Dean’s Message

In this 1st volume, of The Environment, FAMU-SoE continues its legacy of resilience, innovation, and upward swing in many fronts.

Our undergraduate enrollment is looking up. Within 2 years we have achieved an average of 60% growth in our recruitment. Our newly created Undergraduate Success Program, which combines active recruitment, mentoring, and cutting-edge experiential field research, provides a platform for sustained growth. Within the same time frame, we have successfully refurbished our classrooms to smart classrooms with video conferencing capabilities; created a core lab, with on-going efforts for new instrumentations to provide students an uninhibited access to state-of-art research platforms; hired a full-time core lab manager, and promoting a culture for active research engagement.

Faculty and student efforts are creating new scholarly footprints in local, national, and global arena. In many ways, FAMU-SoE is fully engaged and also creating new initiatives for future growth.

Future Outlook Indicates Positive Trends for FAMU’s School of the Environment

The School of the Environment (SOE) has witnessed several positive trends during the last school year. A number of faculty have successfully published in peer-reviewed journals and books; students have received acclaimed awards and scholarships; and the School has witnessed significant improvements in infrastructure. This issue features these positive events and highlights the individuals who have collectively made this happen.

Notable among the achievements of the SOE is the successful implementation of an International Summit on EnergyWaterFoodNexus held in March, 2015. More details on Page 2.

SOE’s Dr. Gragg Receives Gulf Guardian Award

Richard D. Schulterbrandt Gragg III, Ph.D. has been awarded a Third Place 2015 Gulf Guardian Award in the Individual Category. This award recognizes and honors the businesses, community groups, individuals, and agencies taking positive steps to keep the Gulf healthy, beautiful and productive. More details on Page 2.

Dean, Victor Ibeanusi, Ph.D., Achieves Program Milestone

A key initiative of the SOE Dean, Victor Ibeanusi, Ph.D. is the EnergyWaterFoodNexus program. A major milestone in this program was the institution of a Private Sector Global Network (PSGN). This group was highly enhanced through the successful implementation of the International Summit held in March 2015.

Over 500 attendees at the EWFN
International Summit on EnergyWaterFoodNexus

The School of the Environment hosted its inaugural International Summit: EnergyWaterFoodNexus in March of 2015. The event began with a pre-summit reception on March 26, workshops, keynote speeches and session were held on March 27 and ended with an eco-tour on March 28.

Several leaders in the energy, water and food space presented at the event. Include of these were Will Allen, former pro basketball player and CEO of Growing Power, Inc.; Charles Fishman, New York Times bestselling author of “The Wal-Mart Effect” and “The Big Thirst”; Peder Maarbjerg, assistant director for external coordination at the U.S. Department of Energy’s Advanced Research Projects Agency - Energy; Bridgette Bell, FAMU alumna and senior manager of Global Sustainability for Yum! Brands, Inc.; Phyllis Newhouse, president and CEO of Xtreme Solutions, Inc.; Dimitri Corpakis, head of unit, research, and innovation at the European Commission; Istvan Kenyeres, CEO and co-founder of Biopolus, Hungary; Andre Sayles, principal deputy director of the Office of Economic Impact and Diversity, U.S. Department of Energy; and Dean Minardi, CFO of Bing Energy International.

At this summit, FAMU celebrated the launch of a new science enterprise with the inaugural International Summit on EnergyWaterFood Nexus. The biennial meeting developed from the University’s newly formed global public-private partnership, led by the School of the Environment, seeks to provide sustainable and innovative solutions for energy, water, and food security.

The Summit connected over 530 attendees with a growing global network of public and private sector industry thought-leaders, innovators, policymakers, corporations, next-generation scholars, researchers, and other stakeholders working in the energy, water, and food sectors. Poster sessions held during the Summit also allowed participants from diverse perspectives and disciplines to articulate on paper, the complex issues surrounding energy, water, and food production. The Summit also boasted a diverse group of representatives from several international countries including Botswana, Hungary, India, Nigeria, Tanzania and Greece.

Richard Gragg III, Ph.D. receives a Gulf Guardian Award

SOE’s Professor, Richard D. Schulterbrandt Gragg III, Ph.D. has been awarded a Third Place 2015 Gulf Guardian Award in the Individual Category. The award was given on July 30th, 2015, at a ceremony at the Texas State Aquarium in Corpus Christi, Texas. The Gulf of Mexico Program initiated the Gulf Guardian awards in 2000 as a way to recognize and honor the businesses, community groups, individuals, and agencies that are taking positive steps to keep the Gulf healthy, beautiful and productive. First, second and third place awards are given in seven categories: individual, businesses/industry, youth, environmental education, civic/nonprofit orgs, cultural diversity/environmental justice, partnership and bi-national efforts.

Dr. Gragg has contributed to the development of FAMU SOE’s Environment, Center for Environmental Equity and Justice and the training of environmental scientists from underrepresented groups. Dr. Gragg has demonstrated passion and commitment to community engagement and the protection of the environment and human health. He has promoted and practiced community-based participatory action as well as the integration of environmental science and public policy in his teaching, research and service activities.

Among his vast achievements, Dr. Gragg has actively promoted environmental justice as a member and in partnership with more than a dozen public and private entities including Florida Department of Environmental Protection- Community Environmental Health Advisory Board, Florida Department of Health, Executive Council and Health and Research Subcommittee, and the National Environmental Justice Advisory Council-US Environmental Protection Agency.
Professor Henry N. Williams, Ph.D. Co-Authors Paper in a High Ranked Journal

Professor Henry Neal Williams and his former graduate student, Dr. Huan Chen, served as conveners of a scientific session at the 115th General Meeting of the American Society for Microbiology held from May 30 through June 2, 2015 in New Orleans. The session entitled “Microbes in Microbes – Russian Dolls” included invited and selected presentations by seven outstanding scientists. Dr. Chen is currently a postdoctoral research associate at the National High Magnetic Field Laboratory at Florida State University. Both Williams and Chen are experts on the group of predatory bacteria known as the Bdellovibrio and like organisms (BALOs).

The American Society for Microbiology is the oldest and largest single life science membership organization in the world, recognizes scientists for outstanding contributions to microbiology. A total of eight undergraduate and graduate students in the School of the Environment, three FAMU postdoctoral associates and two professors, authored the paper. Dr. Williams who served as group leader stated that “It is extraordinary for this number of underrepresented students to be included as authors on a paper of such magnitude in such a high quality journal. This accomplishment raises the bar for not only these students but others at FAMU and other HBCUs”.

The paper is scheduled for publication in the summer of 2015.

Hsinshei Ma, Ph.D.: SOE Lab Manager

Dr. Ma received her Ph.D. in Tzu-Chi Medical School/University, Taiwan. Her major is related to the pathogenesis of Hepatitis C Virus. Ma has worked on SARS when there was an outbreak in Asia, 2003 and has several published works in international journals.

SOE UPGRADES INFRASTRUCTURE

The School of the Environment is poised for a positive outlook. Upgrading the learning environment and equipment necessary for the smooth running of the SOE has been one of the core focus’ of the new Dean, Victor Ibeanusi, Ph.D. Smart Class rooms installed in the spring of 2015 are now a normal feature of the teaching and learning experience. This is a huge leap from the cart drawn projectors which professors formerly had to rely on. State of the art equipment have also been installed in the laboratories. The Dean has as one of his goals, full installation of equipment to the grade of a STEM Core Laboratory.

The School of the Environment has made many strides in improving the infrastructure of the program. One of these is the improvement of the SOE laboratories, both in purchasing new state of the art equipment as well as the hiring of a core lab manager, Hsinshei Jennifer Ma, Ph.D.

SOE METRICS INDICATE POSITIVE TRENDS

The School of the Environment has been successful in its launch of the Environmental Studies programs alongside the existing Environmental Science programs. The fall of 2015 witnessed positive student participation in the SOE as students took advantage of the program offerings. Two students graduated from the program with Bachelor of Science degrees in Environmental Studies. Featured on the left are Justyn Lewis Washington and Mark-Anthony Williams who both graduated with the Bachelor of Science degrees in Environmental Studies. The Environmental Science program also graduated Loreal Sangster with a Bachelor of Science degree.

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Justyn Lewis, Graduated with a Bachelor of Science in Environmental Studies

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Congratulations to Jason Caldwell and Krystal Pree who have been awarded the 2015-2016 McKnight Dissertation Fellowship. Mr. Caldwell and Ms. Pree were two of only three students who received this award from Florida A&M University.

Daryl Sible Interns with Turtle THIS (Teens Helping in the Seashore): A Citizen Science Project

The School of the Environment graduate student, Daryl Sible, is on an internship with the Gulf Islands National Seashore of the National Park Service. His project is Turtle THIS (Teens Helping in the Seashore).

Currently, there are 41 sea turtle nests distributed throughout Gulf Islands National Seashore. This seashore stretches across 160 miles of coastline along the Gulf of Mexico and is inhabited by four species of endangered sea turtles and one species of threatened sea turtle. Findings suggest that these threatened species suffer hatchling disorientation as a result of light pollution. They have drawn a citizen network composed of local middle and high school students, teachers, undergraduates from the local university, scientists, the National Park Service (NPS) interns and park rangers, to investigate the findings and educate the community in the study. The project is designed to be a citizen science project, so most of the labor will be provided by the network.

Plans for the THIS students include that upon data collection, students will map transects across the islands systematically going from one point to the next. When completed, the process will begin again both for the transects and then for the 2015 season sea turtle nest sites, producing a spatial image of light pollution across the a spatial image of light pollution across the Seashore makes continuing efforts to bring this program to the surrounding community and to expand to include other coastal parks and schools, enhancing the reach of the data to as much of the US coastline as possible.

The Turtle THIS Students and park personnel have completed data collection for over sixty nest sites and expect to complete all of the 2014 sites by the end of March 2015.

Ivory Council Serves as Student Engineer at the US Nuclear Regulatory Commission

Ivory is a PhD candidate in Environmental Science with a focus on environmental chemistry. Her research foci include soil/water radiochemistry and waste stream remediation in radioactive-contaminated environments. Ivory holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Environmental Studies as well as a Bachelor of Science degree in African-American Studies, both from Florida State University. In 2013 she was awarded a 5-year McKnight Doctoral Fellowship.

Ivory’s previous engineering experience and background in environmental science allowed her to serve as a student engineer for the summer at the US Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) headquarters in Rockville, Maryland. Ivory was tasked with acting as an independent inspection and process liaison between the NRC and its licensees (i.e., nuclear power plants) in the future.