

# SFSC staff prepping for return to campuses

By **MARC VALERO**  
STAFF WRITER

AVON PARK — South Florida State College's campuses will remain closed to the public through May 15, but plans call for staff to return to their regular assignment on May 18.

In a staff update, SFSC President Thomas Leitzel said in the meantime, employees will continue to work remotely or on their respective campus as needed.

"SFSC faculty has demonstrated both their willingness and ability to deliver fully online courses, and we may need to do this again," he said.

Leitzel noted that online learning

does not lend itself easily to experiential learning, including clinical instruction, shops/labs, and applied research, so every effort should be made to integrate these face-to-face experiences into the curriculum, but doing so in a manner that respects the college's commitment to the health and safety of students, faculty, and staff while maintaining academic standards.

"To achieve this goal of offering in-person experiential learning, we will need to follow closely the public health guidelines designed to limit the spread of COVID-19 infections and protect individuals who are at a greater risk of

contracting this virus," he said.

While the college is planning to deliver in-person, face-to-face learning in the fall, there is a possibility that this may not be feasible, Leitzel said. He encouraged faculty to use any available time now to prepare for the possibility of teaching online in the fall as a backup plan.

During the past month, the college has realized some major financial savings by closing buildings, reducing substantially the air conditioning, and moving toward our energy-saving schedules, Leitzel noted. The college has



MARC VALERO/STAFF

**South Florida State College staff members are preparing to return to their regular assignments on May 18. Due to the COVID-19 precautions, SFSC employees have been working remotely or on their respective campus as needed.**

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## SFSC

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limited non-essential expenses and only filled vacant positions that are deemed critical.

The college expects there will be a need to consider budget cuts in the 2021 fiscal year, he said.

"We are extremely grateful for the financial assistance received from the federal government through the CARES Act," he said.

SFSC received a little over \$2 million. Half of this amount must be used for direct student support, and the balance will be used primarily to address current expenses incurred through the COVID-19 crisis.

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## SFSC reopening campuses to the public on Monday

By **MARC VALERO**  
STAFF WRITER

AVON PARK — South Florida State College will be reopening all of its campus locations to the public on Monday, May 18.

Most staff members had been working off campus due to the COVID-19 precautions, but now all staff members will be reporting to work at their regularly assigned campus location.

In a message to staff, SFSC President Thomas Leitzel said, safety precautions will be followed and there will be additional safety protocols in place in offices that have direct

contact with students to protect employees.

AA classes will remain online for the remainder of the summer terms. Applied Sciences and Health Sciences classes may resume instruction that was delayed from the spring term.

Students in workforce programs will also be contacted to inform them of the reopening schedule.

Workforce class schedules may be staggered and class sizes will follow safe social distancing with class capacities operating at 10 or fewer persons, according to Leitzel.

Kelly's (cafeteria) on the

Highlands Campus will open for business on Monday from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. daily.

Patrons may eat inside the Johnston Student Center as long as capacity does not exceed 25%. Patrons must adhere to safe social distancing while inside this facility.

College officials continue to monitor the COVID-19 situation, and a decision regarding classes for the fall will be forthcoming following various meetings and discussions with key individuals, including representatives from the SFSC Faculty Council, according to Leitzel.



MARC VALERO/STAFF

South Florida State College is reopening its campuses to the public on Monday.

# SFSC Offers 10 Free Online Courses For Professionals

By **DEBORAH BELL LATTER**

Special To The Herald-Advocate

South Florida State College (SFSC) is offering 10 free, non-credit online courses in partnership with ed2go, an educational company that offers online tutorial and instructor-led courses in a variety of disciplines.

The free courses can aid individuals in achieving their personal and professional goals in job hunting, personal finance, communications, website development, management, and marketing.

The 10 courses are: "Twelve Steps to a Successful Job Search," "Individual Excellence," "Personal Finance," "Keys to Effective Communication," "Creating Web Pages," "Creating WordPress Websites," "Managing Customer Service," "Fundamentals of Supervision and Management," "Small Business Marketing on a Shoestring," and "Marketing Your Business on the Internet."

The self-paced, tutorial courses are available 24 hours a day, 7 days week. Students may begin a course anytime through Wednesday, July 1, 2020. However, once the student has enrolled in a course, it is available to the student for up to three months.

To learn more about any of these free, online courses, visit [ed2go.com/sfsc/](http://ed2go.com/sfsc/) and in the Search box, type "Free."

To enroll in a course, click the course and click "Add to Cart." For more information, contact the SFSC Corporate and Community Education Department at [CommunityEducation@southflorida.edu](mailto:CommunityEducation@southflorida.edu) or call 863-784-7388. *Deborah Bell Latter is the coordinator of internal communications at South Florida State College and can be reached at 863-784-7251 or [Deborah.Latter@southflorida.edu](mailto:Deborah.Latter@southflorida.edu).*

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News

# George Floyd has connections in Highlands County

By RUTH ANNE LAWSON Staff Writer

🕒 05.29.20

AVON PARK — George P. Floyd, the man at the center of the uproar in Minneapolis, was a former Highlands County resident and student athlete at South Florida State College, at the time known as South Florida Community College. Floyd died Monday night after being arrested and pinned to the ground by a Minneapolis police officer's knee. A viral video surfaced of the arrest, sparking outrage and protest of the treatment of African-Americans by white law enforcement.

Floyd played center and power forward on the Panthers basketball team during his time at the local college. South Florida State College released a statement Thursday morning stating, "Officials at South Florida State College confirm that George P. Floyd attended South Florida Community College from 1993 to 1995. During his time as a student he was a member of the Panther basketball team in the fall of 1994 and in the spring of 1995."

Coach George Walker was the Panther's basketball coach for six years and remembered Floyd fondly.

"George was a good person and I never had any problems with George," Walker said Thursday. "He was a regular student and a good athlete. He was just a regular student who would miss class now and then, but other than that he was a good kid. He was a good player who averaged 14 points and eight rebounds a game. He ended up leaving after his two years at South Florida and went to Texas A&I in Kingsville, Texas."

Walker recalled his enjoyment in coaching Floyd.

"I had not only him but I had three or four other guys from the Houston area. I coached at the University of Houston before moving to South Florida Community College so Houston was my biggest recruiting area. I was looking for a power center and power forward so I was looking at Yates High School, which was right across from the University of Houston, where George attended. I kind of kept my eyes on them for a couple of years.

"George was not only a good player, but a good person with a good heart. He did what I needed him to do at South Florida and I couldn't have asked for any more," he said.

Walker had seen on television the reports of what happened to Floyd.

"I think it is horrible what happened to George. It's not right and something should be done about it," he said.

According to the Associated Press, Floyd moved to Minneapolis from his native Houston several years ago in hopes of finding work and starting a new life, said Christopher Harris, Floyd's lifelong friend. But he lost his

job as a bouncer at a restaurant when Minnesota's governor issued a stay-at-home order.

On Monday night, an employee at a Minneapolis grocery store called police after Floyd allegedly tried to pass a counterfeit \$20 bill.

In a widely circulated cellphone video of the subsequent arrest, Floyd, who was black, can be seen on the ground with his hands cuffed behind his back while a white police officer presses him to the pavement with his knee on Floyd's neck. The video shows the officer holding Floyd down for minutes as Floyd complains he can't breathe. The video ends with paramedics lifting a limp Floyd onto a stretcher and placing him in an ambulance.

The four Minneapolis police officers involved in Floyd's arrest were fired Wednesday.

Floyd's death is under investigation by the FBI and state law enforcement authorities.

Robert "Bobby" Caldwell, who now lives in Virginia, was close friends with Floyd.

"I met George when he played basketball at SFCC," Caldwell told the Highlands News-Sun. "We met through mutual friends and we became really cool. He was a big guy but was like a gentle giant. He was so cool and relaxed. He used to give me a hard time about my sneakers because I always had the latest shoes. He was just so kind, sweet and always smiling. I used to give the guys rides; they were known as the 'Jac Boys' because they stayed at the Jacaranda in Avon Park. We just clicked. He would always talk about H-town, which was Houston. I felt like I needed to go to Houston because he loved it so much, Caldwell said, adding he couldn't believe the news reports about his friend's passing.

"When I saw George Floyd on the news, I was thinking 'why does this guy look so familiar?'," Caldwell said. "My wife showed me a photo that said 'Floyd' and I said 'wait a minute, that is my Floyd.' We never called him George, we always just called him Floyd. To see him begging for his life, I just could not believe it. I still haven't watched the full video because I just can't do it."

Caldwell is originally from Avon Park and said back in 2010 or 2012 some of the residents spoke before City Council about how men of color were treated by local law enforcement. "It is all around the nation. It hits really hard for me because I remember when I went to school in Tampa we were pulled over by the cops and they were trying to put dogs on us. When stuff like this happens, it reopens those wounds. I have to have 'the talk' with my son because he 22 and when he goes out, he has to be respectful to people of authority. It is painful and very hurtful. I did not sleep well last night. If you would have known him and seen anyone treat him like that, he is just not that guy.

According to Caldwell, Floyd would not approve of the violence and riots going on in Minneapolis.

"I agree with the protests going on, but not the violence," Caldwell said. "Violence is not the answer, but I get it. I tell all my white friends, 'imagine if that were my son, how would you feel?' I don't care if you are black, white, Hispanic or whatever, if you have been wronged by anyone, I will speak out against that. This will not go away and it is heartbreaking. I don't think Floyd would approve of violence but I can see his smile and I

think he would say 'man, they are doing this for me? Wow!'

"He was not a braggadocios guy; he was so relaxed, humble and chill. Just a great guy and this is all heartbreaking. He was the type of guy you wanted to date your daughter or have your kids be friends with," Caldwell said.

A peaceful gathering will be held at 11 a.m. Saturday, May 30 at Emmanuel United Church of Christ (EUCC) in Sebring.

In a statement released by EUCC stated, "Over the years Emmanuel UCC has shared the call to do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with the Lord. A few days ago, we witnessed the death of George Floyd. Mr. Floyd lived in Avon Park and attended South Florida State College, where he played basketball. Many in Highlands County know Mr. Floyd personally. Our community is wounded right now. Our nation is wounded. Our black and brown sisters and brothers are understandably upset. This is not an anti-police event or a gathering to incite violence, but a way to compassionately, faithfully say 'Emmanuel UCC believes in justice, kindness, and humility for all.'"

The Non-Violent Peaceful Sign of Solidarity for the Minneapolis Community event will take place in the church parking lot at 3115 Hope St. in Sebring. Participants are to wear masks and are encouraged to wear blue as a sign of peace and hope. At 11:10 a.m., Rev. George Miller will speak as a representative of EUCC and local clergy. Participants are expected to adhere to social distance protocol.

The public, local clergy and law enforcement are invited to participate.

Corona\_coverage

# Relief fund helping SFSC students

By MARC VALERO Staff Writer

🕒 05.29.20

AVON PARK — South Florida State College's Panther Emergency Student Aid Fund is providing eligible students with cash grants for expenses related to disruptions to their educations due to the COVID-19 outbreak, including things like course materials and technology as well as food, housing, healthcare and childcare.

The grants are not required to be paid back.

SFSC, with the support of the federal government's CARES Act, developed the emergency student aid fund to help with immediate financial needs.

As of May 13, a total of \$193,643.35 in CARES Act Emergency Financial Aid Grants has been distributed to 211 South Florida State College students.

A total of 3,903 SFSC students are eligible to participate in the emergency financial aid grants.

According to SFSC, many factors are taken into consideration when making a decision to approve or deny a request and in determining the amounts to be awarded.

These factors include, but are not limited to:

- The amount of requests received compared to the funds available at the time.
- The nature and urgency of the student's emergency/negative impact during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- The specific and immediate impact the emergency may have on the student's living and academic circumstances.
- Other resources or support that the student may have available to them.

The initial maximum award will be \$1,000. Exceptions may be made if circumstances warrant and with the recommendation of the Panther Emergency Student Aid Fund Committee.

The fund is intended only for costs directly to the student but could be incurred as a result of providing care to a dependent or other family member.

SFSC was awarded \$1,055,723 from the Higher Education Emergency Relief Fund, which is funding the Panther Emergency Student Aid Fund.

There is link for more information on the emergency aid fund on the SFSC homepage at [www.southflorida.edu](http://www.southflorida.edu).

Any student who has been negatively affected by the COVID-19 outbreak and needs emergency financial assistance is encouraged to complete the Panther Emergency Student Aid Fund application, according to SFSC.