



FLORIDA SOUTHWESTERN STATE COLLEGE

# WORKFORCE EDUCATION

AY 24-25, Issue 2

**6** Bachelor's  
Degrees

**28** Associate  
Degrees

**29** Certificate  
Programs



**Whitney Rhyme**

AVP

Workforce Education

I'm excited to share achievements, initiatives, and partner events that showcase FSW's commitment to workforce excellence. Our students, faculty, and programs continue to reach remarkable milestones that reflect FSW's dedication to workforce education and industry alignment. Here are a few highlights.

- Nursing Students achieve exceptional NCLEX pass rates, surpassing state and national averages with a current average for the year at 95%
- Newly revised Scientific Workplace Preparation Certificate increase student's attainment of credential
- Successful School of Business and Technology Hackfest, connects students with tech industry leaders
- School of Pure and Applied Sciences host prestigious Herpetological Conference
- FSW hosted a successful Lee Health Day strengthen community connections
- Dr. Susan Foster selected as 2025 Speaker-Elect for AHIMA House of Delegates
- Strong attendance at Fall 2024 Career Connection series, serving over 500 students
- New articulated credit scholarship program launches to enhance academic pathways for CTE students

As we look ahead, we remain focused on expanding opportunities for our students and meeting our region's evolving workforce needs.



FSW is an equal access, equal opportunity organization. More: [www.fsw.edu/equity](http://www.fsw.edu/equity).



## Scientific Workplace Preparation CCC

Launch your STEM career with FSW's Scientific Workplace Preparation Certificate. This 26-credit program equips you with essential skills for entry-level positions in science and engineering laboratories.

You'll develop:

- ✓ Core laboratory techniques and procedures
- ✓ Scientific reasoning and analysis
- ✓ Professional communication skills
- ✓ Mathematical foundations

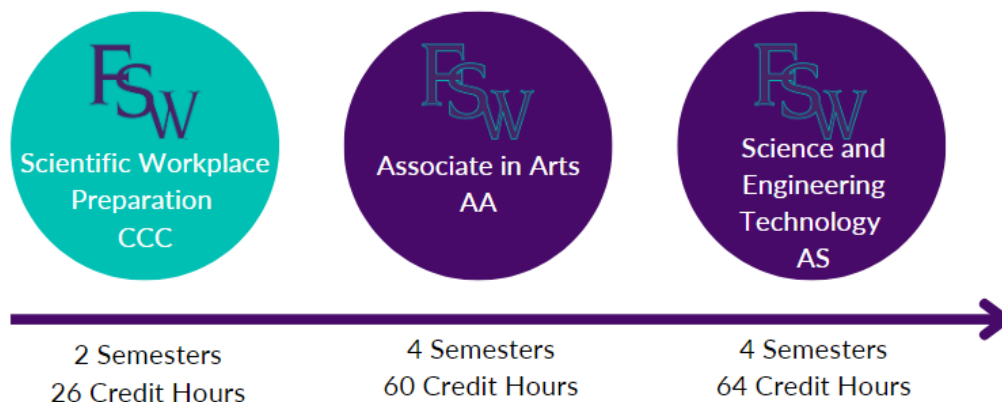
Students can choose from a variety of science electives including:

- Biology and Microbiology
- General and Organic Chemistry
- Anatomy and Physiology
- Human Nutrition
- Physics

Best of all, every credit can count twice: first toward your certificate, then toward your Associate in Arts and/or Associate in Science degree in Science and Engineering Technology. Whether you're starting your STEM journey or advancing your career, this program provides the perfect foundation.

### *Stackable Credential Pathway*

The stackable pathway below shows credential progression at FSW. Many STEM students completing this pathway continue on to earn their baccalaureate and professional degree(s).



# Seizing Every Opportunity: Eden Sterk's Path to Global Health

## Student Feature

### From Nicaragua to FSW: A Future Epidemiologist's Journey

When Eden Sterk witnessed the impact of Zika virus in Nicaragua as a child, she found her calling. Today, as a senior at FSW's Collegiate High School, she's turning that early inspiration into reality.

Through FSW's accelerated dual-enrollment program, Eden will graduate next spring with not just her high school diploma, but three college credentials: a Scientific Workplace Preparation Certificate, an AS in Science and Engineering Technology, and an Associate in Arts degree.



## Eden Sterk

Senior, FSW Collegiate High School

- Scientific Workplace Preparation, CCC
- Associate in Arts, AA
- Science and Engineering Technology, AS

"The hands-on laboratory experience has been invaluable," Eden says. She particularly values the program's emphasis on practical skills—from laboratory safety protocols to advanced Excel applications—that mirror real-world scientific work.

Biology classes at FSW have especially fueled her passion, combining theoretical knowledge with extensive lab work. This foundation perfectly aligns with her goal of becoming an epidemiologist, driven by her firsthand experience with health inequity and food insecurity in Nicaragua.

The interdisciplinary nature of FSW's programs has been one of Eden's favorite aspects of her education. Her advice to other students? "Just go for it. I think a lot of people don't know what opportunities are out there. Don't be afraid to take the initiative, look, ask questions and seize the opportunities available wherever you are, including in high school."

After completing her university studies, Eden aims to join Doctors Without Borders, bringing her expertise back to global communities like those that first inspired her journey into public health.



# FSW Launches First Hackfest: Where Cyber Skills Meet Real-World Challenges



The halls of FSW's School of Business and Technology buzzed with energy as students tackled real-world cybersecurity challenges at the inaugural RIST Cyber Institute Hackfest. This intensive event combined hands-on training, networking opportunities, and competitive challenges that put students' skills to the test.



**Rushell Hopkins**  
Professor, Computer Science

"The enthusiasm was electric," says Computer Science Professor Rushell Hopkins. "Watching our students excel in the Capture The Flag (CTF) competition showcased not just their technical prowess, but their ability to think creatively and work as a team—skills that are invaluable in cybersecurity."

The event featured:

- Expert training sessions by Antisyphon specialists
- Black Hills Information Security's "Backdoors and Breaches" incident response scenarios
- A two-hour Hack The Box CTF Challenge
- Networking sessions with Tech Alliance groups

"The 'Backdoors and Breaches' tabletop exercise was particularly exciting," Hopkins notes. "Students got to experience the adrenaline rush of incident response in a controlled environment, making split-second decisions just like they would in the field."

Community partnerships played a crucial role in the event's success. "Our partners don't just support us—they help create transformative experiences for our students," Hopkins explains. "Their involvement bridges the gap between classroom theory and real-world application."

Looking ahead, Hopkins sees Hackfest as just the beginning. "We're building something special here at FSW. With our dedicated administration, faculty, students, and industry partners, we're creating a cybersecurity program that doesn't just teach—it transforms. Hackfest is proof that our students are ready for the challenges of tomorrow's cyber landscape."





## Scales, Tails, and Science Tales: FSW Hosts Florida's Premier Herpetological Conference

At the second-ever South Florida Herpetological Conference, students and researchers from across the state gathered in FSW's U-building to discuss and present on topics related to herpetology—or the study of reptiles and amphibians. In attendance were representatives from several institutions across Florida, including the University of Florida, University of South Florida, Eckerd College, University of Central Florida, Santa Fe College, Florida Gulf Coast University, and our very own FSW!



Hosted by FSW Biology Professor Jordan Donini, aka “The Turtle Guy,” the conference included many talks from speakers such as Dr. Sean Doody’s experience in the Australian wetlands, and keynote Dr. Bruce Means’s plenary talk on the wildlife on the tepuis of South America. We also had speakers presenting from the Sanibel-Captiva Conservation Foundation discussing the effects of hurricanes and human development on Loggerhead sea turtles in Southwest Florida.

There were also many student presentations, including FSW’s own Emma Ulseth, a nursing student who is pursuing a career in microbiology after she transfers to UCF next semester. Her presentation dove deep into the immunomodulation in invasive cane toads and the effects on native populations. Her work can better help us understand the ecological and environmental impacts of invasive species and methods of mitigating their harm.



In exciting news, it was announced that Herpeton would expand from South Florida to the entirety of Florida! Hopefully this can mean even more people discussing and collaborating around all of the wonderful species our state has to offer.

The conference was an excellent opportunity for professionals and curious minds alike to dive deeper into the field of Herpetology. Many FSW student attendees noted that they previously had no interest in the field before signing up, but after connecting with so many inspiring scientists they had broadened their horizons.



# Career Connections Lecture Series

# Lee Health Day

Lee Health Day brings industry leaders in healthcare to our students' doorstep offering a unique chance to network with leaders from various healthcare specialties all in one location. Students explored various career paths, learned about employment opportunities, and received firsthand insights.

The event showcases the strong partnership between FSW and Lee Health, Southwest Florida's largest healthcare system, while providing students with direct access to healthcare leaders who can answer questions about:

- ✓ Career opportunities and pathways
- ✓ Professional development
- ✓ Industry trends
- ✓ Employment and Internship possibilities

## 100%

Of survey participants agreed that attending the event encouraged them to think critically about the topic under discussion.

## Student Comments

- ✓ It was awesome, loved the presenters.
- ✓ I really like how it opened my mind more to what I would like to do in the future.
- ✓ I got the opportunity to speak with Mike Norys! I'm looking forward to shadowing!
- ✓ Really loved the lecture. All interesting topics.



## FSW Alum Brings Cutting-Edge Cardiac Technology to Classroom

FSW student Michael Orellana returned to campus to give current Cardiovascular Technology (CVT) students an inside look at breakthrough cardiac treatment technology. His presentation focused on intravascular lithotripsy using the Shockwave system, an innovative technique for treating calcified arterial blockages.

While FSW's curriculum covers emerging cardiac catheterization technologies, Michael's hands-on demonstration provided students with invaluable real-world exposure to the equipment they'll encounter in their future careers. Students had the unique opportunity to examine the Shockwave device up close and learn directly from a practicing professional in their field.



"Having our alumni return to share their expertise demonstrates the strength of FSW's cardiovascular program and its ongoing connection to industry advances," said Lena Scott, Program Director. This type of industry partnership and alumni engagement helps ensure FSW students are well-prepared for the rapidly evolving field of cardiovascular technology.

## FSW's Dr. Foster Selected for Key Leadership Position in National Health Information Organization

We are proud to announce that Dr. Susan Foster, our Program Director of Health Information Technology and Medical Coding and Billing, has been elected as the 2025 Speaker-Elect for the American Health Information Management Association (AHIMA) House of Delegates.

In this prestigious role, Dr. Foster will help elevate the visibility of health information professionals who play a vital role in patient care and safety through the management of accurate, comprehensive health records. Her appointment reflects both her exceptional leadership in the field and our institution's commitment to excellence in health information management.



# Career Connection Lecture Series



This fall, FSW hosted an impactful series of six Career Connection lectures, bringing together industry leaders and students for dynamic professional discussions. Distinguished professionals from law, healthcare, marketing, finance, engineering, and biological sciences shared real-world insights and career guidance with our students.

The lecture series proved exceptionally successful, engaging more than 500 students who gained valuable exposure to diverse career paths in our region. Students were able to develop meaningful connections with Southwest Florida leaders and employers. Guest speakers provided students with insights into their professions, industry trends, and practical advice.



## Student Comments

*Great information, I appreciate the advice that "no one path is the correct path, everyone has their own unique journey to success!"*

*It was very helpful to get insight into what life after college looks like. I received good pointers as to what I should start doing now.*

*The lecture helped me decide what I want to study for in the future.*



**95%** Of survey participants agreed that this event is part of what a college should offer its students.



**91%** Of survey participants agreed that attending this event encouraged me to think critically about the topic under discussion.







## Connecting Careers: FSW's Fall Job Fair Links Students to Local Opportunities

FSW's recent Part-Time Job and Internship Fair proved to be a major success, drawing approximately 500 students across the Lee and Collier campuses. The event connected job-seeking students with local employers offering flexible opportunities that complement their academic pursuits. The turnout shows our students are eager to gain real-world experience while pursuing their degree.



Students met with employers from diverse industries, exploring opportunities ranging from healthcare and hospitality to business and technology. The dual-campus format ensured accessibility for students across Southwest Florida, while employers appreciated the chance to tap into FSW's talented student pool. The fair's success highlights FSW's commitment to not just educating students, but helping them launch their careers.



## FSW's Division of Workforce Education Welcomes Three New Team Members

The Division of Workforce Education is pleased to announce the expansion of our team with the addition of three talented professionals. Join me in welcoming Tania, Amanda, and Earl to their new roles at FSW.



**Tania Garcia**  
Coordinator  
Workforce Education



**Amanda Lasher**  
Workforce Education  
Outreach and Events  
Coordinator



**Earl Rausch**  
Coordinator  
Corporate and Community  
Education

# Scholarship Opportunities for Workforce Programs

## Articulated Credit Scholarship



Students who have earned industry certifications or articulated credit from one of FSW's five partnering technical colleges may apply for a scholarship covering first-semester courses in their aligned program of study.

- Gold Standard Articulation through earning of industry certificate
- Completion of articulated program from one of the 5 public technical colleges in SWFL



## Open Door Grant



FSW received Open Door Grant funding through the Florida Department of Education. These funds will help students fast-track their success in a short-term career and technical education program.

- 39 fundable programs across FSW's five academic schools

See complete list at [www.fsw.edu.opendoor](http://www.fsw.edu.opendoor)



## Transforming SWFL 2025



FSW was awarded \$125,000 from the Lee County Industrial Development Authority and \$100,000 from the Elsa and Peter Soderberg Charitable Foundation through the FutureMakers Coalition.

Transforming SWFL Supports:

- [GED Pathway Program](#)
- Second Look
- Last Mile & Gap Funding
- Workforce Pathways



## Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act



FSW was awarded a direct allocation of Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) funding to expand pathways to multiple in-demand industry certificates.

WIOA Programs

- [Information Technology Support Specialist, CCC](#)
- [Network Security, CCC](#)
- [Cybersecurity, AS](#)
- [Network Systems, AS](#)
- [Architectural Design and Construction Technology, AS](#)
- [Logistics and Transportation Management, CCC](#)
- [Supply Chain Management, AS](#)
- [Nursing, AS](#)
- [Medical Assisting Specialist, CCC](#)
- [Advanced Medical Assisting, AS](#)

