

SFSC Gets \$47,203 In State's \$1.5 Million Allocation To Expand Entrepreneurship Education And Training

South Florida State College is slated to receive \$47,203 in grant funds to expand entrepreneurship education and training.

Commissioner of Education Richard Corcoran announced the recipients of the Department of Education's Perkins V Entrepreneurship Education and Training Grant on Feb. 24.

The grant aims to help scale entrepreneurship-related initiatives across the state's career and technical education (CTE) programs. A total of 22 agencies were awarded, ranging from \$25,000 to \$100,000 dollars for each proposal.

"While we know the quality of Florida's career and technical education programs is unmatched, it is vital that our students graduate as critical thinkers, value creators and excellent communicators," said Governor Ron DeSantis. "Entrepreneurship education and training ensures for a well-

rounded graduate and this is another step toward our goal to make Florida the best state in the nation for workforce education by 2030."

Florida's Perkins V State Plan has committed to creating a robust entrepreneurial statewide ecosystem through its CTE programs. The plan recognizes how self-employment and the ability to create value contributes to Florida's economic security. For this reason, the plan attempts to help all CTE stakeholders understand how to better support interdisciplinary and entrepreneurial ways of thinking and acting across all career pathways.

"Being an entrepreneur, or an intrapreneur – an employee who can add value from within – is a viable path to improving Florida's economic and social mobility rates. CTE does not just prepare students to take jobs, but to create the jobs of

the future," said Commissioner Corcoran. "The idea is that we do not want to just technically train, but to also equip all students with the necessary employability skills."

The \$1.5 million will fund a variety of initiatives, such as teacher professional development and certification programs in entrepreneurship education to development of student idea-accelerator programs or start-up CTE boot camps for budding entrepreneurs; and underwriting the costs associated with integrating entrepreneurship education and training into existing CTE programs of study. The grant aims to help school districts and colleges expand community and business partnerships to better connect CTE students with area enterprises and venture capitalists.

For information about the Florida Department of Education, visit www.fldoe.org.

SFSC students present scientific research

Special to the Highlands News-Sun

PROVIDED BY SOUTH FLORIDA STATE COLLEGE

AVON PARK — Nine South Florida State College (SFSC) students presented at the 2021 Florida Undergraduate Research Conference (FURC) that was held this year in a virtual format.

FURC is one of the largest multi-disciplinary research conferences in the United States and is open to all undergraduate researchers in Florida to present their research in a poster format. The conference offers college and university students presentation experience, networking opportunities, and professional development workshops. The February 2021 FURC was hosted by the Florida Undergraduate Research Association and Florida State University (FSU).

The SFSC students' scientific research presentations for the conference were varied and, for the lay person, seemingly complex. Kyra Wickham

and Kosha Upadhyaya researched genes that are involved in blood vessel formation and neuron function. Devan Patel assessed if high sugar affected the function of endothelial cells (cells that line blood vessels). Osbaldo Cisneros is looking at angiogenesis – blood vessel formation – and the potential influence that endothelial cells have on angiogenesis. Carl and Coralis Ewing are researching if freely circulating biomarkers in canine plasma influence both cardiovascular heart function and kidney function in canines. Angelique Robinson is researching if biomarkers from patient tissue can be used to test for colorectal cancer. Camila Rimoldi examined whether certain genes involved in sound generation, detection, or reception are also found in coral, as they may use sound for communication. Angela Huang is researching whether circadian rhythms (daily light and dark cycles) affect thyroid tumor cell

metabolism and cancer gene expression.

Amy Bohan, SFSC biology instructor and Honors Program director, and Dr. James Hawker, dean of arts and sciences, presented a workshop at the conference that discussed how SFSC adjusted through the pandemic, keeping students engaged in undergraduate research.

"I'm pleased with how our students have adapted in times of this pandemic," Bohan said. "Not only have we been able to continue meeting biweekly via Zoom to discuss science-related papers, but we have been able to virtually meet once a month for our Undergraduate Research Forums at SFSC. Our students have been able to continue working in the lab in some capacity, which has allowed them to progress in their research. It is rewarding to see so many students from SFSC present their data in this new virtual format, as seen during FURC, held by FSU, on

Feb. 26 and 27. We had a great turnout, and I'm looking forward to the Experimental Biology and Florida Academy of Science conferences, where we will also have students present their work."

According to the FURC website, the benefits of undergraduate participation in research are many: it increases students' logical and critical thinking skills; increases student retention, achievement, and persistence, especially for underrepresented groups; is associated with a stronger identity as a scientist; increases the likelihood of students pursuing a graduate degree; increases students' self-confidence in designing and executing scholarly or research projects; and increases their overall satisfaction with their undergraduate educational experience.

For more information about undergraduate research at SFSC, contact Dr. James Hawker at 863-784-7329 or james.hawker@southflorida.edu.

Wildstein Center for the Performing Arts to offer 4 free performances

By TOM MEISENHEIMER
CORRESPONDENT

AVON PARK — The Wildstein Center for the Performing Arts on the campus of South Florida State College has a 1,400-seat state-of-the-art theater.

Since 1984 it has been the “go to” place to see world class entertainment right here in Highlands County.

The theater, in a normal year, presents 10 matinee shows, usually on Tuesdays starting at 1:30 p.m. and eight to 10 Artist Series productions weekly at 7:00 p.m. during the winter/spring season. They range from tribute shows to Broadway plays, to musical dance performances. Another smaller cozy theater on campus is home to three to four jazz concerts.

This season the theater had a number of cancellations as performers chose not to travel. However many entertainers did not cancel, knowing that the theater took great precautions to keep attendees safe with social distancing. American Sweethearts and the Celtic Angels show last week was wonderful.

Shows are still scheduled March through June, four of them, via a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts.

The Wildstein Center staff includes a sound and a light technician, volunteer manager, box office staff, house managers, a work study and social media assistant and over 100 volunteer ushers. Entertainers also bring their own



TOM MEISENHEIMER/CORRESPONDENT

The Wildstein Center is SFSC's 1,400-seat theater for the performing arts.

staff. Shows sometimes require crews between six and 60 people, assuring first-class entertainment. The theater also has a 15-member advisory committee of residents from Highlands, Hardee and DeSoto counties.

The staff is led by Cindy Garren, M.F.A., who has been Director of Cultural Programs since 2014. Theater attendees see Garren as she walks on stage to greet the audience prior to every show. She usually appears on stage dressed in an outfit that fits the performance. Her vibrant personality and sense of humor sets the stage for a wonderful evening of entertainment.

Making pre-performance announcements is just a minor role that Garren plays. She is literally responsible for every show and it is a Herculean task. You can



TOM MEISENHEIMER/CORRESPONDENT

Than Alan Jay Wildstein Center for the Performing Arts.

sum up her work in two words, “networker” and “negotiator.”

Garren grew up in Nanticoke, Pa. She received her B.A. in Theater from Penn State, University Park, and her M.F.A degree in Theater from the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. She is also a graduate from the School

for Public Management, International Association of Auditorium Managers. In 1999 she was a member of that year's Super Bowl Entertainment Committee. Besides her work at SFSC she volunteers with the United Way of Central Florida and the Tourist Development Council of Highlands County.



TOM MEISENHEIMER/CORRESPONDENT

Cindy Garren has been with SFSC since 2014 as their Director of Cultural Programs.

Garren has worked as a Major Gifts Officer for the Red Cross in Pennsylvania and was CEO of the Girl Scouts for 5 1/2 years in Penn. She served as executive director of Broward State College's concert hall which is the home of the Miami City Ballet. Garren said, “I've loved and been involved in theater since the 4th grade.”

The average cost to bring one performance to the Wildstein Center is \$22,500. That does not include hotel costs to house the entertainers, food, marketing, advertising, copyright fees or software needed to handle ticket sales.

Garren said that she is two years out finding and arranging shows for a given season. One performer took her four years to schedule. Every year she attends a National Booking Conference in

New York City. During that time she travels the Big Apple attending various shows to search for appropriate entertainment for SFSC. She also attends another traveling booking conference. She is called regularly by booking agents and checks out other shows happening throughout Florida.

Garren is excited to announce a Kaleidoscope Series of four shows she is bringing via a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts. Tickets are required and are available four per family. Visit sfscARTS.org for details. Garren said, “The free events bring people here who usually cannot afford a show ticket. It also introduces our regular attendees to new venues.”

“We were denied a grant the first two years



TOM MEISENHEIMER/CORRESPONDENT

The Celtic Angels returned to the Wildstein Center for a second time last week. The audience loved them.

CENTER

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that I applied. This year we received a \$10,000 gift to present four diverse performances," commented Garren. Seeking a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts is very competitive. Most grants are only awarded to major arts organizations. Receiving this grant speaks to how positive the Wildstein Center is regarded.

Daniela Soledade will perform Saturday, March 27 at 7 p.m. She interprets bossa nova classics and puts a Brazilian touch on jazz standards.

The Lee Boys will perform April 10 at 7 p.m. They play "sacred steel" music rooted in Gospel infused with rhythm and blues, jazz, rock, funk, hip-hop, country and African music.

An award winning animated film, "The Breadwinner" will be shown April 15 and again April 16 at 7 p.m. It is the story of Parvana, an

11-year-old girl growing up under the Taliban in Afghanistan in 2001. It is a story with the potential to unite and heal.

Rudram Dance Company will visit June 19 at 7 p.m. They will make it easy for the audience to experience the grandeur of Indian classical dance. It will be an ideal performance both enlightening and inspiring.

Highlands County can thank former college President Dr. Catherine P. Cornelius for her vision. She felt the community needed a theater offering many types of entertainment if we were to attract families and retirees to move here. The Wildstein Center for the Performing Arts is now a testimony to that vision.

The Center's curtain will rise again with shows planned for the 2021-2022 season. They will be revealed May 1. You can join over 58,169 residents and tourists who have attended one or more of the Wildstein Center's many events.



TOM MEISENHEIMER/CORRESPONDENT

Volunteer Janice Steven's has volunteered at the Wildstein Center for four years. Here she hands out a performance booklet listing upcoming shows, sponsor and donors names as well as detailed information about the theater.

Tickets sales start in August. Businesses and individuals can benefit from season and individual show sponsorships. "Our ticket prices are reasonable but only cover 49% of the cost of a show. That is why our sponsors

are so important to us," said Garren.

Call the theater at 863-784-7178 to find out how you can become a sponsor or a volunteer usher for the 2021-2022 season.



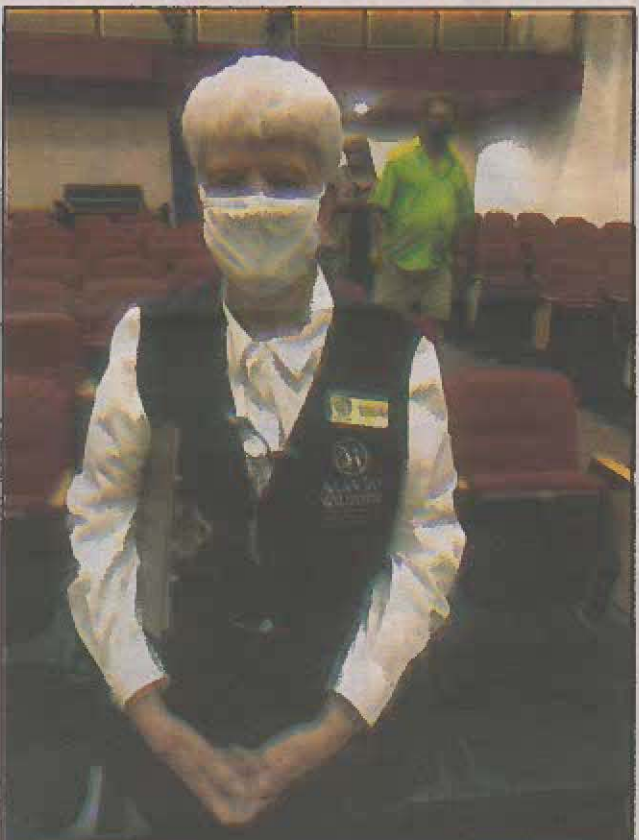
TOM MEISENHEIMER/CORRESPONDENT

Cindy Garren greets all guests to the Wildstein theater prior to every performance to acknowledge sponsors and upcoming shows.



TOM MEISENHEIMER/CORRESPONDENT

This is the fifth year that Wildstein Center friendly usher volunteer Clair Smith has help attendees find their seats prior to a performance.



TOM MEISENHEIMER/CORRESPONDENT

Dorothy Horman is Captain of the usher volunteers at the Wildstein Center. She has volunteered for 12 years and was voted Volunteer of the Year in 2016.



COURTESY PHOTO

The Lee Boys will perform at the Alan Jay Wildstein Center for the Performing Arts at SFSC in Avon Park on Saturday, April 10.

Lee Boys to perform at SFSC

SPECIAL TO HIGHLANDS SUN

AVON PARK — The Lee Boys, one of the top “sacred steel” bands in the United States, are scheduled to perform at the Alan Jay Wildstein Center for the Performing Arts at South Florida State College (SFSC) in Avon Park at 7 p.m. on Saturday, April 10. The performance is free, but tickets are required due to social distancing.

Sacred Steel is a music style and African American tradition that evolved out of the House of God Pentecostal churches during the 1930s. Worship services, driven by a lap steel guitar, were punctuated by “shout” or “praise” music. In the 1970s, the pedal-steel guitar was introduced into the House of God by musicians including Maurice “Ted” Beard Jr., Calvin Cooke, Chuck Campbell and Acorne Coffee. Determined to incorporate the pedal-steel into their musical tradition, they developed unique tunings, pedal setups and playing techniques.

The Lee Boys are a family group which consists of three brothers: Alvin Lee (guitar), Derrick Lee and Keith Lee (vocals), along with their

nephews, Alvin Cordy Jr. (seven-string bass), Earl Walker (drums), and Roosevelt Collier (pedal-steel). Chris Johnson, a young pedal-steel player from Miami, has joined The Lee Boys. Johnson, a huge fan of Collier’s, is making quite a name for himself and has shared the stage with Anders Osborne, Warren Haynes, Robert Randolph, Eric Gales, Campbell Brothers and more.

Following a blazing performance at the 2008 Bonnaroo, The Lee Boys were asked to perform on NBC’s “Late Night with Conan O’Brien.” Their rousing performance had the host jumping out of his chair and raving about the band. The Lee Boys are also the subject of a Florida Public Broadcasting System (PBS) documentary.

In the last decade, The Lee Boys have performed for more than 750,000 music fans at festivals throughout the United States, Canada, Europe and Asia. Their unique sound has attracted musical artists such as The Allman Brothers Band, B.B. King, Buddy Guy, Robert Plant, Robert Randolph, Derek Trucks, Mavis Staples, Gov’t Mule, Blind Boys of Alabama, Black Crowes,

John Legend and The Roots – all of whom have performed with the Lee Boys and/or invited them to tour with them.

“Their 2019 “Live on the East Coast” album reached number one on the chart and it was a follow up to their impressive “Testify” album,” said Cindy Garren, director of cultural programs at SFSC. “This promises to be a raucous, funky performance for the whole family, and I expect to see people dancing in the aisles. This is a casual dress event.”

Face masks are required during the performance. Seating is socially distanced. Tickets are available online at sfscARTS.org or by calling the SFSC Box Office at 863-784-7178.

The Alan Jay Wildstein Center for the Performing Arts is located on the campus of South Florida State College located at 600 West College Drive in Avon Park. Parking is free.

Upcoming free performances include: “The Breadwinner,” the award winning animated film on Thursday, April 15 at 4:30 p.m. and Friday, April 16 at 7 p.m. and Rudram Dance Company, a classical Indian dance company on Saturday, June 19 at 7 p.m.

SFSC students present scientific research at Florida Academy of Sciences

Special to the Highlands News-Sun

PROVIDED BY SOUTH FLORIDA STATE COLLEGE

AVON PARK — Four South Florida State College (SFSC) students presented research at the 84th annual meeting of the Florida Academy of Sciences that was held on Friday, March 19 and Saturday, March 20 in a virtual format. Bethune-Cookman University hosted the annual meeting.

The Florida Academy of Sciences was founded in 1936 and is the Florida affiliate of the American Association for the Advancement of Science.

The Academy sponsors the Florida Junior Academy of Science to encourage young scientists; publishes the quarterly journal, "Florida Scientist"; and sponsors an annual meeting to give members an opportunity to present papers, honor their peers, and participate in multidisciplinary scientific exchanges.

Although most undergraduate researchers presenting at the Florida Academy of Sciences meeting were from state or private universities, SFSC students came from one of three Florida state colleges that made presentations — including Indian River State

College and Hillsborough Community College.

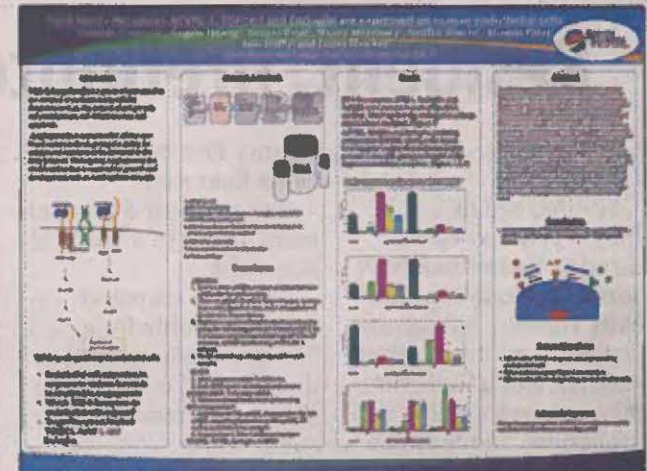
SFSC's Osbaldo Cisneros, who presented "TGF Family Receptors ACVRL-1, TGF R-1, and Endoglin Are Expressed on Human Endothelial Cells," tied for second place for best undergraduate poster in biology. The other SFSC undergraduate student presentations were from Angelique Robertson on "Biomarkers to Predict Metastasis in Colorectal Cancer," and Carl and Coralie Ewing on "Expression Profiling of Circulating MicroRNAs in Canine Congestive Heart Failure and Associated Disorders."

"We are thrilled for

all of our students that presented their research at the Florida Academy of Sciences annual meeting," said Dr. James Hawker, SFSC dean of arts and sciences. "Presenting one's research work to fellow students and faculty from all over the state is a vital component of learning to do research. Students articulating their project gives them important communication skills that they can apply in their future studies and career."

Hawker served as a judge for the Florida Junior Academy of Sciences research presentations in biology.

For more information about undergraduate



COURTESY/CISNEROS VIA SFSC

Osbaldo Cisneros' poster used in his presentation before Florida Academy of Sciences. Cisneros placed second place for best undergraduate poster in biology.

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