunct faculty and has always tried to provide compensation and support services accordingly. Adjunct faculty bring practical knowledge and the flexibility needed to provide instruction that would otherwise be unavailable to many of our students."

In an April 1 message to faculty and staff, SFSC President Thomas Leitzel said the SEIU has been extremely aggressive in their efforts to convince Florida College System adjunct faculty at many of its sister colleges as well as at SFSC that they can secure employment protections and higher compensation for them.

Although the unionization effort was not started by SFSC faculty nor encouraged by college administration, union organizers took it upon themselves to begin the solicitation, he said. The SFSC District Board of Trustees has been and will continue to be the final authority on employee compensation and contractual matters, with or without union representation, Leitzel said.

In March, Miami Dade College and University of South Florida adjunct faculty voted to unionize and Lake-Sumter State College adjunct faculty voted to unionize in April.

Santa Fe College (Gainesville)

UNION | 4A

UNION

FROM PAGE 1A

administration is working to block adjuncts' right to form a union, according to a Friday opinion piece from a Santa Fe adjunct faculty member in The Gainesville Sun. The college has hired an outside law firm to contest the right to vote.

In December 2018, Highlands News-Sun was informed by SFSC that it has 125 active adjunct instructors. The salary range for these instructors was \$19.50-\$36.08 per contact hour depending on their academic rank.

Onward & upward



COURTESY PHOTO

EMT Graduates, front, from left: Veronica Romero, Hayleigh McCall, Seth Ramos, Shawn Korzep Townsend, Charlene Korzep, DeJung Mangum Jr., and Zachary Weed. Back, from left: Joshua Velazquez, Elizabeth Debree, Marangeline Hernandez-Sanchez, Kevin Lopez Garcia, Hunter Mehrer, Nicholas Arnold, and Eric Ortman. Not pictured: Justin Larosa and Ryan Moore.

16 graduate from local EMT program

SPECIAL TO HIGHLANDS NEWS-SUN

AVON PARK — The Emergency Medical Technician (EMT) program at South Florida State College (SFSC) conferred 16 Applied Technology diplomas during a ceremony held on Thursday, May 2 in the SFSC University Center Auditorium, Highlands campus.

Nicholas Arnold, Elizabeth Debree, Marangeline Hernandez-Sanchez, Charlene Korzep, Shawn Korzep Townsend, Justin Larosa, Kevin Lopez Garcia, DeJung Mangum Jr., Hayleigh McCall, Hunter Mehrer,

Ryan Moore, Eric Ortman, Seth Ramos, Veronica Romero, Joshua Velazquez, and Zachary Weed completed the 16 weeks of training, or 300 contact hours, in the program.

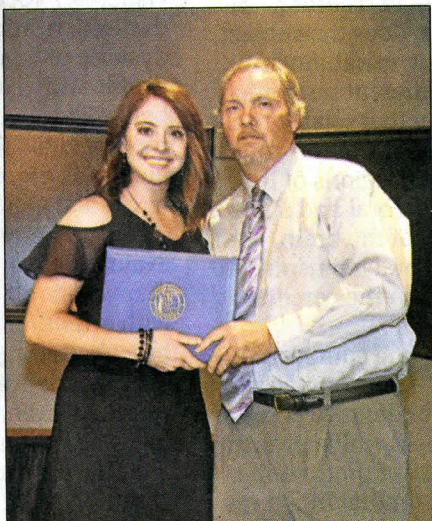
Graduates receiving special awards were Arnold for Highest GPA in Lecture; McCall for Highest GPA in Lab; and Hernandez-Sanchez for Most Heart, for her compassion and determination.

Upon completion of the program, graduates are eligible to apply to take the Florida EMT State Board Exam.

EMTs function as part of an

emergency rescue and transportation team by responding to emergency calls through a dispatch system, operating emergency vehicles safely, assessing scenes of accidents or illnesses, setting priorities for treating patients based on their degree of illness or injury, providing pre-hospital emergency care to treat trauma, shock, wounds, and other medical issues.

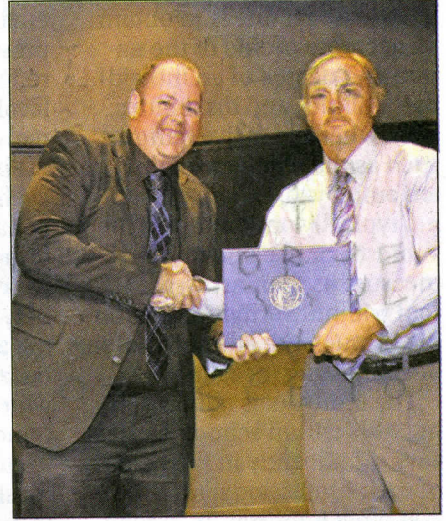
For more information about SFSC's EMT program and other Emergency Medical Services programs, visit southflorida.edu or call 863-784-7272.



COURTESY PHOTO



COURTESY PHOTO



COURTESY PHOTO

Hayleigh McCall was recognized for highest

Marangeline Hernandez-Sanchez was

Nicholas Arnold received a special award for

supplement for all eligible full-time employees and a \$300 non-reoccurring salary supplement for eligible part-time employees filling regularly established positions to be distributed in November, 2019.

Administrative Services Vice President Glenn Little said Saturday, "We are excited to be able to do at least a reoccurring raise that is the most important part for people because we have not been able to do that for a while."

"Fortunately our enrollment has been pretty strong and so we are hopeful that will also be again strong in the coming year."

Overall, the college didn't get a lot of new money, he said.



MARC VALERO/STAFF

South Florida State College's proposed 2019-20 budget includes both a salary increase and a one-time salary supplement for eligible full- and part-time employees.

The SFSC budget summary noted that the PECO (Public Education Capital Outlay) project list for the Florida College System's institutions was funded for \$11.3 million, down from \$66.4 million in the current year. This funding included no funding for facilities maintenance at FCS

institutions, down from \$35.4 million allocated for 2018-19.

SFSC's formula-driven allocation for maintenance from PECO will suffer a reduction of \$506,725 as a result. These funds have been used for facility repairs, renovations, and safety improvements.

Salary increase part of proposed budget

By MARC VALERO
STAFF WRITER

AVON PARK — South Florida State College's proposed 2019-20 budget includes a salary increase and one-time salary supplement for eligible full-time and part-time employees with no tuition

increase for students.

The South Florida District Board of Trustees will review the college's operating and capital budgets at a workshop at 10 a.m., Wednesday and then will vote on approval at its meeting that follows at 1 p.m.

In the budget summary, SFSC President



MARC VALERO/STAFF

SFSC President Thomas Leitzel.

Thomas Leitzel stated, as requested by Gov. Ron DeSantis, the Legislature approved no tuition increase for the Florida College System.

"While we are hopeful that the college will continue to achieve enrollment growth in 2019-20 (.04% increase projected), tuition and fee revenue budgets reflect no enrollment increase from 2018-19 projected levels," he stated.

The revenue projections contained in the proposed operating budget for 2019-20 total \$23,600,543, a decline of 0.72% from the current year revenue budget of \$23,771,698.

The proposed operating budget includes a 2% across-the-board raise for all eligible full-time and part-time employees and a 2% non-recurring salary

South Florida's Cimo wins award

Named Suncoast Conference Student Athlete of the Year

SPECIAL TO HIGHLANDS NEWS-SUN

AVON PARK — South Florida State College baseball player P.J. Cimo was named the 2019 Suncoast Conference Male Student Athlete of the Year by the Suncoast Conference athletic directors and sport chairs at their meeting on Friday.

Cimo is the sophomore co-captain of the South Florida State College Panthers and his leadership on and off the field earned

him this recognition.

"Without question, one of the finest young men I have ever had the pleasure to coach," said South Florida State College head baseball coach Rick Hitt. "Congratulations to P.J. and his family for this honor; it is well deserved."

Cimo earned a 4.0 GPA during his two years on the SFSC Panther baseball team.

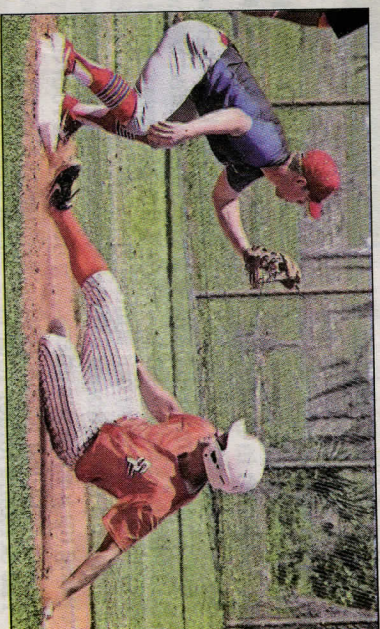
He was named First Team All-Conference in 2019 and FCSAA

All-Conference, All-State, and NJCAA All-American in 2018.

Cimo was on the SFSC President's List all four terms and a member of the Tau Epsilon chapter of the Phi Theta Kappa academic honor society.

He also participated in several department- and team-sponsored community service projects while at SFSC.

Cimo is currently undecided on his future four-year school of choice.



FILE PHOTO

South Florida's P.J. Cimo slides into third for a triple during the season. Cimo was named the 2019 Suncoast Conference Male Student Athlete of the Year on Friday.

SFSC board approves budget

By **MARC VALERO**
STAFF WRITER

AVON PARK — The South Florida State College District Board of Trustees approved Wednesday the college's operating and capital outlay budgets for the 2019-20 fiscal year.

The budgets are subject to approval of the General Appropriations Act by Governor DeSantis.

The operating budget includes a salary increase and a non-recurring salary supplement for all eligible full-time employees and a non-recurring salary supplement for eligible part-time employees filling regularly established positions.

Board of Trustees Member Joe Wright said Saturday, "The things that happen at South Florida State College are dependent on our people. So I think there was a very conscious effort to take care of all the employees at the college regardless of whether they are professors or administration



MARC VALERO/STAFF

The South Florida State College District Board of Trustees approved the college's operating and capital outlay budgets for the 2019-20 fiscal year.

or even the support services."

There has been data that showed in the past 10 years there has not been a lot of money with no increases sometimes or just non-recurring payments to employees or a few times some modest increases, he said.

"It just seemed like it was time," Wright said. There was a restructuring of things with people retiring and new people coming on board; it was a tight budget, but there

was a conscious effort to try to do something for our employees."

The approved operating budget includes a 2% across-the-board raise for all eligible full-time and part-time employees and a 2% non-recurring salary supplement for all eligible full-time employees and a \$300 non-recurring salary supplement for eligible part-time employees filling regularly established positions to be distributed in November, 2019.

Message from SFSC director, 'decide your next steps'

The end is the beginning. For our high school seniors, this is the end of many years of going to school: getting up early, catching the bus, locker combinations, school lunches, dress code, homework, and bells

ringing at dismissal.

Seniors, this is also a beginning for you, and one that doesn't require a choice. Life will happen. Time will pass by, whether you want it to or not. You can decide what your next steps will be ... or not. If you don't choose, life will choose for you.

There's a world that awaits. The opportunities may be across the

globe, or across the town. Many graduates don't realize how much our town has to offer young adults as they transition to the next stage of life. Two and four-year degrees can be earned here, a banking career can begin, education for high wage-earning jobs are available through vocational programs, website and graphic designers are sought after

by multiple local companies, and so much more.

Class of 2019, as this part of your life comes to an end, take a moment to reflect—but not for too long. A new beginning starts now. A new beginning may be far way, but it can also be right here in DeSoto County.

—Asena Mott, Director DeSoto campus, South Florida State College



ASENA MOTT

May 31, 2019