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AND

Shakers

...inside
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3 Fred Hawkins takes the helm as SFSC's fifth president



5 A \$750,000 grant from the National Science Foundation is providing scholarships to engineering students



6 Gifts from the estates of Larry Johnson and Dr. Charles McLochlin are benefiting SFSC students

Drs. Vinod and Tarlika Thakkar Are 2023 Inductees into the Legacy Society

THE THAKKARS ARE KNOWN FOR THEIR GENEROSITY TO THE COLLEGE AND COMMUNITY.

During the South Florida State College (SFSC) Foundation Legacy Showcase and Fundraiser on May 6, Drs. Vinod and Tarlika Thakkar were inducted into the 2023 Legacy Society for their service to the Foundation, the College, and the community. Jamie Bateman, SFSC vice president for institutional advancement and external affairs, made the presentation.

"Drs. Vinod and Tarlika Thakkar have been friends of our community for many years," Bateman said. "Their support and dedication to help advance students through scholarship opportunities and in the medical field have been tremendous. Over the past couple of decades, the Thakkars have donated to SFSC in a way that would help nursing students achieve their goal of obtaining a nursing degree and entering into the health care field. It is a privilege to recognize them with the SFSC Foundation Legacy Award."

This is the fifth year that such an honor has been bestowed. Ben Hill Griffin III was posthumously inducted into the Legacy Society in 2022, Bill and Lisa Jarrett in 2021, Joan Hartt in 2020, and Joe Jr. and Gloria Davis in 2019.

Dr. Vinod C. Thakkar has served on the SFSC Foundation board of directors since 2015. He is a gastroenterologist, and Dr. Tarlika V. Thakkar is an anesthesiologist.



Dr. Vinod Thakkar (left) and Dr. Tarlika Thakkar are inducted as members into the SFSC Foundation's Legacy Society by Michael Kelly, SFSC Foundation board of directors secretary and Jamie Bateman, SFSC vice president for institutional advancement and external affairs.

"I first met the Thakkars when I became part of our YMCA in the early 1990s," said John Shoop, mayor of Sebring and Highlands County YMCA board of director's treasurer. "They donated many funds, from a building campaign to scholarships for our kids. They continue to help us on an annual basis through our Strong Kids campaign, helping kids and families who can't afford to come to the YMCA to be part of the programs and part of our community. If it wasn't for the Thakkars, our YMCA wouldn't be where it is today."

Mike Swaine, a Highlands County attorney, discussed the Thakkars' support

■ LEGACY SOCIETY CONTINUES ON PAGE 5

Gifts Make a Difference in the Lives of Students

This year flew by, resulting in many changes. Earlier this summer, we wished our former president, Dr. Tom Leitzel, happy trails as he retired after serving our college and community diligently for over 10 years, and 45 total years in the higher education. Following in his footsteps, we welcomed the fifth president to serve South Florida State College, Mr. Fred Hawkins. President Hawkins brings an abundance of knowledge and leadership skills that are sure to assist SFSC in achieving innovative and academic greatness.

As we look forward to the holidays, I want to thank all of you for supporting SFSC and participating in our events throughout the year.

Imagine that you are a student. You're dealing with the pressure of maintaining your grades, perhaps holding down a job, and possibly trying to support your family. Now imagine you're given a scholarship that covers the exact amount you need in order to continue earning a degree — a degree that will open doors for you and your family to have a better future.

When we hear the stories from the students we're impacting, we understand how our gifts make a difference. When



you support SFSC, you make a life-changing impact on our students. Thank YOU!

This past year we awarded over \$750,000 to support the

Emerge Scholars Program giving scholarships toward Associate in Science degrees in Engineering Technology. Our Volleyball and Cross-Country seasons have begun, and our teams are off to an amazing start! We invite you to come and cheer on our students during their home matches. They are all free to attend.

As we near the end of this calendar year, your contribution could make a significant impact. Would you consider making an end-of-the-year gift to SFSC?

Thank you for joining us at our events, attending our cultural arts programs, or taking a tour at one of our beautiful campuses. You are making a difference.

Jamie Bateman

Vice President, Institutional Advancement and External Affairs



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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 ability of residents in our district to obtain a college education.

Fred Hawkins Becomes SFSC's Fifth President

On July 3, Fred Hawkins started his first day in the office as SFSC's fifth president.

"I am honored to join such an exceptional group of educators and professionals at SFSC and look forward to working together as we continue to offer the life-changing programs and services that influence the workforce of Florida," said President Hawkins. "I strive to build upon the already solid academic foundation that SFSC maintains and enjoys, and further advance the innovative offerings and partnerships."

Hawkins formerly served in the Florida House of Representatives for Osceola and Orange counties as the vice chair of the Higher Education Appropriations Subcommittee and the whip of all education committees. He was also the president and chief



SFSC President Fred Hawkins

executive officer of the Osceola County Education Foundation.

Hawkins served three terms on the Osceola Board of County Commissioners where he was first elected in 2008. He served as chairman

in 2010, 2014, and 2016. He also served on the Osceola County Planning Commission, Osceola County Charter Review Commission, Florida Association of Counties, Greater Osceola Partnership for Economic Prosperity (GOPEP), and the Orlando Economic Partnership. Hawkins was awarded the Legislator of the Year Award by the Florida Councils of the Boy Scouts of America, the Legislative Champion from the National Waste & Recycling Association (Nwra), and the Community Supporter Award from the Puerto Rican Chamber of Commerce.

Hawkins graduated from the University of Akron with a bachelor's degree in Pre-Law and Political Science. He, his wife Tiffany, and daughter Kendrie look forward to meeting members of the tri-county community.

Foundation Receives \$90,000 Edward K. Roberts Grant

A \$90,000 grant from the Community Foundation of Sarasota County has been awarded to SFSC Foundation to benefit part-time students and student-parents enrolled in SFSC's 2023 summer term, 2023 fall term, and 2024 spring term.

The grant comes from the Edward K. Roberts Community College Fund, which was established by Roberts as a legacy to support Florida's community colleges and other charitable organizations. Managed by the Community Foundation of Sarasota County, the fund continues Roberts' vision of making higher education a priority, particularly for those motivated to seek better lives for themselves.

SFSC's grant funds aid students who attend college part-time and may not qualify for other forms of financial aid and students who are parents. Individual students may receive up to \$2,500 through the end of March 2024. The grant covers tuition, housing, books,



Financial Aid Director Tina Stetson and Jamie Bateman accept the \$90,000 Edwards K. Roberts Grant.

childcare, transportation, and needs that would otherwise prevent students from attending college.

"Because of grants from organizations such as the Community Foundation of Sarasota County, the SFSC Foundation can support the educational goals of SFSC's students," said Jamie Bateman, SFSC vice president for institutional advancement and external affairs."

CELEBRATE THE
Holidays
WITH THE
SFSC FOUNDATION
19 East Main Street
Avon Park

The Jacaranda Jubilee
Monday, Nov. 27
6:30 p.m.
Veranda of the
Hotel Jacaranda
Join us for a festive social while watching the Avon Park Christmas Parade.

The Christmas Luncheon
Thursday, Dec. 7
11:30 a.m.
Hotel Jacaranda
Dining Rooms
Dine with us at the grand ol' Hotel Jacaranda for a festive holiday luncheon.



4 Ways to Support the SFSC Foundation

1 Become a Friend of SFSC by setting up an online recurring donation of \$25 or more per month using the QR code.



2 Sponsor a fundraising event, such as the Howl at the Moon Dueling Pianos Legacy Showcase, the Jacaranda Jubilee, the Christmas Luncheon, or the Million Dollar Hole-in-One Golf Shootout.

3 Give stock or securities. For information, call 863-453-3133 or email foundation@southflorida.edu.

4 Join the SFSC Heritage Society by including the SFSC Foundation in your will or trust, or name the SFSC Foundation as a beneficiary of a life insurance policy.



Dr. Brent Ferns, dean of applied sciences and technologies at SFSC; Nancy Dodd, government and community relations manager for Duke Energy Florida; Christopher Yeomans, electrical distribution professor at SFSC; and Dr. Michele Heston, vice president for academic affairs and student services at SFSC

Duke Energy Donates \$50,000 for Electrical Lineworker Equipment

LINEWORKER PROGRAM PREPARES STUDENTS TO WORK AS ELECTRIC LINE TECHNICIANS.

SFSC received more than \$50,000 in grant funding from the Duke Energy Foundation at a Live-Wire Demonstration event at the Highlands Campus on April 12.

The grant was issued just before National Lineworker Appreciation Day on April 18. “Duke Energy Florida, along with the Duke Energy Foundation, is thrilled to create opportunities for access to education that benefits the workforce in the communities where we work and live,” said Melissa Seixas, Duke Energy Florida President. “For our communities to thrive, we need skilled lineworkers to maintain our infrastructure, and SFSC can prepare individuals for a rewarding career by equipping them with the skills and knowledge required to perform utility line work.”

The Duke Energy grant is being used to update equipment in the SFSC Electrical Lineworker Program by purchasing a pole-mount Viper-ST

breaker, climbing gear, tools, and safety equipment. The Viper-ST breaker will enable students to become proficient in installing state-of-the-art circuit protection widely used within the industry today. The safety equipment, climbing gear, and tools will allow a growing number of students to enter the program safely and complete climbing and on-pole work training.

“The College is fortunate to have a community partner in Duke Energy who cares about our students and their success,” said Dr. Thomas Leitzel, then-president of SFSC. “We are grateful that our students will personally benefit from this grant in practical ways. We look forward to future endeavors with our generous friends from Duke Energy.”

SFSC’s Electrical Lineworker Program prepares students to work as electric line technicians in the construction, maintenance, and repair of electric utility overhaul and underground systems. Students who successfully complete the program earn a Career Certificate. For more information about the program, email Christopher Yeomans, electrical distribution professor, at chris.yeomans@southflorida.edu or call 863-784-7045.

Proud to be a Panther!

SFSC
ALUMNI
MEMBERSHIP PROGRAM

Discover the benefits of membership in the SFSC Alumni Association.

SOUTHFLORIDA.EDU/ALUMNI



NSF Awards \$750,000 Grant to Start Emerge Scholars Program

SFSC is using a \$750,000 grant from the National Science Foundation (NSF) to create the Emerge Scholars Program, which provides scholarships to students seeking an Associate in Science (AS) degree in Engineering Technology.

The NSF is an independent agency of the United States federal government that supports research and education in all non-medical fields of science and engineering. The grant monies awarded to SFSC will be available for six years.

Through the SFSC Emerge Scholars Program, students who have been admitted to or are enrolled in SFSC's AS in Engineering Technology may be eligible for a scholarship of \$4,625

per term, providing they meet certain criteria.

SFSC's AS in Engineering Technology prepares students for high-skill, high-wage positions, such as systems technician, process analyst, technical sales technician, project technician, and calibration technician. It can serve as a terminal degree or the first step leading to a bachelor's degree in a technical area or management through the Florida University System.

Students interested in the Emerge Scholarship Program should call Jazmin Rosario, PATHways advisor, at 863-784-7256 or email jazmin.rosario@southflorida.edu.



A grant from the National Science Foundation is providing scholarships to students seeking Associate in Science degrees in Engineering Technology.

■ LEGACY SOCIETY CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

of education. "Providing funds for the SFSC Foundation to carry on certain projects creates a better educational atmosphere, and it supplements what the state government can and will do. The Highlands County Bar Association provides a scholarship fund for young people who might not otherwise be able to attend SFSC or another college. The Thakkars have seen the benefit of education, and they encourage others to get an education. They have been beyond charitable."

"When I think of the Thakkars, my immediate thought is their commitment to family, community, health care, and education," said Dr. Michele Heston, SFSC vice president for academic affairs and student services and a registered nurse since 1982. "They've supported educational excellence at all levels, from their work in the local health care facilities, to the elementary schools, to the College. Their passion and focus is a healthy and thriving community. Their mission is truly lived."

Dr. Heston continued: "They have an unwavering commitment to excellence in all aspects of life, whether it be through the Thakkar Award, recognizing educational excellence and leadership at the middle schools, by providing monetary recognition for nursing students for clinical and academic excellence, or hosting events at their home featuring healthy fare. Their commitment to education, health, and to the community is unparalleled."

SFSC Foundation Welcomes June Weyrauch as Grants Coordinator

On Aug. 1, 2023, June Weyrauch joined the SFSC Foundation as its coordinator, grants development and federal relations.

Previously, Weyrauch was a staff assistant I in the Nursing Education Department, the executive assistant to the vice president of student services, and the executive assistant to two vice presidents of administrative services.

Weyrauch is using her organizational skills and attention to detail to ensure that all requirements

are met for each grant. She is responsible for corresponding with each grant's principal investigator and numerous key stakeholders in the writing and implementation of each grant. Jamie Bateman is Weyrauch's direct supervisor.

Weyrauch holds an Associate in Science in Early Childhood Education from Gateway Technical College in Racine, Wis. and a Bachelor of Science in Interdisciplinary Studies from Hodges University in Naples, Fla.



Weyrauch

Major Gift Comes to SFSC Athletics and Benefits Students

A \$365,234 gift from the estate of Larry Ross Johnson is making it possible for SFSC to remodel its softball field while establishing a scholarship geared to fast-pitch softball players.

Plans for the remodeling a new scoreboard, landscaping, updated seating, extension of dugouts and bench seating, a television for video analysis, and more. The facility will be named in Johnson's honor.

"Larry was an enthusiastic softball player, pitcher, and fan," said SFSC Athletic Director Rick Hitt. "He provided guidance to players over the years in an effort to help them improve, as a coach as well. We are truly blessed to receive this wonderful gift and thank all of those who assisted in helping this happen."

In addition, the Ross, Lorene, and Larry Johnson Endowed Scholarship was established through the SFSC Foundation.

Johnson, who had been a fast-pitch softball coach in Highlands County for many years, died in October 2021. In the early 2000s, he was the assistant girls softball coach at Sebring High School. Together, with Lee Tolar, the team's head coach, Johnson began a summer travel team of high school softball players from across the county.

SFSC's softball program began in 2004 with the hiring of Head Softball Coach Falla and the construction of the SFSC Panther softball facility on the SFSC Highlands Campus in Avon Park. The Lady Panthers softball team played in competition for the first time in 2005.



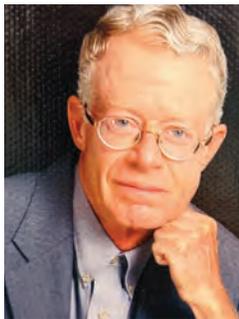
(From left, kneeling) SFSC softball players Briella Rosa and Kaylee Underwood. (from left, standing) Head Softball Coach Carlos Falla; Lee Tolar; Jamie Bateman, SFSC vice president for institutional advancement and external affairs; Rick Hitt, SFSC athletic director and head baseball coach; Connie Foster; Benny McGee; and Dr. Thomas C. Leitzel, then-SFSC president

McLochlin Memorial Fund Established

The Dr. Charles McLochlin Memorial Fund has been established through the estate of Dr. McLochlin as a donation to the SFSC Foundation. The funds are unrestricted and will be used to support the College and its students.

According to Dr. McLochlin's niece, Pamela Karlson, he was a lifelong learner. He earned bachelor's and master's degrees in engineering from Purdue University and a doctoral degree from the University of Florida in 1989. He later received recognition from the faculty of Johns Hopkins University for continuing his education in engineering. He worked most of his adult life for the National Security Agency. Dr. McLochlin built and flew many experimental aircraft, such as ultralights. Until a month before his passing in July 2023, he was enrolled in classes at Broward College to become an aircraft mechanic so he could work on and certify his own aircraft engines.

"He placed a great deal of importance on education and wanted others to do the same," Karlson said. "It all came down to relationships. When going through his papers, he had countless letters and invitations from



Don Applequist, the former executive director of the SFSC Foundation; Jamie Bateman, SFSC vice president for institutional advancement and external

affairs; and SFSC President Emeritus Dr. Thomas Leitzel to attend functions and be a part of the SFSC culture. I believe it was this constant contact, communication, and genuine caring that caused my uncle to choose SFSC as the predominant beneficiary of his estate."

"Dr. McLochlin has been a long-standing donor to the SFSC Foundation," Bateman said. "We are thankful to him and his family for their continued support and are currently working on honoring his name and contribution in a way that will fulfill his legacy."

To leave a legacy such as Dr. McLochlin's, speak with your attorney about drafting a will or trust naming the SFSC Foundation as a beneficiary.

Seventh Annual **Million Dollar HOLE-IN-ONE GOLF SHOOTOUT**

Benefits SFSC Athletics

Jan. 11-13, 2024

**All Golfers Welcome
\$10 for Bag of 10 Balls**

Top 12 Finalists
Advance to the
Shootout
at 5 p.m. Jan. 13

Prizes for four
finalists closest-to-
the-pin

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Take Stock in Children Workshop Prepares Seniors for School Year

Take Stock in Children helped seniors in its program prepare for the 2023-24 school year with a workshop on July 25 at the Hotel Jacaranda in Avon Park. Take Stock presented students with senior binders that will help them prepare for their next step in college education while they complete their senior year, along with a graduation cap coloring page with their name and school on it. The students were invited to decorate their caps, and their finished designs will be posted in the windows of the Take Stock office.

The students also received information on college plans and budgets, college applications, SAT and ACT testing dates, Bright Future scholarships, Florida Prepaid scholarships, and Leaders for Life applications.

Take Stock in Children is a statewide program that provides at-risk children with a mentor and a college scholarship. In return, Take Stock scholars sign contracts in which they promise to remain drug-free, to avoid behavior that would get them into trouble with law enforcement, to attend school regularly, and to earn satisfactory grades. The SFSC Foundation serves as the lead agency for Take Stock in DeSoto, Hardee, and Highlands counties.



Take Stock in Children scholars received materials that will help them navigate their final year of high school and make the transition to college.

Volunteer mentors are needed to interact with middle and high school scholars. Mentors meet with their student for a half hour once a week on a public high school or SFSC campus. They become a friend and role model to their student and assist them in setting and attaining goals, guide them toward an education and a productive life, and give them hope for the future. For information about mentorship opportunities, call 863-794-7343 or email tsic@southflorida.edu.

Foundation's Board Welcomes New Members

The SFSC Foundation welcomes two new board members, Heather Beato and George Mousa, D.M.D.

A Highlands County native, Beato attended South Florida Community College (now SFSC) as a dual enrollment student, earned a dual degree in Economics and International Relations from The College of William and Mary in Williamsburg, Va., in 1999, and received her juris doctorate from the Florida State University College of Law in 2022. In 2020, she was appointed as a circuit judge and assigned to the Family Division in Highlands County.

Dr. Mousa holds a Bachelor of Arts and Sciences degree in Biomedical Sciences from the University of South Florida and earned his Doctor of Medical Dentistry degree from Temple University's Kornberg School of Dentistry, graduating magna cum laude.

In his free time Dr. Mousa enjoys participating in charity events and volunteering with youth groups, food and clothing drives, and homeless outreach programs. He enjoys working out, playing basketball, and spending time outdoors.



Beato



Mousa

As Members Leave Board, Foundation Thanks Them for Their Service

Five longtime members of the SFSC Foundation's Board of Directors recently concluded their terms. At the same time, Dr. Tom Leitzel retired as SFSC college president. Jamie Bateman and the Foundation staff thanked them for their service to SFSC and its students.



Jamie Bateman and Dr. Tom Leitzel



Christy Crews



Becky McIntyre



Dr. David Willey



Tres Stephenson and Judge Peter Estrada

South Florida State College Foundation
600 West College Drive
Avon Park, FL 33825

On the Calendar

Foundation Events

The Jacaranda Jubilee

MONDAY, NOV. 27, 2023 | 6:30 P.M.
The Hotel Jacaranda Veranda
RSVP required

Giving Tuesday

TUESDAY, NOV. 28, 2023 | ONLINE
southflorida.edu/support-sfsc/givingtuesday

The Christmas Luncheon

THURSDAY, DEC. 7, 2023 | 11:30 A.M.
Dining Rooms of the Hotel Jacaranda
RSVP required

7th Annual Million Dollar Hole-in-One Golf Shootout

THURSDAY-SATURDAY, JAN. 11-13, 2024
Sun 'N Lake Golf Club, Sebring
Reservations and tee times are not required.

Board Meetings

Executive Committee Meeting

TUESDAY, OCT. 10, 2023 | NOON
The Hotel Jacaranda

TUESDAY, FEB. 13, 2024 | NOON
The Hotel Jacaranda

Foundation Board Meeting

TUESDAY, NOV. 14, 2023 | 5:30 P.M.
The Hotel Jacaranda

TUESDAY, JAN. 9, 2024 | NOON
SFSC Board Room, Highlands Campus

SFSC Events

2023 Fall Commencement

THURSDAY, DEC. 14, 2023
Alan Jay Wildstein Center for the Performing Arts
Highlands Campus

GIVING TUESDAY
NOV. 28, 2023



Making a Difference = **\$10**



New Lab Technology or Equipment = **\$300**



Tomorrow's Leader Tuition = **\$2,593**

The Future of the Panther Community =
Priceless

Support the work of the SFSC Foundation as we help students receive a college education and become the leaders of tomorrow.