

Online learning to continue to end of spring term at SFSC

By **MARC VALERO**
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The South Florida State College Spring Commencement has been postponed due to COVID-19 precautions.

instructional obligations with online learning and modified laboratory options for students. The practices now currently in place will continue through the remainder of the spring term.”

Leitzel said a new date for commencement has not been established. Among the considerations are a date in August or a larger commencement ceremony on Dec. 17.

Beginning today (April 3) and continuing

through the month of April, all campus locations will close at noon Fridays, he said.

Beginning on May 1, all campus locations will begin its energy saving Friday schedule. Although SFSC normally begins its energy saving Fridays in late June, the rationale for this decision centers around cost saving.

The next fiscal year, which begins on July 1, will most likely see budget cuts due to the economic impact of

COVID-19, Leitzel noted. The college needs to begin making preparations to preserve as much carryover funds as possible to offset future budget cuts.

In an effort to save money, the college has implemented a close watch on all purchases, he said. Any expense deemed necessary or critical to your operations will not be denied, as our budget for the current fiscal year has not been substantially impacted. However, any savings we experience will be used to help bolster next year's budget.

“Our highest priority remains the safety of all employees, students, and guests/patrons of SFSC,” Leitzel said.

The college-wide online learning and modified laboratory options began Monday (March 30) at the end of spring break. The spring term ends on May 4.

4/3/2020

COMMUNITY COLLEGE

AVON PARK — South Florida State College's current online learning practices due to COVID-19 will continue to the end of the spring term and the SFSC Spring Commencement that was scheduled for May 5 has been postponed.

Also, the college will be implementing cost saving measures in anticipation of budget cuts due to the economic impact of COVID-19.

SFSC President Thomas Leitzel updated the campus faculty and staff recently in an online announcement that stated, “We are all impacted by COVID-19. Our College team continues to work together to support our operations and to support quality student learning.

“I highly commend the SFSC faculty who have embraced their

SFSC, Hemp4Water partner to study freshwater

Special to Highlands News-Sun

COURTESY OF SFSC

AVON PARK — South Florida State College (SFSC) is partnering with Hemp4Water on the upcoming Florida Industrial Hemp Pilot Project. Through this project, they will research the use of industrial hemp in the removal of nitrogen and phosphorus from Florida's lakes and rivers. The Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services recently issued an industrial hemp planting permit, allowing SFSC and Hemp4Water™ to proceed with the project. This will be the first bio-remediation project using industrial hemp on water in the United States.

"Nutrients in appropriate levels are required and part of the ecosystem," said Steve Edmonds, Hemp4Water™ founder. "However, an overabundance of nutrients, such as nitrogen and phosphorus, help fuel green-blue algae and red tide. All rivers and lakes in Florida are inundated with nitrogen and phosphorus. Everyone has been trying to reduce the content for

the last 15 years."

Dawn Ritter, Highlands County natural resource manager, said that because Lakes Glenada and Lelia are public lakes, the county wants to make sure people aren't prevented from making use of them for activities such as boating and fishing. "The map provided with the submission toward the permit provides a good perspective on placement of the biomats for the industrial hemp," she said. "The permit from the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services was issued for the project in February. As long as the project remains in compliance with the permit, the county shouldn't have a problem with the project at all."

A letter from the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission to Kendall Carson, SFSC coordinator of agricultural programs and lead in the Florida Industrial Hemp Pilot Project, stated that the commission's Invasive Plant Management Section had "no opposition to the industrial hemp hydroponic pilot project." The commission required that permission



COURTESY PHOTO

Kendall Carson (left) and Steve Edmonds complete installation of biomat on Lake Glenada.

had been obtained from the owner of the property adjacent to the lakes (SFSC), that the hydroponic mats would be placed so they don't compete directly with "existing native aquatic vegetation for resources," and "the hemp plants will not be planted into the hydrosoil."

Established in 2013, Hemp4Water is a not-for-profit corporation that concentrates on education and environmental cleanup. According to Edmonds, the company focuses on cleaning water of contaminants with the use of hydroponic hemp. Edmonds indicated

that excess nitrogen and phosphorus come from a variety of sources. "It's basically a combination of failed infrastructure in Florida built for 4 million people that is trying to deal with a population approaching 20 million people. All of the excess nutrients from our storm water system is, eventually, shunted to our rivers and lakes. Excess nutrients also come from the highways, the urban landscape, the creation of developments, and fertilizing the lawn three or four times a month rather than once or twice a year. It's not just a single source."

The Florida Industrial Hemp Pilot Project will make use of industrial hemp to extract nitrogen and phosphorus from water. According to Edmonds, "Nitrogen and phosphorus are hemp's favorite food. The plants will be happy and healthy in a high nitrogen and phosphorus environment."

The partnership between Hemp4Water™ and SFSC will accomplish the initial baseline of research — to determine how much nitrogen and phosphorus a single hemp plant can process. With the resulting data, several further projects will be developed to target and remove tons of the excess nitrogen and phosphorus, restore a healthy ecosystem, and avert billions of dollars of damage to Florida's water resources.

SFSC will provide the research site, a certified lab, lab technicians, academically qualified researchers, and other resources to carry forth the research. Hemp4Water™ will provide contacts, research, and materials unique to this project.

The SFSC Highlands Campus in Avon Park is located on an isthmus

— between two lakes — making it an ideal site for this project. The three locations that have been identified for use in the initial phase of the project are on Lake Glenada, on Lake Lelia, and in the SFSC Dr. Norman L. Stephens Jr. Health & Science Education Center.

"In the first phase of the project, we'll have biomats in which we'll plant industrial hemp," Carson said. "These are hydroponic biomats that float on top of the water and will be anchored into place. We'll allow the hemp to grow. Toward the end of the project, we'll measure how much nitrogen and phosphorus the hemp plants remove. At the same time, we'll set up a hydroponic control that will be housed in a lab in SFSC's Health & Science Education Center."

"The biomats will be placed away from any other vegetation," Carson said. "It won't allow the hemp plants to take root in the ground or to compete with any other vegetation. Two specific lake locations were chosen for the biomats because they are out of navigational areas for boaters."

SFSC Testing and Assessment Center recertified

Special to Highlands News-Sun

COURTESY OF SFSC

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The South Florida State College (SFSC) Testing and Assessment Center has been re-certified by the National College Testing Association (NCTA). Criteria for certification are rigorous and are based on the NCTA Professional Standards and Guidelines, which were developed to guide postsecondary test centers in the delivery of quality testing programs.

With millions of educational, certification, and licensure tests administered in the United States every year, the need for secure testing environments and trained testing staff has never been greater. The SFSC Testing and Assessment Center is one among a growing number of test centers in the United States and Canada to have completed this intensive recertification process. This recertification will be in place for five years and can be renewed by demonstrating continued compliance to national standards.

Congratulations are extended to Adela Bello, director of the Testing and Assessment Center, and the entire staff at the Center for maintaining high test administration standards and for providing excellent service to a wide variety of students and community members in the performance of their duties.

"We are proud and honored to be part of this NCTA testing community," Bello said. "I cannot begin to express how appreciative I and the members of my department are to all who assisted us during this four-month process, especially Dr. Timothy Wise, dean of student services."

The National College Testing Association, a non-profit organization dedicated to the promotion of professionalism and high-quality service in the administration of testing programs, offers certification to college and university test centers that demonstrate exemplary practices. NCTA membership numbers more than 2,200 testing professionals from 650 colleges and universities as well as 50 test companies and organizations offering test-related products and services. For more about NCTA, visit ncta-testing.org.

Contact the SFSC Testing and Assessment Center at 863-784-7214 for more information about the numerous testing services provided, or go to: southflorida.edu/current-students/testing-center.

SFSC will start summer sessions with online classes

4/24/2020

By **MARC VALERO**
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AVON PARK — As South Florida State College finishes the spring term with online classes on May 4 due to the COVID-19 precautions, the summer term will be starting with online classes.

All Associate in Arts and General Education classes that are scheduled

to begin in May or June (eight weeks, 10 weeks, or Summer A only) will be offered completely in an online format during that time, according to SFSC.

South Florida State College's summer term begins on May 6. The full 12-week summer term is from May 6 through July 30.

In addition, students have the option of registering for courses during two six-week flex sessions. Summer A begins on May 6 and ends on June 17 and Summer B begins on June 18 and ends on July 30.



MARC VALERO/STAFF

The South Florida State College Associate in Arts and General Education classes that are scheduled to begin in May or June will be offered completely in an online format.

There are Associate in Arts or General Education courses offered during the summer. These courses that begin in May will be offered completely in an online format.

All workforce

Applied Sciences and Technologies and Health Science courses that begin in May will also be offered fully online.

All General Education faculty are working remotely at this time.

If the governor lifts the stay-at-home order, the Applied Sciences and Technologies and Health Science courses will resume face-to-face instruction as appropriate using the CDC's social distancing guidelines, according to SFSC.

A decision will be made at a later date regarding classes that begin in June (Summer B).

Registration for summer and fall 2020 is open. The schedule of course offerings can be found at bit.ly/sfscregister2020.

The April 29 meeting of the SFSC Board of Trustees has been canceled due to COVID-19.

The board is next scheduled for a May 27 budget workshop and a May 27 board meeting.