

SFSC Club Rush spaced over 4 days

By **MARC VALERO**
STAFF WRITER

AVON PARK — Instead of a big Club Rush at one time, the annual South Florida State College fall Club Rush is running Monday through Thursday this week to accommodate social distancing.

There were fewer clubs and fewer students than usual during the first day of Club Rush on Monday, from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. in the Building B Rotunda.

Student Life Coordinator Andy Polk, “We are trying to do the best we can to maintain social distancing obviously, but also provide the same services that we always have for our students.”

So it’s social distancing for Club Rush, he

said, where usually there are 30 to 40 clubs, it is being staggered with a certain amount of clubs each day.

The clubs are sending out emails to students with information and videos about the clubs so the students who are not coming to campus can interact with the clubs and club advisors, Polk said.

Each club is doing it differently with some utilizing Zoom video conferencing, emails, or social distancing face-to-face meets.

HSI STEM Program Coordinator Tasha Morales, who serves as an advisor for the Latin Club, participated in Monday’s Club Rush.

The Latin Club starts the semester with about 20 to 50 students, but as they find other interests

and groups on campus the numbers go down during the year, she said. “I think it is good to know your contemporaries and definitely get to know the other students. We recommend it.”

The Latin Club tries to meet bi-weekly to talk about Latin heritage and cultures, the differences and some of the barriers, whether globally or just within the community, and some of the barriers to achieving their education as well, Morales said. The club has also helped countries that were hit with natural disasters by donating supplies.

The students are involved in a lot of good stuff and fun stuff that really celebrates life and culture, she said.



MARC VALERO/STAFF

South Florida State College’s Club Rush goes through Thursday this week to accommodate social distancing.

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SFSC garners CARES Act, Rapid Credentialing grant

Special to the Highlands News-Sun Provided by SFSC

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AVON PARK — South Florida State College (SFSC) has been awarded special funding through Florida Governor Ron DeSantis' Emergency Education Relief (GEER) under the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act, Rapid Credentialing, to assist in educational training for residents who are unemployed, underemployed, or furloughed.

DeSantis allocated a total of \$35 million to support Florida College System (FCS) institutions, such as SFSC, and district postsecondary technical centers in their ability to enroll and complete students in short-term, in-demand workforce/career and technical education (CTE) credentialing and certificate programs.

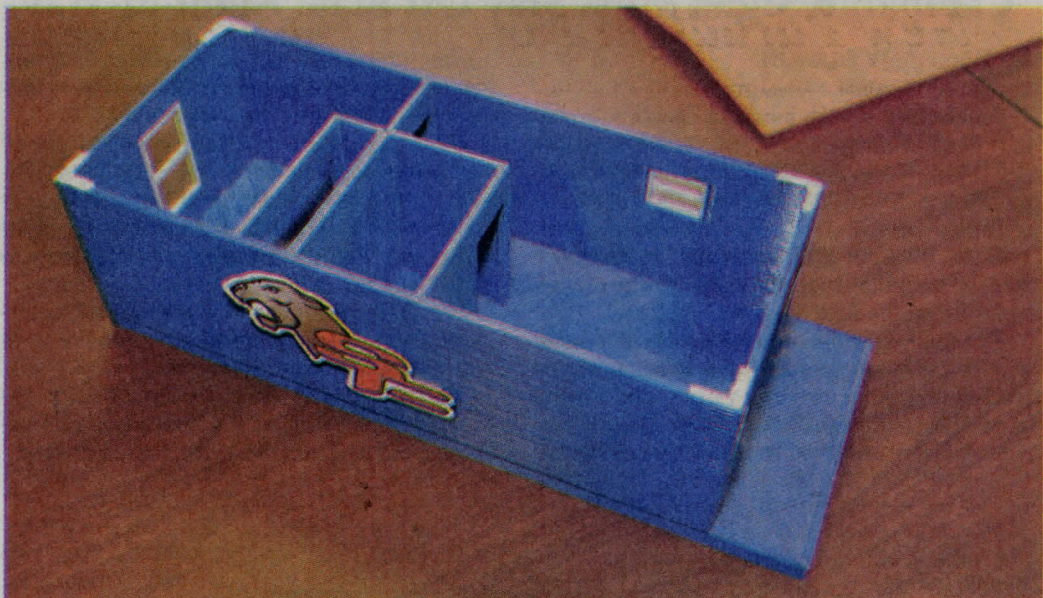
SFSC has been awarded \$292,096 with the requirement of an additional 25% through matching funds for a total of \$365,120. Matching dollars will come through the CARES Act Institutional funding (\$23,472) and Perkins Career and Technical Education Act of 2016 (Perkins V) funding (\$60,414). The Rapid Credentialing funds must be used by the end of May 2021.

"During the ongoing coronavirus pandemic and time of economic uncertainty, we are delighted to be able to enhance our program offerings and focus on helping individuals in our communities earn a short-term certificate or credential," said Erik Christensen, SFSC dean of applied sciences and technologies. "As always, our goal is to help people get a job, keep a job, or be promoted in a job, and this grant is helping us do just that."

Funds are focused on providing those unemployed, underemployed, or furloughed with training in an in-demand area of the regional workforce board. Funds will be used to purchase necessary equipment and underwrite costs associated with administering in-demand, non-credit industry certification preparation, clock hour career certificate programs, as well as for-credit, short-term CTE courses/programs. SFSC will use the funds to purchase equipment, personal protective equipment (PPE), recruiting, software, and instructor salaries to enhance the student learning experience.

The Rapid Credentialing funds will support SFSC students enrolled in these programs and courses: College Credit Certificates in Automation, CNC Machinist/Fabricator, Engineering Technology Support Specialist, Lean Manufacturing, Emergency Medical Technician (EMT) and Landscape & Horticulture Professional; Career Certificates in Firefighter I or Firefighter II, Automotive Service Technology, Correctional Officer, and Phlebotomy; Non-credit Continuing Workforce Education (CWE) Pre-Apprenticeship Certificate in Carpentry/Roofing as well as Electrical, Nursing Assistant, Real Estate, Welding, and the Commercial Driver's License (CDL) Class A and B.

Scholarships toward these programs may be available through CareerSource Heartland. To learn more, visit CSH's website at careersourceheartland.com or call one of the local CareerSource Heartland Career Centers: in DeSoto County at 863-993-1008, in Hardee County at 863-773-3474, in Highlands County at 863-385-3672, or in Okeechobee County at 863-610-6000.



COURTESY PHOTOS

The inside of the presentation model created by Garrett Lee on a 3D printer.

SFSC Students Will Have A Hand In Building Tiny Homes For The Homeless

By **DEBORAH BELL LATTER**

Special To The Herald-Advocate

Leslie Behm, CEO of Hope Haven Transitional Housing, has a dream to help her clients get back on their feet by offering them a place to call their own.

Those clients are homeless veterans, elderly, individuals, and families. When she spoke with Dr. Thomas C. Leitzel, president of South Florida State College (SFSC) about her plan, he saw a way to benefit her organization as well as the College's students. So, later in the fall term, SFSC students in Basic Carpentry/Roofing and Basic Construction-Electrical classes will begin work on two tiny homes for Hope Haven.

SFSC recently started a Construction and Utility Trades program that offers eight-week courses in Basic Carpentry/Roofing, Basic Masonry, Basic Construction Plumbing, and Basic Construction-Electrical.

"Our Basic Carpentry/Roofing course kicked off on Aug. 3 and the Basic Construction-Electrical kicked off on Aug. 10," said Fred Hayes, coordinator of SFSC's Trades program. "Once the students get to the midpoint in their training, we should be able to spend time in the field working on these projects for about three or four weeks. Then, when the next class rolls around, it'll be a four-week delay before we get back again because the next class needs its four weeks of in-house training. Then we can go back out and work on the tiny house."

Behm's plan is to begin her multiphase project by building eight tiny homes. "They're going to be located at EO Douglas Avenue in Sebring," she said. "It's close to the Highlands County School Board."

Unlike the tiny homes audiences see on television programs that focus on home design, decorating, and rebuilding, Hope Haven's tiny homes will be more modest in cost and design.

"These are not \$40,000-\$60,000 homes," Behm said. "These are under \$8,000 homes which is much more affordable for everyone involved. They'll have everything that you and I have—a living room, a bedroom, a bathroom, and a kitchen. They'll be 386 sq. ft. They'll be efficient, so the electric bill is not going to be \$200-300 a month and the water bill won't be \$100. These homes will be something that my clients can afford. These first eight homes will be for singles or couples only."

Hayes and the SFSC Trades program students will be ready to go to work shortly.

"Leslie Behm said the septic systems will be put in before we get there and then we could have the reigns on the project to pour the concrete pad and get it ready to go," Hayes said. "Then we'll work on the framework, the rough structure, and do the drywall work, as well as build the roof. The electrical class would do the electrical work on the inside, so this project benefits students in our Trade programs."

The community and Highlands County have gotten behind the tiny house program.

"This project will be going forward with the help of the community, especially churches," she said. "Several churches have stepped up and really provided a good backing."

Behm has plans to build tiny houses on other sites in Highlands County and indicated that private citizens have donated land. However, she continues to speak to groups in the community to explain what the tiny house project is and what the houses will look like.



College Students Thinking Small

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To assist Behm in her efforts, Garrett Lee, SFSC Engineering program coordinator, created a miniaturized model of the tiny house with the aid of the College's 3D printer.

"People can actually see the tiny house in a full 3D view and understand a little better than having to figure it out based on the plans and layout. We were able to put together a prototype of the house in a couple of days. We printed the main body in one day and printed the roof another day, then put the two together."

Lee explained that 3D printing is a component of Mechatronics—computer-controlled manufacturing. He explained that 3D printing is useful for rapid prototyping or one-offs.

"In this case, we were able to come up with something and hit 'print.' The next day, you may want to tweak it a bit, hit 'print,' come back and check it again," Lee noted. "To try to have this made out of something else would have been to do it with molding. You'd have to craft the dies and then it would be a month-long project. If something wasn't right, you'd have to mold a whole new set of dies."

"I've done a lot of presentations to churches, Rotary clubs, and private groups that are interested in the project and to individuals who want to help," said Behm. "They want to know exactly what it is I'm talking about and they want to see it. Garrett knocked the model out of the park. The 3D tiny house model is small enough and lightweight enough that I can turn it around when I do presentations, and everybody will understand and see what I'm talking about."

Behm is passionate in her assistance to the homeless in Highlands County and has maintained the Safari Inn in Sebring as a refuge.

"We have a need in Highlands County for affordable housing for the homeless. Our facility at the Safari Inn is constantly filled, so I decided that we're going to build tiny homes so we can move people out of this facility into their own places. These homes will provide normalcy for them. Everybody thinks that because someone is homeless, it's because of drugs or alcohol. But that's not the case for some of these people. Some have just fallen on hard times, and now with COVID-19, everyone's fallen on bad times. For instance, we have families — mom and dad just lost their jobs, lost their home, and have nowhere else to go, so they're out there."

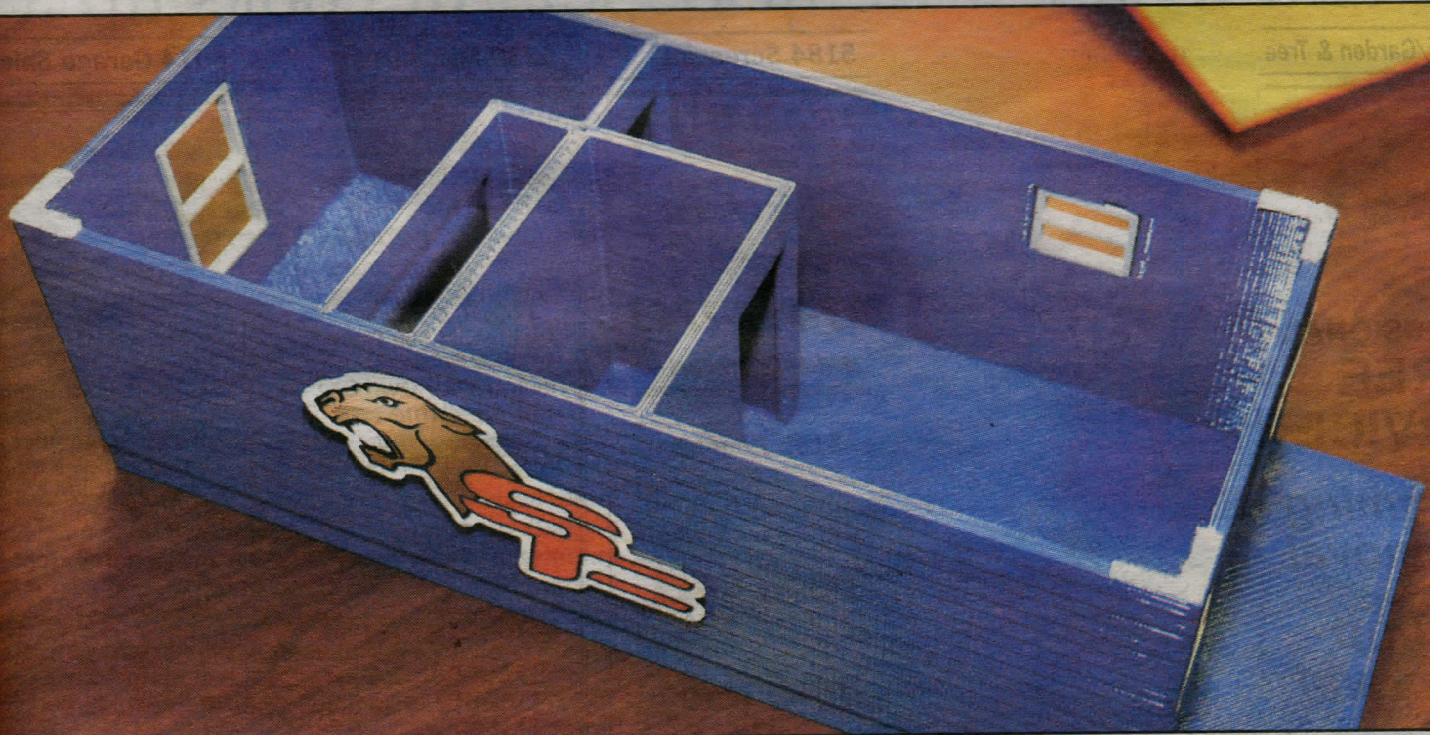
"It's been hard work finding good people who understand the need and everything that has been donated. But I love what I do," she said. "I just want to see it through and get this rolling and show everyone what we're talking about."

For detailed information about any of SFSC's Construction and Utility Trades courses, see the catalog at southflorida.edu/corpedschedule, call 863-201-7195, or email corporatetraining@southflorida.edu.

To register for any of the Construction and Utility Trades courses, call 863-784-7405.

To learn more about SFSC's Mechatronics program, visit southflorida.edu and look under "Future Students" and "Degrees & Programs," email leeg@southflorida.edu, or call 863-784-7439.

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COURTESY PHOTO/SFSC

The inside of a 3D model of a Hope Haven tiny home, as printed on the South Florida State College 3D printer by the college's Engineering Program Coordinator Garrett Lee, people can see how the small footprint will include what most homes have: A living room/kitchen (right) bathroom and closet (center) and bedroom (left).



COURTESY PHOTO/SOUTH FLORIDA STATE COLLEGE

From left, South Florida State College Engineering Program Coordinator Garrett Lee, Hope Haven Transitional Housing CEO Leslie Behm and SFSC Trades Program Coordinator Fred Hayes pose with the 3D model of a future Hope Haven tiny home, as produced on the college's 3D printer.

And the winner is ... Blackbird Anthem

By **KIM MOODY**
STAFF WRITER

SEBRING — Highlands County-based southern rock band Blackbird Anthem was recently nominated for several Josie Awards. The band's front man, Adam Martin, represented the band at the sixth annual Josie Awards show on Sept. 5 at County Tonite Theatre in Pigeon Forge, Tennessee. He happily accepted two awards for the band out of the five they were nominated for.

The band is comprised founder Adam C. Martin on lead vocals, acoustic guitar, harmonica and songwriter; Jeremy Chesnutt lead guitar and songwriter; Lee Thompson on drums, Joe Lamphier, bass; and the youngest member, Cole Jahna, plays the electric guitar and keyboards.

The JMA recognizes the work of independent artists and up and coming artists and bands in all genres.

Blackbird Anthem won for the Music Video of the Year for "22," a video about the 22 is about the (22 on average) veterans who commit suicide every day. Blackbird Anthem was awarded the Southern Rock Band of the Year, for the second time in as many years.

Martin's wife Amy was able to walk down the red carpet with him and sit with him even though the theater seating was limited because of social distancing. Adam said he was able to catch up and root for friends he made from the previous year who were also up for awards.

"It was a great experience, despite the challenges (from COVID)" Martin said. "Next year, they plan to make it a two-day event with multiple stages and the awards show on the last night, like a festival. It's the largest independent music award show."

The entire band will attend next year if they play at the show and if coronavirus is not an issue.

The video of the year was one of the first award presented. The music from the song played as Martin walked to the stage. He dedicated the award to military members who have struggled with suicidal thoughts or have committed suicide.

"It was surreal," Martin said. "Out of all the awards, that is the one we wanted to win most. We spent so much time and energy on it. The message is so important to us."



COURTESY PHOTO

Adam Martin is seen here accepting an award for Blackbird Anthem at the sixth annual Josie Award Show on Sept. 5

Martin texted his band mates who were at home as soon as events were happening.

"It was a huge honor," Chesnutt said about the win for "22." "It is something that should be talked about more. This creates an avenue to help someone else, maybe someone will stumble across it on YouTube and

it will help. It was very humbling and proud to have won, especially Southern Rock Band of the Year again."

Martin said he cheered on friends who were nominated in the same categories because at JMA it is about the art, not the competition.

Thompson has played drums for over 40 years in all different genres.

Before returning to Highlands County, he was in California playing blues. He was happy with the two wins.

"The video was very special and everyone had a stake in it," he said. "It's very powerful. It's incredible. That's justification for life choices I have made. I'm feeling good about it. It's great to be recognized."

Currently, the awards on the mantel at Martin's house but he will bring it to the rehearsals and shows so the members can all enjoy them. "Second Hand Smoke" is the band's new single available on all digital platforms. Blackbird Anthem will be releasing

SFSC Students Publish Undergrad Research In Academic Journal

By **DEBORAH BELL LATTER**

Special To The Herald-Advocate

A hurricane broke through the Lake Okeechobee dike in 1926, devastating the town of Moore Haven. The flood waters washed away homes and drowned many of the town's residents. A little known mass grave in Pinecrest Cemetery in Sebring holds the secret of their demise. Because of their research on the disaster, two South Florida State College (SFSC) students, Camila Rimoldi Ibanez and Kyria Wickham, have assisted in bringing the Moore Haven story to light and honor its victims.

That research was published in the fall 2020 issue of the "Journal of Multidisciplinary Research."

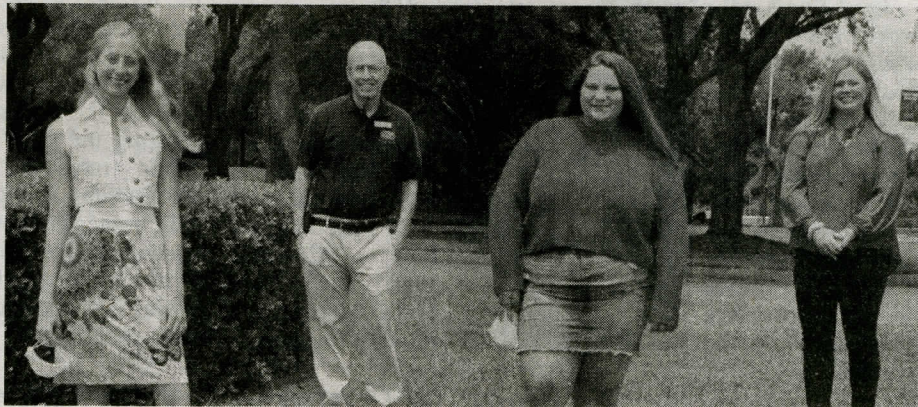
The research article is titled, "Disaster at Moore Haven: How the 1926 Great Miami Hurricane Destroyed a Small Town on the Shores of Lake Okeechobee."

"It's extremely important for students to know that they can work on a project and get recognized in this way," said Dr. James Hawker Jr., SFSC dean of arts and sciences. "Two of our undergraduate students published research. I've never seen this before. Students become engaged in learning so much more than in the classroom by participating in these kinds of undergraduate research projects."

Rimoldi and Wickham are both dually enrolled at Sebring High School and SFSC. They're also members of SFSC's Honors program. In their first semester at SFSC, they took Dr. Charlotte Pressler's Honors Freshman English I class. Dr. Pressler, who recently retired from SFSC, had heard from local historians at the Avon Park Depot Museum about the Moore Haven hurricane and that few people knew many of the details. So she proposed the topic to her Honors Freshman English I class as a research project. According to Wickham, the mass grave at Pinecrest Cemetery is difficult to find.

"We wanted to, eventually, recognize the victims, maybe through a state grant and funding, with a bronze plaque," she said. "That was the goal of the project."

Each student involved in the project took on specific aspects of the disaster. "Being the science person that I am, I tried to focus on how and why the dikes and the town failed to protect the people," Rimoldi said. "Back then, there weren't really any building codes. The residents were just building houses that were made from materials immediately available to them. So, I researched why and how the dike failed during the storm."



COURTESY PHOTO

Student Camila Rimoldi Ibanez (left); Dr. James Hawker Jr., SFSC dean of arts and sciences; student Kyria Wickham; and Amy Bohan, SFSC Honors Program director and biology instructor.

Wickham focused on researching the victims—the number of victims in the mass grave and how they came to a resting place in Sebring, the body recovery process, and the forensics that were done. She had some early successes and ran into a few snags.

"I communicated with the Stephenson-Nelson Funeral Home and received documents from them about the hurricane and how they traveled down to Moore Haven at that time and helped with the body collection and identification process."

Wickham drew information from documents provided by the Sebring Historical Society, and she and Dr. Pressler attempted to find relatives of hurricane victims to gather oral histories. However, they found that the survivors had said little about the disaster to their family members. Wickham also found it difficult to gather forensics information. "There wasn't much in the way of forensics back in the 1920s—it was just starting as a practice," she said.

"There are multiple racial aspects to the research that I didn't expect to come across," Wickham said. "Moore Haven was an agricultural area with a lot of laborers who were from elsewhere, some were Hispanic, and some African American. There are a lot of differences in the number of people who died and survived because whites were given priority during that time."

Rimoldi and Wickham's research first went public when they presented posters at two undergraduate conferences—the Florida Collegiate Honors Conference and the Florida Undergraduate Research Conference (FURC)—in February 2020. Wickham networked while at FURC and met Dr. Donald Duke, an ecology and environmental studies professor from Florida Gulf Coast University (FGCU), who was interested in continuing the research on Moore Haven.

Rimoldi and Wickham feel that their research on the Moore Haven disaster is significant for the residents of South and Central Florida. "Bringing events to life and understanding what happened shows respect for those who lost their lives, lost their homes, lost their family in such an event. If I was in their shoes, what would I want to be done or what would I have done?"

Wickham said, "It reveals a part of local history that we didn't know we had. It helps us recognize individuals who went through severe times and now they can be recognized and identified. And we can just keep telling their story."

Rimoldi and Wickham both look forward to graduation from high school in spring 2021 and earning their Associate in Arts from SFSC in May 2021. Wickham plans to major in biochemistry and wants to be a research scientist working on genetics. She's currently considering attendance at the University of Central Florida, Florida Gulf Coast University, or the University of Florida.

Rimoldi plans to major in marine biology with an eye toward continuing her education at the University of Miami or the University of Chicago.

"Ultimately, I want to become a researcher, specifically, to help coral with all the bleaching epidemics going on right now. I want to help that type of ecosystem." Coral bleaching is stress often caused by the rise in ocean temperatures. When the temperatures remain high, coral release symbiotic algae. Over time, without the algae, the coral can die.

"Undergraduate research allows students to dig deeper into an area of interest," said Amy Bohan, SFSC Honors Program director and biology instructor. "It allows more one-on-one time with the instructor and allows them to learn a new skill set. For example, they can learn laboratory techniques if they're working in our science labs. The students will have networking opportunities if they attend and present their data at undergraduate conferences. Undergraduate research also helps in building students' resumes for when they apply to transfer to a university or when applying for specific programs."

Bohan said that research opportunities for students at SFSC are plentiful in the Humanities and the Natural Sciences. Research projects have been done on the Moore Haven disaster, industrial hemp for the removal of contaminants in rivers and lakes, canine congestive heart failure, growth factor genes in endothelial cell and neuron function, and on mechanisms of apoptosis (programmed cell death).

Students who are interested in becoming involved in the SFSC Honors Program may contact Bohan at bohana@southflorida.edu or 863-784-7362. To become involved in a research project at SFSC, students may contact Bohan, Dr. Hawker at hawkerj@southflorida.edu or 863-784-7329, Dr. Daniel Sanchez at daniel.sanches@southflorida.edu or 863-784-7360, Dr. Mintoo Patel at Mintoo.Patel@southflorida.edu, or Dr. Theresa James at JamesT@southflorida.edu or 863-784-7185.

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