

FLORIDA TECH

M A G A Z I N E

FALL 2026

Campus on the Rise

Already a campus landmark, Crimson Crossing represents a milestone in Florida Tech's growth, expanding not just where students live, but the community they call home.



In This Issue

Fall 2026 • Volume 25, Issue 2

Ribbon Cutting: Crimson Crossing

With the snip of oversized scissors, a new era of student residential living at Florida Tech began at the Aug. 12 ribbon-cutting ceremony for Crimson Crossing, the university's six-story, 556-bed housing complex that has been under construction on the northeast corner of Babcock Street and University Boulevard since its groundbreaking in April 2025. More than just a residence hall, the 212,237-square-foot building, with its distinctive design and eye-catching façade, creates a new residential gateway for Florida Tech's campus and reflects the university's continued investment in providing an exceptional student experience. Peek inside the new facility on page 24.



CAMPUS NEWS

A Message from the President	3
The Pursuit	4
Panther Athletics	10
The Relentless	12
Research	14
Prime Examples: Tradition	16

ALUMNI NEWS

From the FTAA President	32
AlumNotes	34
In Memoriam	38
Faces of Greatness: Carlos García-Galán.	39

FEATURES

18 **Cleared for Leadership**

Four Florida Tech alumni at the helms of aviation's most influential associations reflect on innovation, leadership and the future of flight.

22 **A Tinkerer's Tale: Meet COES Dean Sambandamurthy Ganapathy**

New dean brings vision for 'enduring and sustainable' evolution of the COES.

24 **Crimson Crossing**

Crimson Crossing, the university's newest residence hall, is the latest expression of Florida Tech's commitment to relentless innovation.

30 **Driven: Meet COPLA Dean Leslie Matuszewich**

Behavioral neuroscientist Leslie Matuszewich has spent her career studying motivation. As COPLA's new dean, she's putting those lessons into practice.

A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Hello Panthers,

There is something special about the start of a new academic year. Our campus is once again bustling with students, ideas and possibilities, bringing renewed energy and excitement for what we can accomplish together.

That energy never really waned this summer. Across Florida Tech, our faculty and staff were hard at work preparing for the year ahead, advancing important initiatives and investing in our university's future. It was a summer full of activity and progress, culminating in the official opening of Crimson Crossing and the arrival of students who now call this beautiful new residence hall home.

We are also beginning the year with new leaders who will help shape Florida Tech's next chapter. We welcomed Dr. Sambandamurthy "Murthy" Ganapathy as dean of the College of Engineering and Science and Dr. Leslie Matuszewich as dean of the College of Psychology and Liberal Arts. Both bring valuable experience and new perspectives to colleges that play vital roles in our academic mission.

We also brought retired U.S. Space Force Maj. Gen. Timothy Sejba aboard as military affairs advisor to the president. His extensive defense and space leadership experience will help strengthen Florida Tech's collaboration with the U.S. military and advance shared educational and research priorities.

These developments are part of something larger happening across our university. Florida Tech continues to evolve, invest and look ahead while remaining grounded in what has always distinguished us: an ambitious community of people who are willing to take on meaningful challenges and put their knowledge to work—all centered on student success and the transformative power of education.

That is especially exciting as we welcome our students for a new year. In classrooms and laboratories, through research and internships, in student organizations and athletics and across our community, they will have countless opportunities to discover what they are capable of and prepare for what comes next.

There is much to look forward to this year. I am confident in where Florida Tech is headed and grateful for the faculty, staff, students, alumni and friends who continue to move us forward together, with boundless potential.

Go Panthers!

Sincerely,

John Nicklow, Ph.D.
President



FLORIDA TECH MAGAZINE

Florida Tech Magazine is published three times a year by Florida Tech's Office of Marketing and Communications and is distributed to more than 25,000 readers.

EDITORIAL DIRECTOR Andy McIlwraith

ART DIRECTOR Christena Callahan '07 M.S.

MANAGING EDITOR Karly Horn

ASSOCIATE EDITORS Trey Avant, Adam Lowenstein

CONTRIBUTORS Erin Alvarado '16, Jerry Durney, Christina Hardman, Don Platt

PRODUCTION Kristie Kwong

WEB LAYOUT David Smith

CIRCULATION Daniel Blucker

PHOTOGRAPHY Dominic Agostini, Rich Aronson, Mark Bush, Adam Palumbo, Brice Smith

Have a Story Idea? magazine@fit.edu

Update your Preferences:
floridatech.edu/magazine/subscribe

Advancement Office

VICE PRESIDENT, PHILANTHROPY
Cassie Pericak, 321-309-3124, cpericak@fit.edu

ASSISTANT VICE PRESIDENT, ALUMNI AFFAIRS
Gina Yates '17, '19, 321-674-8428, gyates@fit.edu

DIRECTOR OF ANNUAL GIVING
Erin Alvarado '16, 321-674-6141, ealvarado@fit.edu

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR OF ALUMNI ENGAGEMENT
Madison Hatzel, 321-674-6826, mhatzel@fit.edu


FLORIDA TECH
FLORIDA'S STEM UNIVERSITY™

ANYTIME, ANYWHERE

**[floridatech.edu/
magazine](http://floridatech.edu/magazine)**

© Copyright 2026 by Florida Institute of Technology.
All rights reserved. Reproduction by any means whole
or in part without permission is prohibited.
For reprint information: 321-674-8963 or magazine@fit.edu

20260620

Florida Institute of Technology does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, genetic information, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, protected veteran status or any protected minority in the admission of students, administration of its educational policies, scholarship and loan programs, employment policies and athletic or other university-sponsored programs or activities. In accordance with Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, Florida Tech does not discriminate on the basis of sex.

STEM Summer Academy

High school students solder functioning game kits at the L3Harris Student Design Center during Florida Tech's STEM Summer Academy June 22–26.

Participants from across Brevard County attended the weeklong, hands-on tour of artificial intelligence, drones and aviation, osteopathic medicine, marine science, engineering design, forensic psychology and more. They experienced learning beyond textbooks and theory by tackling practical challenges and developing technical skills relevant to future academic and professional pursuits while gaining valuable insights into college life and various career pathways.



The winning team from the Space Coast Initiative Hackathon. From left to right, Ryan Huttshell, David Nieves-Acaron, Nathan Perez Matos, Jean Garin and Dominic Catania. Nieves-Acaron, Matos and Garin are Florida Tech students.

Marine Probe Wins Students Second at Local Hackathon

Three Florida Tech students helped their team earn second place and \$500 at the Space Coast Initiative: Hackathon 2026 this spring at Groundswell Startups in Melbourne, Florida.

Computer engineering Ph.D. student David Nieves-Acaron and sophomores Nathan Perez Matos and Jean Garin helped Team Orion excel in the Tinkerers Track, which involves both software and hardware, such as the Internet of Things, robotics and embedded systems. (The other track was software only.) Additional team members were Ryan Huttshell and Dominic Catania.

Nieves-Acaron and Matos are from associate professor Adrian Peter's

Center for Advanced Data Analytics and Systems (CADAS).

Their problem statement: "Understanding plankton behavior, distribution and health is essential for monitoring ocean ecosystems, yet collecting high resolution, long-term data on these microscopic organisms remains extremely difficult."

Over roughly two days, the team conceived, built and began testing a prototyped concept of what Nieves-Acaron described as a "simple yet cost-effective marine probe" capable of measuring and recording basic but important metrics for marine biology, including salinity levels and water temperature.

Team Orion was one of 18 Hackathon teams, and, in addition to Florida Tech, participating students came from Eastern Florida State College, the University of Florida, the University of South Florida and the University of Central Florida.

On hand, as well, were more than two dozen subject-matter experts (SMEs) to assist teams.

Judges, consisting of local business leaders, SMEs and investors with relevant technical and commercial experience, based their decisions on five categories: viability and scalability; technical execution; relevance to the Space Coast; innovation; and team commitment.



Bonhomme Conference Room Dedicated at Crawford Event

The Crawford Building's top-floor conference room has been newly named the "Drs. Raymond and Mary Bonhomme Conference Room" to honor a generous couple President John Nicklow called "two exceptional individuals who made a tremendous impact on this campus."

Raymond Bonhomme served as budget manager and senior vice provost and was instrumental in establishing the freshman advising center, while Mary Bonhomme oversaw and grew Florida Tech's online education, chaired the Teaching Council and helped lead and champion Florida Tech's Phi Kappa Phi honor society chapter.



FAMILIAR FACES:

Gina Yates '19

A SERIES CATCHING UP WITH THE CAMPUS FIGURES WHO MADE YOUR TIME AT FLORIDA TECH MEMORABLE

“Florida Tech alumni are making an impact around the globe, working in roles that improve lives and shape a better future for everyone.”

—Gina Yates

Since joining Florida Tech in 2013, Gina Yates '19 has dedicated her career to creating opportunities for Panthers past and present. Having spent a decade in athletic fundraising supporting scholar-athletes, she now serves as assistant vice president for alumni affairs, fostering lifelong connections with Florida Tech graduates across the globe—a mission that hits close to home for her own all-Panther family. We caught up with her to reflect on her journey, her passion for alumni engagement and what inspires her every day.

What is your title, and what do you do?

I am the assistant vice president of alumni affairs, which is part of the university's advancement office. We work with alumni all over the world. We learn about what they have been up to since graduation and keep them engaged with the university. Our alumni enjoy learning what our current students are doing and how they can help them get the most out of their time here, on campus.

What do you love about your job?

Hearing about the incredible things our alumni are doing! Florida Tech alumni are making an impact around the globe, working in roles that improve lives and shape a better future for everyone. From advancing space initiatives and leading major organizations to conducting groundbreaking medical and technological research, our alumni are also working with animals and marine life to better understand how our worlds are interconnected. They are brilliantly driving innovation and making a difference in communities around the world!

What is one of your favorite Florida Tech memories, and why?

The day my youngest son graduated from Florida Tech was especially meaningful: a Panther family!

That day, I truly felt the impact Florida Tech has had on my life. My

oldest son summed it up perfectly: He always thought of Florida Tech as the little college down the street, but once he became a student here, he realized how incredible it is and how many opportunities his education has provided him.

What do you see in the future for Florida Tech, and what are you excited about?

I love seeing the new residence halls going up and new opportunities for our students. I'm excited to watch Florida Tech continue to grow and to see the breakthroughs our alumni will achieve in the years ahead. So many industries are evolving and creating new opportunities every day, and our professors are constantly introducing new concepts while encouraging students to think outside the box. That combination of innovation and creativity will empower our graduates to make meaningful advances across a wide range of professions.

Share more about your life outside of work.

- Family: My husband and I have four adult children (all Panthers!!) and four grandchildren.
- Pets: We have three grand-dogs.
- Hobbies: Anything outside—the beach, walking, traveling, hunting and camping. I also love to cook.
- Favorite thing to do on a weekend: Spend time with family and friends!



SBA Honors weVENTURE WBC

The U.S. Small Business Administration honored weVENTURE Women's Business Center with its 2026 Florida Small Business Community Partner of the Year award. weVENTURE WBC was one of six state and award recipients recognized by the SBA and its South Florida District for this year's Small Business Week. Pictured accepting, from left: Florida Tech first spouse Stacy Nicklow, business coach Jeannette Kraar, former weVENTURE WBC executive director Kathryn Rudloff, SBA representative Dieulanie Claude, Bisk College of Business Dean Ted Richardson (back row) and IGNITE 360 program director Kathy Register.

Florida Tech, Curaçao Agree to Student Support, Future Cooperation

Florida Tech and Curaçao have agreed to a memorandum of understanding that will provide financial support for select eligible residents of the island nation to attend the distinguished STEM university and establish formal pathways that could lead to joint research and other projects.

“With this collaboration,” said Sithree van Heydoorn, Curaçao’s minister of education, science, culture and sports, “our students will be able to benefit from more opportunities to pursue higher education, with more favorable conditions and an exchange of knowledge at an international level.”

The agreement was signed during the minister’s working trip to Miami in early spring as he attended the World Baseball Classic at loanDepot Park, where the Netherlands battled Venezuela. Florida Tech’s Brian Ehrlich, vice president of enrollment management, represented the university. (Curaçao is an autonomous country within the Kingdom of the Netherlands.)

Minister of Economic Affairs Roderick Middelhof referred to the signing as a “historic moment.”

Curaçao, located in the southern Caribbean Sea near Venezuela, is home to approximately 155,000 people representing more than 90 nationalities.

According to the agreement, Curaçao’s key national priorities include strengthening STEM education at the University of Curaçao, advancing marine and environmental protection, expanding e-government services and increasing investments in renewable energy and sustainable economic sectors.

“Within this context, Curaçao provides a strategic platform for applied research, student exchange, and discussion and development of possible collaboration,” the agreement notes.

Van Heydoorn said the collaboration represents an investment in the future of Curaçao.



“With more opportunities for study and development, we continue to pave the way for our young people to reach their potential and contribute with pride to the progress of Kòrsou,” he said, using the Papiamentu word for Curaçao.

Ehrlich said the university is honored to support the Education Ministry’s vision of elevating the country and empowering what’s next in Curaçao through a Florida Tech education.

“When Minister van Heydoorn explained the national goal of educating their citizens and having them return home to help build the future of Curaçao, it was clear to me that Florida Tech should get involved and assist with bringing their students to our campus,” Ehrlich said.

In 2023, Florida Tech entered into a similar memorandum of understanding with Aruba, Curaçao’s sister island.

Mission Minded



“I’m honored to work with a university that has such a proud legacy of ensuring its students are ready to meet tomorrow’s technological challenges. From its founding to support NASA during the Space Race to today, Florida Tech continues to provide trusted and innovative education and research that remain valuable resources for civilians and those who serve in uniform.”

— **RETIRED U.S. SPACE FORCE MAJ. GEN. TIMOTHY SEJBA**, a past STARCOM commander and former special assistant to the vice chief of space operations, who will bring his extensive military and space leadership experience to Florida Tech in the new role of military affairs advisor to the president.

Florida Tech MDRS Crew

ALLONA YEHIIV ¹

CREW SCIENTIST

B.S. Astrobiology,
Biology Concentration

Senior

Project: "Effects of Simulated
Martian Pressure Conditions on the
Function of Plant Growth Promoting
Bacteria"

PEYTON HAY ²

COMMANDER

B.S. Electrical Engineering '26

MCKENNA TAYLOR ³

CREW SCIENTIST

B.S. Astrobiology '25; B.S.
Astronomy and Astrophysics '25
Graduate Student

Project: "Use of ISS-Derived
Bacteria Cultures to Improve
Plant Growth in Simulated Martian
Regolith"

ANNA WEATHERWAX ⁴

GREENHAB OFFICER

B.S. Astrobiology,
Biology Concentration;
B.S. Biochemistry

Junior

Project: "Pisum Sativum
Germination Under Novel Low-
Pressure Environments"

RIVER RIEHLE ⁵

CREW ENGINEER

B.S. Interdisciplinary Sciences '26

Project: "Weather Satellite Data
Downlink"

ANN ALOR ⁶

HEALTH AND SAFETY OFFICER

B.S. Aeronautical Science;
A.S. Flight Operations and Dispatch

Junior

SYDNEY DECK (NOT PICTURED)

ALTERNATE/GROUND CONTROL

B.S. Astrobiology,
Chemistry Concentration;
B.S. Biochemistry

Senior

Project: "The Psychological Effects
of the Earth-Mars Time Delay on the
MDRS Crew"



Florida Tech Crew Completes Simulated Mars Mission at Desert Research Station

For five (Martian) days in the Utah desert, a team of Florida Tech students lived as if they were already on Mars.

Operating under full Mars analog protocols at the Mars Desert Research Station, the six-member crew conducted research, completed spacewalk-style extravehicular activities (EVAs) and managed delayed communications designed to simulate the realities of future human missions to the red planet.

Even more remarkable: The entire crew was made up of Florida Tech students.

It also served as the pilot mission for Florida Tech's Analog Research Program (ARP), a new Student Life organization that provides a professional platform for student scholars with a passion for space-related research to conduct their work in high-fidelity analog environments.

"This mission proved that the university can effectively support student scholars

in realistic testing environments, establishing a new and permanent avenue for future space research," said Peyton Hay '26, mission commander, ARP founder and then-senior electrical engineering major.

Together, the students carried out four research projects focused on plant biology and satellite communications for future Mars exploration. Over the course of the mission, they completed 11 EVAs while operating with a 15-minute communication delay meant to mirror conditions astronauts could experience on Mars.

"Leading this team in an isolated setting was a transformative lesson in accountability and clear communication," Hay said. "The insights I gained from our crew and the obstacles we overcame together have made me a more capable leader for my future career."

“

The insights I gained from our crew and the obstacles we overcame together have made me a more capable leader for my future career.”

—Peyton Hay '26, MDRS Commander

Florida Tech Returns to Construction Management Competition

For the first time since COVID-19 struck more than six years ago, Florida Tech construction management students participated in the ABC Construction Management Competition (CMC), the annual test for the nation's top construction management students sponsored by Association of Builders and Contractors (ABC) member chapters around the country.

After competing in the prestigious event from 2015–2019, Florida Tech returned in March as the 2026 competition unfolded in Salt Lake City, site of ABC Convention 2026, thanks in large part to the generous support of the ABC Florida East Coast chapter.

The CMC challenges college teams to apply their skills in four areas—estimating, project management, quality control and safety—and to develop and give professional presentations.

“For students,” said Troy Nguyen, Department of Mechanical and Civil Engineering professor and head, “the competition offers hands-on, real-world experience, valuable résumé credentials and direct exposure to industry professionals. It strengthens teamwork, problem-solving and communication skills, while giving participants the opportunity to showcase their talents on a national stage.”

Florida Tech sent eight students: four core team members and four alternate team members who served in backup and observer roles. The core members were Pete Abdou '26, William (Lance) Thompson '26, Emmalyn Gibbs and Aren Marsh. Alternate members were Genevieve Spitaletto '26, Evan Kaprelian, Connor Kelly and Nicolas Nania.

Several of the crew's projects explored how plants and microbes might survive in Martian conditions.

Students collected soil samples near the research station to study plant growth-promoting bacteria and investigate whether microbes could adapt to lower-pressure environments, like Mars. The team also tested the growth of Brassica rapa plants and low-pressure-treated sugar snap pea seeds in simulated Martian regolith and local desert soils.

Another project focused on satellite communications. River Riehle '26 successfully downlinked and processed weather data from the GOES-19 satellite, creating graphics capable of tracking weather system evolution and helping predict daily conditions.

“I'm no meteorologist, but it's safe to say that if I can do it, competent astronaut crews could use a system like this to get real-time updates on the weather outside their habitats,” Riehle said.

Sydney Deck, an alternate crew member who attended meetings and completed all training alongside the others but did not travel to Utah, created and administered a daily survey to gather data about the psychological effects of the time delay and isolation of the environment.

Beyond the research itself, students gained experience solving operational problems—from equipment issues to habitat maintenance—in real time while working closely as a crew under demanding conditions.

“MDRS was a fantastic opportunity to apply classroom knowledge and technical skills in an environment that is usually hypothetical,” Riehle said. “This allowed the crew to directly experience the reality of living and doing research on Mars, and we learned a lot about how those constraints impact everyday life.”

The mission closed out the Mars Desert Research Station's 2025-2026 season and gave students an immersive introduction to the realities of human space exploration. Crew members said the experience strengthened both their scientific skills and their commitment to pursuing careers in spaceflight.

“For the duration of the five-sol mission, the Mars Desert Research Station was home to uproarious laughter and conversations rooted in inspiration,” crew members reflected in their final report. “Each crew member only grew more certain in their aspirations of becoming astronauts themselves.”

By the end of the mission, the students described themselves not just as teammates, but as “acquaintances-turned-family,” united by a shared goal of helping shape the future of human exploration beyond Earth.

Champion Culture

How values-first leadership helped transform Florida Tech men's lacrosse, producing the team's best season ever

By Jerry Durney

When head coach Brad MacArthur first assembled his team after taking over the men's lacrosse program in February 2022, he didn't talk about lacrosse.

"I still have the PowerPoint," MacArthur says. "It was about academics. It was about our commitment to community. We touched on lacrosse at the very end, but that was more, 'Here's how we're going to play; this is what we're going to do.' The biggest focus was academics."

His approach reflects the overall team culture that the coaches and players strived to foster year-round and that led to a historic 2026 season.

At the outset of the season, the Panthers were picked to finish sixth in the Sunshine State Conference (SSC) preseason poll. They quickly went to work to dispel past notions, winning two of their first three games, including an overtime upset of No. 4 Wingate Feb. 14.

The season's turning point happened a week later in the Blue Ridge Mountains. The Panthers traveled to North Greenville University ranked No. 9, breaking into the United States Intercollegiate Lacrosse Association (USILA) Top 10 for just the second time in program history.

A 5-0 run by North Greenville in the space of 2:03 late in the first quarter put Florida Tech in a 6-2 hole that they were unable to escape from, ultimately falling 12-6. The moment was a test for the team: Would this unexpected, heavy defeat push them back into previous habits? Or would the values the staff had instilled take hold and allow them to reach new heights?

"It was a pretty quiet ride from the time we got on the bus to the time we got off the bus in Melbourne," MacArthur

says. "Guys were angry. There was a lot of reflection, a lot of change."

"I think [beating] Wingate showed us how good we could be," says junior midfielder Brooks Van Esselstyn. "And we thought that was how good we always are. We found out that, no, this is how good you must choose to be. You must choose to do the work."

Lesson learned. The Florida Tech defense held its next 11 opponents under 10 goals, winning 10 of those games. The Panthers finished the season with the ninth-best scoring defense in the nation, allowing just 8.53 goals per game. Van Esselstyn and senior defenseman Steve Ulrichs each earned First Team All-SSC honors, while senior goalie Jax Francisco became the program's first SSC Defensive Player of The Year.

The Crimson and Gray finished the regular season with an 11-3 record, and after defeating Saint Leo University 8-7 in overtime in the SSC semifinal at Rick Stottler Field, they matched the program record for wins in a season. Their hard work paid off May 3, when, for the first time in program history, Florida Tech was called for the NCAA Tournament, earning the No. 3 seed in the South region, a first-round bye and a home game in the second round.

While the Panthers' season came to an end one week later at the hands of Lenoir-Rhyne University, everyone associated with the program entered the offseason with a sense of pride about what had been accomplished over the previous three months.

"Winning is always sort of the external factor that people see when they look at a team," Ulrichs says. "But I think, for us, winning was more of a byproduct of everything else: the other attributes we were able to gain as

people, and how we were able to better ourselves through our teammates by holding each other accountable, learning how to lead and how to be led."

The Panthers demonstrated excellence in the classroom and community throughout the 2025-2026 academic year, as well. The team's collective GPA was 3.45, the highest during MacArthur's tenure. Their 1,220-plus community service hours were also a high mark of the past half-decade.

"We're defined by our character both on and off the field, and I think that's really where we've made a lot of growth in the past couple years," says senior goalie Jax Francisco. "Coach always preaches about sacrifice for your teammates, your family, and doing what you must do to not only be a good athlete on the field, but also be a good student, friend, family member, partner. To make sure whatever you're doing, you're doing it with character and to the fullest of your ability."

Francisco, Van Esselstyn, Ulrichs and midfielder Thomas Strong each earned All-America honors from the USILA following the season, and Florida Tech finished the campaign ranked No. 12, the program's highest finish ever.

With all they accomplished in 2026, of most pride to the team was that the culture they had worked so hard to shape had now given them tangible success.

"When you're in the thick of it, you don't know if you're doing things right, necessarily, all the time and making the right decisions. You're kind of leading each other into the unknown," Francisco says. "So, to have the success that we had was validation for the group. I hope it's validation for the younger guys and that they buy into the same values we did this past season."



DON PLATT

Constructing a Legacy: Inside the ISS' Journey From Assembly Floor to Orbiting Laboratory

When I started working for Boeing in 1998, after receiving my M.S. in space systems from Florida Tech, most of the pieces of the International Space Station (ISS) were in the Space Station Processing Facility (SSPF) and others at Kennedy Space Center. We tested the pieces on the ground to ensure they would work once they were connected in space to form the station we know today.

A marvel of international cooperation, the ISS has continuously housed humans conducting research and testing new technologies since 2000. With labs 300 miles above Earth's surface, we can: evaluate human physiology in space, such as bone and muscle loss; observe how the Earth changes over time; test new technology in a harsh environment; and research new materials and alloys in a microgravity vacuum.

Personally, I have worked on a project growing small 3D muscle tissue cultures in space, stimulating them with electrical impulses that simulate exercise and observing genes that were turned on and off, leading to atrophy in space. We then applied pharmaceuticals and monitored potential improvements—work with direct application to treating muscle-wasting diseases here, on Earth. We have learned a great deal about how these systems evolve in space, as well as treatments to

“

NASA hopes to involve more commercial partners in operating follow-on commercial space stations before the ISS' full retirement and splashdown planned for 2030.

”

.....

Don Platt
associate professor

help astronauts counteract these issues with pharmaceuticals and exercise regimes.

The ISS has also helped open the new era of commercial enterprise in space. As an associate professor at Florida Tech, I teach my students about these commercial enterprises and their incredible growth. I believe it is no coincidence that this growth coincides with the 25 years the ISS has been active.

Companies such as SpaceX, Nanoracks, Space Tango, Made in Space Inc. and many others got their true start with NASA contracts supporting ISS operations. NASA's faith in these groups opened new markets and provided new opportunities for them that they are taking advantage of today.

The ISS is an incredible machine. But like any machine, it has a finite lifetime and, unfortunately, the ISS is nearing the end of its life. Today, it costs more to operate, and certain elements are starting to break down.

NASA hopes to involve more commercial partners in operating follow-on commercial space stations before the ISS' full retirement and splashdown planned for 2030. By then, the goal is for the new stations to be ready to take over and build upon the remarkable achievements made possible by the ISS.



DON PLATT '01 M.S., '13 Ph.D., is associate professor of space systems and interim head of the Aerospace, Physics and Space Sciences Department at Florida Tech. He serves as director of Florida Tech's Spaceport Education Center, which offers space-related courses adjacent to Kennedy Space Center, as well.

Florida Tech Advances Community Climate Resilience Through Research and Student Engagement

Researchers from Florida Tech's Center for Resilience Science are partnering with the U.S. Department of Energy's Argonne National Laboratory and local nonprofit Little Growers to help underserved communities along Florida's Space Coast prepare for challenges such as extreme heat, flooding, hurricanes and rising energy costs. The initiative, called Space Coast RESCUE (RESilience Solutions for Climate, Urbanization and Environment), began in fall 2024 and is led by professor Steven Lazarus.

The project includes four interconnected research thrusts: atmospheric and future climate modeling; hydrology and compound flooding; building energy resilience; and community science and outreach.

Associate professor Hamidreza Najafi leads the building energy thrust, which focuses on developing practical solutions that help homes and buildings become more efficient, resilient and climate-ready.



Pictured, from left, at the Make a Green Noise Event at Evans Library: Queriah Simpson, Little Growers; Hamidreza Najafi, Florida Tech associate professor; Camille Hadley, Little Growers; Emily Ralston, Florida Tech research assistant professor; Steven Lazarus, Florida Tech professor

current energy performance of homes in the community, investigating retrofit strategies suited to Florida's hot-humid climate and developing practical, accessible solutions tailored to the needs of the participating community. The work also explores future climate-ready building design, rooftop solar and

curriculum introducing local high school students to building science and energy through interactive learning activities.

This summer, the program moved from classroom learning to real-world application. Najafi and mechanical engineering Ph.D. student Muhammed Salih developed an interactive residential energy audit tool and trained the students to conduct home energy assessments. Working alongside mentors from Florida Tech and Little Growers, the students visited homes in an underserved Melbourne neighborhood, performed audits, analyzed the findings and gave participating families a better understanding of their energy use, along with personalized recommendations to reduce utility costs and improve indoor comfort.

"Working on the Space Coast RESCUE project has been a particularly rewarding experience," Najafi said. "What has stayed with me most is seeing local high school students progress from learning about building science and energy efficiency to conducting home energy assessments and helping families in their own community better understand their energy use, reduce utility costs and improve indoor comfort. It is a powerful reminder that research is at its best when it directly serves the communities around us."

“Working on the Space Coast RESCUE project has been a particularly rewarding experience. It is a powerful reminder that research is at its best when it directly serves the communities around us.”

—Hamidreza Najafi

The team uses high-resolution future climate projections developed by Argonne National Laboratory, combined with local weather data, to assess how building energy demands may change under future climate scenarios.

The thrust has partnered with Stone Magnet Middle School and more than 10 homeowners who volunteered to host weather stations on their properties, providing microclimate data that supports and strengthens the team's analyses. Researchers are evaluating the

battery storage and resilient cooling strategies that can help maintain safe indoor conditions during power outages and extreme weather.

Community engagement has been central to the project from the start. In 2025, the team held two community workshops attended by more than 70 residents, covering how buildings and energy use affect indoor comfort, utility costs, health and quality of life. That summer, in partnership with Little Growers, the team developed a hands-on

NSF Graduate Research Fellowships

Four Florida Tech students have been awarded the National Science Foundation Graduate Research Fellowship (NSF GRF), a highly competitive honor that provides recipients with a \$37,000 annual stipend and a \$16,000 education allowance for three years. The program, established in 1952, has funded more than 70,000 researchers, including at least 40 future Nobel Prize recipients.

“The NSF GRFP award draws applications from the likes of Harvard, Stanford, MIT ... and Georgia Tech—institutions with substantial resources and a rich history in scientific research. I hope that the students here, at Florida Tech, who have won this prestigious award show people that we can compete with these larger institutions.”

—Quintin Peters

RUSS SMITH '25

PROGRAM:
Chemical engineering, Ph.D.

RESEARCH:
Extracting critical minerals and materials from unconventional sources—including electronic waste, biomass and coal waste

ADVISOR: Associate professor Toufiq Reza

APPLICATION: Addresses domestic supply chain concerns for minerals used in defense, alternative energy, automotive infrastructure and consumer electronics.



EMILY ACAMPORA '26

PROGRAM:
Biomedical engineering, Ph.D.

RESEARCH:
Identifying brain-based signals that could give physicians an objective measure of fibromyalgia, a chronic widespread pain condition that disproportionately affects women

ADVISOR: Assistant professor Careesa Liu

APPLICATION: Aims to shorten diagnostic delays for this condition, which lacks visible clinical markers because it stems from changes in how the nervous system processes sensory input.



KAITLYN DUNN '26

PROGRAM:
Operations research, M.S.

RESEARCH:
Developing machine learning algorithms that combine data from multiple medical imaging sources to improve cancer detection

ADVISOR: Professor Nezamoddin Kachouie

APPLICATION: Focuses particularly on low-dose radiation imaging, which is commonly used in rural and underserved hospitals, where image noise can obscure tumors that might otherwise be caught earlier. The algorithms are designed to assess tumor texture and help physicians identify high-risk patients and prioritize urgent care in emergency settings.



QUINTIN PETERS

PROGRAM:
Biomedical engineering, Ph.D.

RESEARCH:
Using electroencephalography to study blink-related oscillations, the brain's processing of visual information during spontaneous blinking, and how concussions alter that process

ADVISOR: Assistant professor Careesa Liu

APPLICATION: Aims to create a standardized, objective measure of concussion severity and one day give clinicians a diagnostic tool for concussions comparable to an X-ray for a broken bone.



Aydeger Wins NSF Grant to Measure, Combat Computer Chip 'Leaks'

Researchers are finding that future quantum computers could break the mathematical foundations of many widely used public-key systems—a looming reality that has spurred the standardization of new post-quantum cryptographic algorithms to further protect these assets.

But now, even that step is not enough.

“We protect important information using secret codes,” said assistant professor Abdullah Aydeger, whose research includes post-quantum security, “but a code can be perfect on paper and still give itself away in practice.”

When one of these new quantum-resistant codes runs on a small, inexpensive computer chip often used in smart meters, industrial sensors, medical monitors and other connected devices, Aydeger said, the chip leaks tiny clues while it works: slight changes in how much power it uses and faint electromagnetic signals.

So, someone with a sensor nearby can measure this “physical side-channel leakage” and recover the secret key without breaking the underlying math or even physically accessing the device.

Supported by a new two-year, \$200,000 grant Aydeger won from the National Science Foundation, he is working to combat this nefarious activity.

He said his project, “Physical Layer Side Channel Assessment and Lightweight Countermeasures for Embedded Post Quantum Cryptography,” will do two things.

First, it will measure how much these new post-quantum cryptographic algorithms leak on small chips, creating a helpful baseline measurement for the first time.

Second, it calls for Aydeger and his team to design and evaluate countermeasures that scramble the timing and order of operations, so the leaked clues become much harder to use. But adding a degree of difficulty is the setting: Any fixes must fit within the constraints of these already packed chips.

“The project will also train students in hardware security, embedded cryptography and side-channel evaluation, strengthening the workforce needed for the nation’s transition to quantum-resistant technologies,” NSF wrote on the award page for the grant.

Prime is a quantity.

Unique, a product unachievable by any two other numbers. 2, 3, 7 ...

Prime is a quality.

Excellent, of the highest caliber.
Outstanding, Choice, Top-Notch...

In both quantity and quality, this column features Prime Examples of what makes us Florida Tech.

PRIME EXAMPLES *of* TRADITION

Tradition is passed down from generation to generation. A custom, a behavior, a belief that connects and grows. For one reason or another, traditions last. Their longevity indicates quality and reliability, badges of prestige and trust. Time-tested and -honored, classic yet evolving, traditions adapt to survive while holding fast to the essence that has sustained them.

At Florida Tech, we honor, celebrate and strengthen traditions—both those longstanding that have shaped who we are and those of tomorrow, just getting started.

Here are a few prime examples.

2 ANNIVERSARIES TO CELEBRATE



CLEMENTE CENTER

October 2026 marks 25 years since the Charles and Ruth Clemente Center for Sports and Recreation first opened its doors. To mark the anniversary, the Clemente Center will host celebratory events—such as a Clemente Fit Games competition, a fall Bench Press Challenge, an open house for incoming students and more—throughout the 2026–2027 academic year.

ABA ONLINE

For 20 years, Florida Tech has provided premier educational opportunities to current and future behavior analysts across the globe through ABA Online. Since founder Jose Martinez-Diaz first pioneered remote broadcasting of behavior analysis classes at Florida Tech in 2006, ABA Online has expanded its offerings from solely professional certificates to a host of bachelor's and master's degrees and continuing education certifications.



3 CAMPUS CUSTOMS

NEW-STUDENT ORIENTATION

During Orientation week Aug. 8–14, Florida Tech welcomed more than 1,400 new students to campus with a full schedule of events, including the President's Welcome and Convocation, Late Night Breakfast, Pick Your Passion breakout sessions and the classic Color Wars.

FOUNDERS DAY

On Sept. 18, students, faculty and staff gathered in the Clemente Center intramural gym to celebrate Florida Tech's 68th anniversary at the annual Founders Day Ice Cream Social.

HOMECOMING: SAVE THE DATE!

From Oct. 18–24, you're invited to celebrate HOCO '26, a week of Panther Pride and campus tradition featuring classic events, such as the annual Alumni Awards Gala, HOCO 2-miler and Homecoming Fest.

Scan for details:



CLEMENTE COURT UNVEILING

Florida Tech Athletics unveiled the Clemente Center court's new look at a campus open house in June.

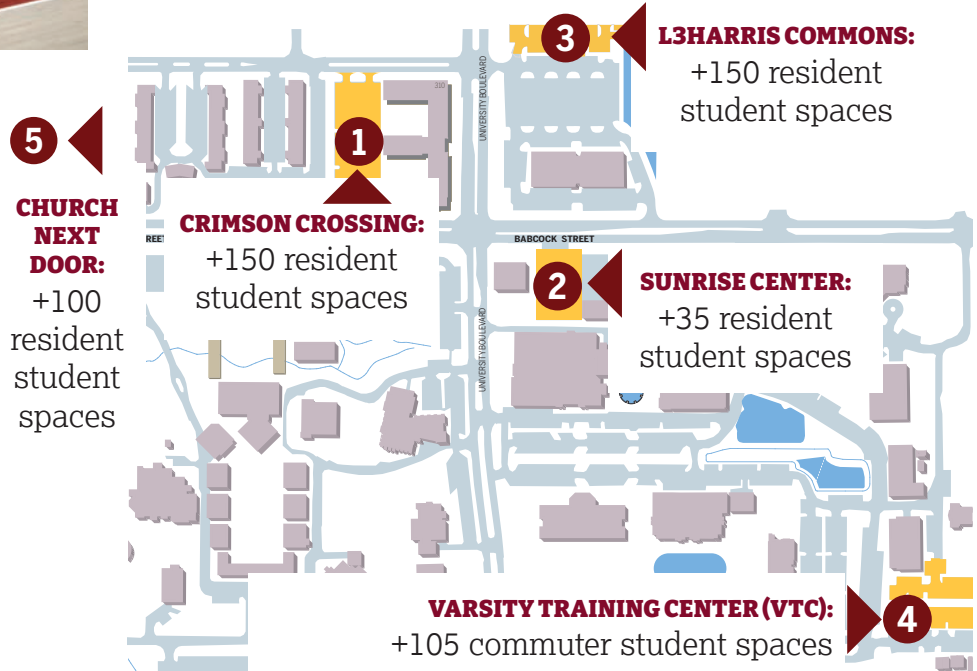
“This exciting update represents the continued growth and pride of Florida Tech Athletics and will serve as the centerpiece for countless moments in the Clemente Center for years to come.”

—Christina Hardman, associate athletic director for external operations

2 FOUNDATIONS REFRESHED

PANTHER PARKING

Over the next several months, the university is adding more than 500 parking spaces on campus to provide more room for Panther vehicles.





Cleared for Leadership

Four Florida Tech alumni at the helms of aviation's most influential associations reflect on innovation, leadership and the future of flight.

By Karly Horn

Airports today aren't what they used to be—and that's the point.

Formerly a place to simply take off and land while getting from point A to point B, a successful airport is now a customer-centric, community hub fueled by developing technology and innovation. From advanced air mobility—drones and electric vertical take-off and landing (eVTOL) aircraft—to the challenges and opportunities created by the emergence of artificial intelligence (AI), the aviation industry is positively turbulent.

To navigate such volatility and propel the industry forward, aviation professionals rely on professional associations, such as the American Association of Airport Executives (AAAE), Airport Consultants Council (ACC) and Airports Council International – North America (ACI-NA).

While each has a focus, together, these organizations represent some of the industry's most prominent players in airport operations, policy and advocacy, infrastructure and development, consulting, technology and finance. They champion innovation, foster collaborative industry networks, spearhead pivotal endeavors—and are all currently led by Florida Tech alumni:

FIN BONSET '96, '99 MSA

*AECOM, Vice President, Aviation Planning and Advisory Services
ACC, Chair*

REBECCA HUPP '92

*Austin Commercial, Vice President of Aviation
AAAE, Immediate Past Chair*

MARSHALL STEVENS '93

Memphis-Shelby County Airport Authority, Vice President Operations/Chief Operating Officer; AAAE, Chair

JASON TERRERI '01

*Syracuse Regional Airport Authority, Executive Director
ACI-NA, Vice Chair*

Theirs are four of the most influential voices in aviation today. Here, we speak with them about the future of aviation, the role of airports in society, leadership and how Florida Tech has contributed to their success.

continued on page 20

What do you see as the single biggest inflection point facing the aviation industry over the next decade?

Bonset: We need to cultivate our future labor force—people just getting into the industry. Airports are not going to go away. So, the inflection point is ensuring we have a continuous pipeline of qualified professionals—and universities, like Florida Tech, play a huge role in this. Everybody wants to be a pilot. Everybody wants to do the fancy things in aviation, but we also need engineers, architects, planners and airport operations people. We can't lose track of that.

Hupp: I think the single biggest challenge for our airport industry is aging infrastructure, combined with rising costs, high interest rates and lack of new funding sources. While that's going to be a challenge for the aviation industry specifically, I think AI is going to challenge every industry.

Stevens: So much is happening all at the same time. The FAA has prioritized air traffic control (ATC) modernization, which is absolutely necessary. Even the best ATC system in the world needs to get better. However, what needs to be done is the equivalent of trying to modernize your dining room while you're having a dinner party.

Terreri: I think drones and advanced air mobility are going to be really big disruptors for the industry. Airlines are retiring smaller aircraft, like the 50-seat regional jet. So, a lot of small communities are losing their air service because they do not generate enough demand to make the economics of a larger jet work for the airlines. That gap is most likely going to be filled by advanced air mobility: these smaller electric vehicles. We need to get airports—and the public—ready for that.

What leadership qualities are most needed in aviation today?

Bonset: There are a lot of different generations in the workforce today, but really good leaders are able to work with



FIN BONSET '96, '99 MSA

AECOM, Vice President,
Aviation Planning and
Advisory Services;
ACC, Chair



REBECCA HUPP '92

Austin Commercial,
Vice President of Aviation;
AAAE, Immediate Past Chair



I think the single biggest challenge for our airport industry is aging infrastructure, combined with rising costs, high interest rates and lack of new funding sources.

—Rebecca Hupp

all of them—understanding their people, what makes them tick, the way that they've been educated is No. 1. The second is to know a lot of different components within the airport development industry. The best leaders I've seen are people who have held many different roles in different disciplines. They are well-rounded people who can talk the talk and use their experience to make good decisions.

Stevens: Ultimately, aviation leadership is about communicating the vision. Leaders believe in what the industry stands for: connecting people. There are now so many means of communication, and an inspirational, visionary leader must use them all.

How has the definition of a “successful airport” changed since you first entered the industry?

Hupp: Well, I think my definition of a successful airport has changed, but I think for the communities that we serve, the definition has been and always will be the level of air service available. Every community wants more air service, and they want it at a lower price. That's consistent. But I think that ease of passenger travel and offering different amenities for different kinds of passengers are important. The family of six wants something different from the single business traveler, and being able to serve the needs of each of those groups and everybody in between matters.

Terreri: I started in airports in 2002. Then, they were very operationally focused. Airports are much more about the customer experience now. We've seen a shift to be more business- and customer-focused, offering more services than just the utility of planes taking off and landing. I describe airports today as economic catalysts for the community. If it is providing the services a community needs—that could be cargo, passenger service, business amenities, lounges, fun bars—than it is successful.

Looking ahead, what makes you most optimistic about the future of air travel?

Hupp: I'm optimistic because the people I see coming up are passionate. I think there are a lot of stereotypes about the upcoming generations, but I don't necessarily think that they're true. The young people whom I've had an opportunity to meet and interact with, including some of the students from Florida Tech, are all motivated, engaged and enthusiastic. That makes me optimistic.

Stevens: I've lost count of all the new technologies that were going to darken the skies with new aircraft—but they never did. There is always a new technology. We don't lack for innovation in the aviation industry. It is always changing, evolving—and that gives me optimism.

Looking back, how did your experience at Florida Tech help shape the way you approach leadership and problem-solving in the aviation industry today?

Bonset: We have a very diverse range of people who attend Florida Tech from all over the world. It's a true international university. So, you learn how to work with people from diverse backgrounds. Also, diversity in our programs makes us unique. My degree is in airport management with flight, but we had classes in airport planning, design and operations, as well as business and logistics classes—I even took a few engineering classes. That variety in my background—constantly learning something new and different—really prepared me as a subject matter expert and future leader.

Terreri: One of the big things that you're taught at Florida Tech is: How do you solve problems? How do you work as a team? How do you prioritize what has to happen first? That human-factors coursework has always stuck with me. I also had a core group of professors who

“

I think drones and advanced air mobility are going to be really big disruptors for the industry.

—Jason Terreri



JASON TERRERI '01

Syracuse Regional Airport Authority, Executive Director;
ACI-NA, Vice Chair



MARSHALL STEVENS '93

Memphis-Shelby County Airport Authority, Vice President Operations/Chief Operating Officer; AAAE, Chair

held a very high ethical standard. And so, from a leadership perspective, one thing I took away was that sometimes, you're going to make a decision that people aren't going to be happy with, but integrity is what is most important.

What advice would you give current students who hope to build careers in aviation and transportation?

Bonset: Be active and make connections. I'm still friends with the folks I went to school with—and a lot of us are leaders in the industry. We have an incredible alumni network at Florida Tech; I have not seen one like it anywhere else. A lot of people have helped me, and now, I'm giving back to others and to the university. Join student groups, build your network, keep learning—that has been the secret to my success.

Hupp: I learned early on that the world is run by people who show up. If you want to have a say, then you need to use your voice. It is the people who step up and contribute who have the opportunity to make a difference. So, don't just sit back; create a situation for yourself—like you do by going to Florida Tech. The more you get out there and interact with others in the profession, the more opportunities you're going to have. Success builds upon success.

Stevens: Get involved; learn as much as you can; and focus on the internship. My first job was with the company with whom I had interned, and my interview was three questions long: "How are you? How's school going? When can you start?" The chance to take what you're learning and use it out in the workforce is absolutely vital.

Terreri: Florida Tech is a small school, and aviation is a small industry—never burn a bridge. Start building your network now because you'll be amazed at how often these people will show back up in your life. And reach out to alumni. Every move I have made in my career was facilitated by a Florida Tech alum, all the way to where I am today. Then, pay it back.

Practically Ambitious

By Adam Lowenstein

New dean brings vision for ‘enduring and sustainable’ evolution of the COES.

It probably didn't matter that it was a telescope a young Sambandamurthy Ganapathy was tasked with repairing over the course of his weekly hands-on practicum shifts at a physics lab at The American College in Madurai, India.

What mattered for the first-year student, what surprisingly and wonderfully helped illuminate an exciting academic path forward, was the process and the results.

It took weeks to order and receive parts to repair the telescopes, to work on them with a faculty mentor who helped guide Ganapathy and several other students. But eventually, it was time to try them out.

On the roof above the physics lab, Ganapathy peered through his repaired telescope and saw stars, planets—and his future.

“That’s one of the moments where I felt connected to doing something with my hands and seeing the results,” Ganapathy says.

In the years since his telescope eureka moment, Ganapathy went on to earn his Ph.D. in quantum materials and build a distinguished career, now into its third decade, as an academic leader, teacher, physicist and researcher focused on materials engineering.

As he was with that telescope, and even as a child, Ganapathy remains a tinkerer. But his days of using screwdrivers and soldering guns have long passed. Now, his tools might include a beam of light, and his work may be with microscopic dabs of material to which he adds even smaller amounts of a different material.

That addition can dramatically alter the original material's properties, a seismic change at an atomic level.

As he begins as dean of the College of Engineering and Science, Ganapathy will again be exploring the impact of additions and choices.

His tenure starts with listening.

“I’m coming into a community that I know is doing really well. But I would like to listen to people and then understand what their ambitions and aspirations are. I see the dean’s role to be someone who provides an environment that enables people to succeed: our students, our faculty, our staff, everyone,” he says.

Brain-Inspired Computing

Ganapathy’s most recent research is seeking new materials or new functionalities from existing materials that he and his team can manipulate, including via the use of tools, such as light and electricity.

“I see the dean’s role to be someone who provides an environment that enables people to succeed.”

—Sambandamurthy Ganapathy

One major change Ganapathy is pursuing could revolutionize modern computing—including artificial intelligence—while reducing the vast amounts of energy needed to power all of it.

Called neuromorphic computing, this brain-inspired approach would work by making the chips at the heart of the computing process function more like human brains, which both store and process information at the same location. (The chips will not be sentient.)

Current computing architecture does something similar but without our brain’s evolutionary elegance: There is memory; there is a processor; but data goes back and forth between them, often billions of times, as it is processed on the way to a decision or output.

These back-and-forth treks require energy—a whole lot of it when it comes to artificial intelligence—and producing that energy can be costly, financially and environmentally.

This storage-and-process ability will not be possible without materials that can store and process data at the same space and, ideally, are also more energy efficient than the silicon-based architecture primarily in use today.

Ganapathy says we are starting to see examples of new materials working side by side with traditional technology. Faster and more energy-efficient neuromorphic materials are being added to silicon electronics to handle processes that do not require intense computing power more quickly, such as pattern recognition and instant decision-making in autonomous vehicles.

“So, we work very closely with the semiconductor and computing industries on the materials that they use, and we develop new materials that are compatible with those and can be integrated into this current architecture so we

could utilize the dramatic properties of these new materials,” Ganapathy says.

‘Leadership Journey’

If curiosity fuels Ganapathy’s academic endeavors, collaboration—between people, public and private entities, university and industry, public sector and the government—has guided him as a researcher and academic leader.

For faculty, collaboration often starts in the lab, as Ganapathy has seen with his materials research. There are chemists who grow the material and characterize it, physicists who build devices out of it, electrical engineers who will develop the systems spurred by the research’s findings and more.

“Increasingly, the world is going into research that’s collaborative,” Ganapathy says. “And that’s what I’ve been doing as an academic leader on my leadership journey—working in very collaborative ways.”

He also sees the value and power of collaboration as an administrator.

The Space Coast’s partnership possibilities within the space, defense, aerospace, advanced manufacturing and other key sectors coupled with what Ganapathy described as “Florida Tech’s DNA in the space program,” appealed to Ganapathy as he considered the opportunity to lead COES.

“I see that the future belongs to an institution that would actually bring together the talent, ideas, partnerships and opportunities for all of us,” he says. “I think that’s where the institution would thrive.”

Ambitious and Practical

The curiosity and ambition that fuel Ganapathy’s scholarship are welcome in his leadership role, as well. However, he says, those drives must be tempered with two notions: what is practically possible and what is impactful immediately.

“The balance is what defines good leaders in my view,” he says.

Put another way, the balance is about tackling far-ranging challenges and more immediate ones but not losing sight of strengthening and evolving the systems that make the college and university successful.

Ganapathy sees his role as dean as providing an environment that enables the “extremely talented people” on campus to succeed, whether students, faculty or staff.

“Be curious, be ambitious and be practical in achieving those ambitions, so that we build structures and research and education programs that are enduring and sustainable.”



WHEN YOU ARE NOT WORKING, YOU ARE ...

TRAVELING: “We are fortunate to have a large extended family all over the country, and so we travel a lot and explore things together.”

OUTDOORS: “We love nature. We love just to be outside.”

CYCLING, HIKING: “All kinds of activities. I’m looking forward to leveraging the nine months of beautiful weather!”





Crimson Crossing

INSIDE FLORIDA TECH'S NEWEST RESIDENCE HALL

By Trey Avant | Photos by Adam Palumbo

For decades, Florida Tech has built its reputation on bold thinking, passionate innovation and an unwavering commitment to student success. Crimson Crossing, the university's newest residence hall, is the latest—and most striking—expression of that commitment.

Located at the northeast corner of Babcock Street and University Boulevard, Crimson Crossing creates a new residential gateway for Florida Tech's campus and reflects the university's continued investment in student life amid record enrollment growth. Community gathering spaces, outdoor courtyards, a grab-and-go café, fitness facilities, dedicated study areas and laundry on every floor round out a building designed as much for living as for learning.

Opening a building of this size involves far more than completing construction. The final weeks require commissioning every building system, testing fire and life safety equipment, coordinating technology and security, furnishing hundreds of rooms and training staff—a true campus-wide effort.

"A Florida Tech education requires hard work, creative thinking and a relentless pursuit of excellence, and we brought that approach to this project," Florida Tech President John Nicklow says. "Crimson Crossing represents the innovation and vision that make Florida Tech so special."

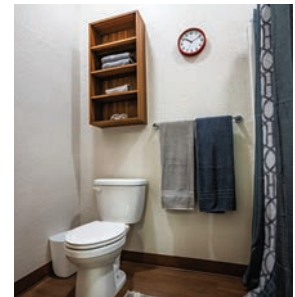
Here, we take a closer look at the spaces that will define the Florida Tech residential experience for years to come.

continued on page 26



FIRST FLOOR: The ground floor of Crimson Crossing sets the tone for the building's blend of comfort and convenience. A bright, open lobby lounge welcomes residents with colorful furniture and curated artwork celebrating beloved Florida Tech landmarks and campus history. Just steps away, the grab-and-go convenience store keeps residents fueled before class. A multipurpose room, classroom and outdoor courtyards round out a ground floor built for everyday student life.





LIVING AREAS: Most of Crimson Crossing's units are four-bedroom, two-bathroom apartments featuring hardwood floors, granite countertops, wood-finish cabinetry and modern appliances in a fully equipped kitchen. Private bedrooms come furnished with an extra-long twin bed, desk, chair, dresser and closet space. Likewise, shared living areas are furnished and ready from day one. Dedicated laundry rooms on every floor add everyday convenience. It's apartment-style living designed for the demands of college life.



continued on page 28



COMMON SPACES: Crimson Crossing's common spaces are as varied as the students who call it home. Each floor features a Community Corner—a recreational space uniquely outfitted per floor, with options ranging from treadmills, stationary bikes and ellipticals to pool, ping pong and foosball tables, offering a place to unwind and compete. For students looking to concentrate, each floor offers a Recharge Retreat—a study room providing a quiet space for individual work or small-group collaboration. Additional study and lounge spaces spread throughout every floor ensure residents always have a place to focus. Whether it is for unwinding, studying or socializing, every space at Crimson Crossing is designed to give Florida Tech students a place not just to stay but to live.



Behind the Building

» Crimson Crossing spans 212,237 square feet across six stories—the largest student housing complex Florida Tech has ever built and, at \$96 million, the largest capital investment in student life in university history.



» Construction took approximately 15 months, beginning with site preparation and progressing through structural framing, interior finishes, furniture installation and final commissioning.



» Construction required the installation of more than 55 miles of 4-foot-wide drywall—enough to stretch from Melbourne to Orlando.

» The structure uses light-gauge steel framing engineered to meet Florida's demanding coastal wind-load requirements, offering durability and precision alongside efficient construction.



» The underground stormwater system beneath each courtyard uses a large-scale modular installation in place of a traditional retention pond, maximizing usable space above ground.

» High-efficiency HVAC equipment, LED lighting and high-performance exterior walls and windows work together to improve insulation, reduce cooling loads and enhance energy efficiency.



» Furnishing the building required 30 53-foot semitrailers' worth of furniture and more than 125 pieces of artwork, giving every space a distinct personality.

» Crimson Crossing's 556 beds across 149 apartment-style units increase Florida Tech's on-campus housing capacity by 27%. For context, Columbia Village has approximately 350 beds, and Roberts Hall has approximately 250.



DRIVEN

By Trey Avant

It was her senior year at Illinois Wesleyan University when Leslie Matuszewich met Gandalf.

Not the wizard—the rat. Specifically, a lab rat assigned to her as part of a class assignment.

She was reading *The Hobbit* at the time, so the name felt right. Over time, she trained Gandalf through a series of increasingly complex tasks.

The next year, Wayne Dornan, a new Wesleyan faculty member who specialized in behavioral neuroscience, joined the psychology department. It was a field Matuszewich had never heard of. Dornan's teaching style clicked with her in a way she still finds difficult to explain.

Researching alongside Dornan, presenting their work and hearing his encouragement to apply to graduate school gave her something she hadn't expected to find: a clear path forward.

Today, Matuszewich, a behavioral neuroscientist who has spent her career studying what drives people to act, persist and succeed, is settling in as dean of Florida Tech's College of Psychology and Liberal Arts (COPLA).

The Scientist

Matuszewich earned her Ph.D. in psychology from the State University of New York at Buffalo, researching dopamine—a neurotransmitter central to motivated behavior, from addiction and eating to sexual behavior.

After completing her Ph.D., Matuszewich accepted a postdoctoral position at Case Western Reserve University, where her research centered on depression and suicidal behavior. The work was important, but it was heavy on brain tissue analysis—and behavior had always been what drew her in.

Matuszewich then returned to animal behavior research as part of a research team, this time studying the vulnerability that chronic stress creates for methamphetamine addiction and its long-term neurological effects. Once she joined the faculty at Northern Illinois University (NIU), her research evolved to examine how stress alters motivated behavior more generally, such as effort to obtain food rewards.

She had spent years studying what drives rats to pursue rewards. Soon,

Behavioral neuroscientist Leslie Matuszewich has spent her career studying motivation. As COPLA's new dean, she's putting those lessons into practice.

she found herself asking the same questions about her students.

When a student came to discuss their grades, Matuszewich told them they could earn an A if they completed the remaining work. The student's response stopped her cold.

"I'm fine with a B or C," the student shrugged.

"I couldn't understand it. I had always been surrounded by students who were striving for A's," she says. "That conversation sparked my interest in understanding why people make different choices about where to invest their time and effort."

The Leader

At NIU, Matuszewich never stopped teaching—or climbing. She served as director of undergraduate studies and chair of the psychology department before becoming senior associate dean for research and graduate studies in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, a role in which she grew the college's external research funding to more than \$31 million.

She describes her leadership style as team-based and people-centered, shaped by years of learning what she didn't know.

"When I came out of graduate school, I was certain I knew the right path forward," she says. "Over time, I learned that isn't true. There are always multiple perspectives to consider. I'm always better off when decisions are informed by shared governance, shared leadership and collaborative discussion."

Her approach shows up in how she moves through a campus. She prefers to walk rather than stay behind a desk. Seeing people in their own environments helps her understand both the barriers they face and the opportunities available to them, she says.

The Vision

When the COPLA dean position opened at Florida Tech, Matuszewich wasn't actively searching. Her youngest son had just finished high school and had started college in Colorado. She wasn't prepared to move from Illinois yet, but the posting caught her attention immediately.

"When I saw the advertisement, I was intrigued, because it's

such a unique college," she says. "I thought, 'Oh, I have to apply.'"

She was drawn to Florida Tech's commitment to student-faculty research, its balance of scale and intimacy, its identity as an R2 doctoral research institution and COPLA's portfolio across its three schools. She sees COPLA not as a counterweight to Florida Tech's STEM identity but as an essential component within it.

"COPLA has strengths that I don't think will be replaced," she says.

She points to The Scott Center for Autism Treatment, to behavior analysts and licensed counselors graduating from the behavior analysis and psychology schools, and to the growing demand for professionals who work directly with people. She also sees an opening for the School of Arts and Communication to serve the rest of Florida Tech in a new way, helping scientists and engineers translate their work for broader audiences.

"One of the growing areas in science is public-facing science communication," Matuszewich says. "We need chemists, biologists and physicists to be able to communicate their work. That's one of the things I find most exciting."

Her goals for the first few years are methodical: Learn the college; amplify what is working; and build partnerships within the university and throughout the community to ensure that COPLA's contributions are visible and understood.

The New Adventure

Matuszewich moved to Florida with her partner, Ross, and their two cats. Their sons, Michael and Peyton, are in college: Michael studies statistics at Iowa State University, and Peyton studies accounting at the University of Colorado - Colorado Springs. Matuszewich and Ross are, as she puts it, "free birds."

She already has her eye on cultivating a garden. A devoted grower of all kinds of plants, she acknowledges she is not especially scientific about it. She just likes to try things and see what happens.

"I am looking forward to learning about new plants that thrive in Florida," she says.

It is a small thing, perhaps. But for someone who has spent a career studying what motivates living things to grow—and who now has a college of her own to tend—it feels exactly right.



GET TO KNOW LESLIE ...

HOME: “I am originally from Chicago, Illinois. I was born and raised in the city, on the North Side.”

THREE VALUES AS DEAN: Transparency, ethics, student success

STAYING MOTIVATED WHEN THINGS GET HARD:

“What keeps me motivated is finding a piece of the problem that I can actually influence, making progress on it and seeing that progress lead toward a larger goal. I also eat chocolate and ice cream. A lot of ice cream.”

FAVORITE PIECE OF ADVICE: “Value the process rather than the outcome.”

FREE TIME: “I spend a lot of time walking or hiking as often as possible. I also love to cook and garden. Growing plants is one of my joys. I like trying new plants, especially flowering. I enjoy watching sports. If given the opportunity, you will find me at some Panthers sporting events.”

A MESSAGE FROM THE FLORIDA TECH ALUMNI ASSOCIATION

It is with a mix of pride, gratitude and a touch of sadness that I write my final letter to you as president of the Florida Tech Alumni Association.

As my term ends, I have found myself reflecting on what an incredible honor it has been to serve not only as a member of the Alumni Association but also as one of its leaders.

Throughout this journey, I have had the privilege of working alongside dedicated alumni for whom I have the utmost respect and admiration. Together, we have shared a common purpose: strengthening the Florida Tech community, preserving the traditions that make our university special and supporting future generations of Panthers.

I have also been fortunate to work with our exceptional Florida Tech Office of Alumni Affairs staff, whose passion and commitment help transform ideas into meaningful programs, events and initiatives. Their tireless efforts make it possible for us to engage alumni around the world and foster lifelong connections to Florida Tech.

One of the most rewarding aspects of serving on the association has been supporting programs that celebrate the achievements of our alumni and create opportunities for students. From alumni-funded scholarships that benefit legacy students to events that honor and recognize excellence across our university community, the impact of the Alumni Association is far-reaching.

Celebrations, such as the MLK Commemoration, the WISE Awards and Grad Bash—which welcomes graduating students into the alumni family—reflect our commitment to honoring the past while investing in the future. I am proud to have played even a small role in continuing these cherished traditions.

During my time as president, I also had the unique opportunity to help welcome a new university president—an experience that few alumni leaders have the chance to be part of. Watching Florida Tech continue to grow and evolve from this vantage point has been truly inspiring, and I am excited for all that lies ahead for our university.

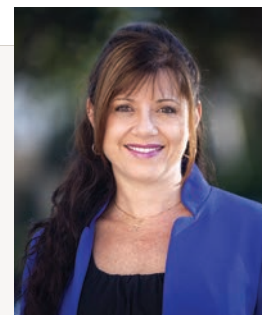
As I conclude my term, I want to express my heartfelt gratitude to everyone who made this experience so meaningful: my fellow board members, our alumni, university leadership and the Alumni Affairs staff. Serving as your president has been one of the greatest honors of my life and a chapter I will always treasure.

Although my time as president is ending, my pride in being a Panther never will. I look forward to remaining an active member of this incredible community and cheering on Florida Tech for years to come.

Thank you for the opportunity to serve.

Yours,

Sherry Acanfora-Ruohomaki
'93, '00, '05 M.S.
FTAA President



YOUR ALUMNI ASSOCIATION OFFICERS

Sherry Acanfora-Ruohomaki

'93, '00, '05 M.S.
President | Melbourne, FL
sherry@facetscog.com

Ameen Sarkees '89

Vice President | Merritt Island, FL
aysarkees@yahoo.com

Warren Pittorie '15, '18 M.S., '22 Ph.D.

Treasurer | Melbourne, FL
wpittorie2012@fit.edu

John Robertson '13

Secretary | San Juan Capistrano, CA
jrobertson2009@gmail.com

Bryan Pommer '85

Member-at-Large | Miami, FL
bryan@pommers.com

Fin Bonset '96, '99 MSA

Past President | Indian River, FL
fbonset@vht.com



See You Soon!



Oct. 18–24

SCAN FOR DETAILS:



Alumni Study Tour Explores Brazil's Pantanal

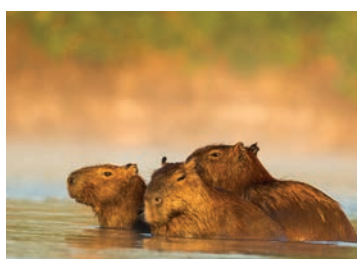
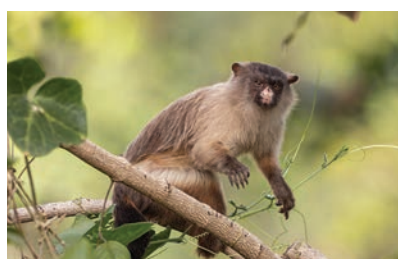
Professors Richard Aronson and Mark Bush led 18 Florida Tech alumni and friends on a memorable journey to the Pantanal region in western Brazil during the eight-day Alumni Study Tour II July 8–16.

The massive wetland—20 times the size of the Everglades—supports an astonishing abundance and diversity of wildlife, and the group saw many of the region's famous and charismatic denizens: giant river otters, capybaras, howler monkeys, hyacinth macaws and, most famously, jaguars.

"The Pantanal is first and foremost the best place on the planet to see jaguars, and we saw a lot of them stomping around, hunting, swimming, grooming themselves and, generally, acting like domestic kitty cats—only a lot larger and with much bigger teeth!" Aronson said.

The group spent the trip hiking, canoeing, going on safaris and more.

Photos by Rich Aronson, Mark Bush and Brice Smith.



ALUMNI RECEPTIONS COMING SOON

OCTOBER 2026
DENVER



NOVEMBER 2026
ORLANDO



JANUARY 2027
HUNTSVILLE



MAY 2027
BOSTON & NYC



Scan to learn more

*Event dates and locations are subject to change.

2024-07-01

By day, **ROBERT “ROB” MCINTOSH** '16 serves as an applications programmer with GSE Inc. on NASA's Occupational Health Contract Team. But when the workday ends, dinner is finished and his young daughter is asleep, he heads to the rink, where his passion for hockey and unwavering Panther Pride take center stage.

For the past six years, McIntosh has served as the volunteer head coach of Florida Tech's ice hockey club team, helping shape the next generation of scholar-athletes while giving back to a program that played a defining role in his own Florida Tech experience.

“Being asked to coach the team was one of the greatest honors I've received,” McIntosh says. “I didn't have coaching experience, but I knew I cared deeply about Florida Tech hockey and wanted to help build the program back into a strong collegiate team.”

Since taking the helm, McIntosh has dedicated countless hours to mentoring players, fostering team culture and advancing the program's growth—strengthening the Panther ice hockey community one practice, one game and one season at a time.

In recent years, the team has become a consistent contender in the American Collegiate Hockey Association (ACHA), earning playoff berths year after year, drawing sellout crowds at home games and reaching new milestones.

This past season, the Panthers secured the program's first-ever ACHA playoff victory, marking another significant step forward in the club's growth and competitiveness.

McIntosh's impact on the program extends beyond the bench. Drawing on the technical expertise he uses in his professional career, he has introduced a more data-driven approach to the team's operations by developing tools that help coaches and players better understand performance and identify areas for improvement.

“I saw an opportunity to use data to make our team better, so I started building apps and tracking analytics to help our coaches and players improve,” McIntosh says. “It's been rewarding to see those tools grow from helping our program to being adopted leaguewide.”

During the team's end-of-season banquet in May, the club hockey program and Florida Tech Athletics surprised McIntosh by retiring his collegiate jersey—a distinction reserved for only a select few alumni in the program's history.

“I'm still at a loss for words,” he says. “Having my jersey retired was such an incredible honor. This program means a lot to me, and to be recognized in that way was a gesture I'll never forget.”

—Erin Alvarado '16



SPOTLIGHT ON

Rob McIntosh '16

FLORIDA TECH CONNECTION: '16 B.S. information systems

GO-TO HYPE SONG: “Bring Em Out” by T.I.

FAVORITE SPORT (BESIDES HOCKEY): Baseball

REALITY TV SHOW YOU'D BE ON: “American Ninja Warrior”

COMFORT MOVIE: “Happy Gilmore”

MOTIVATIONAL QUOTE YOU TELL THE TEAM: “Grit: a psychological and character trait defined as passion and sustained perseverance toward long-term goals. It involves the stamina to stick with your future, day in and day out, not just for the week or month, but for years, working hard to make that future a reality.”

1970s

1 FRANK DESILVA '78 was inducted into the Water Quality Association Hall of Fame, the organization's highest honor, in recognition of more than 45 years of leadership and service in the water treatment industry. DeSilva serves as technical consultant and dean of ResinTech University at ResinTech Inc. and has been a longtime leader in water purification education and innovation.

1980s

2 EDWARD HESS '80 has built a successful career in the automotive aftermarket industry, launching his own vehicle customization business shortly after graduating from Florida Tech and continuing to operate it more than 44 years later. In the past year, he organized the Pi Kappa Alpha Zeta Sigma Chapter Mortgage Group, a network of alumni that provides alumni-financed mortgages at significantly reduced interest rates to support the fraternity chapter.

3 EDWARD P. DONOVAN '82 Ph.D. received a lifetime achievement award from the Environmental Education Association of South Carolina (EEASC) in recognition of his outstanding contributions to environmental education throughout the state.

4 BARRY BAKER '85 A.S., '86, **DAN BERTOSSA** '86, **VINCE FERRIS** '86 (not pictured), **MIKE KELLY** '86, **JACK ZIMAK** '86, **RICK MARKS** '87, **SCOT KILLEN** '88, **CHRIS HELLSTEN** '89 and **MARK MELLINGER** '90, Ph.D., reunited at the Dad Vail Regatta as members of an alumni 8 crew composed entirely of Florida Tech rowers from the 1986 national championship team. Competing in the alumni 500-meter dash nearly 40 years after their championship season, the crew won the regatta's Over-50 division and celebrated a successful reunion of Florida Tech rowing alumni.



1



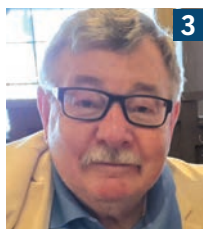
2



4



5



3



6



7



8



9

5 JEFFREY HOEL '87, '89 M.S., retired after 40 years of combined active-duty and federal civilian service with the U.S. Navy. In 2025, he hiked a section of Spain's famed Camino de Santiago pilgrimage route and plans to return in October to continue his journey along the historic trail.

1990s

DAVID ISHIHARA '90 A.S., '92, was appointed deputy executive director of aviation for the Massachusetts Port Authority (Massport). He previously served as director of aviation operations, safety and security at Boston Logan International Airport and has held leadership roles with the U.S. Department of Transportation, Transportation Security Administration and Federal Aviation Administration.

SUBMIT YOUR NEWS TO alumnotes@fit.edu

SHARON WILLIAMS '92 was appointed executive director of aviation for the Massachusetts Port Authority (Massport). A 32-year Massport veteran and commercial pilot, she will oversee aviation operations for Boston Logan International Airport, Hanscom Field and Worcester Regional Airport.

2000s

RYAN TENNY '09, '15 M.S., was named a 2025 Airport Business 40 Under 40 honoree, one of the aviation industry's most prestigious recognitions. The award celebrates emerging leaders who are shaping the industry today while helping to define its future.

2010s

6 ERIK MACKAY '11 welcomed his third Panther cub, Gabriella Lucy, Dec. 15, 2025. The family is thrilled to celebrate its newest addition.

7 STEPHANIE ZOUTENBIER '11 and her husband, Brian Riley, welcomed their daughter, Julianna Zoutenbier, Oct. 6, 2025.

8 MICKEY MIDDAGH '14 retired from the U.S. Air Force after 24 years in Security Forces, where he led teams responsible for protecting critical national defense assets and personnel around the world. He

later founded Grey Matter Ops, a situational awareness and preparedness organization, and launched the Red Dot Mindset podcast, which focuses on personal safety, workplace violence prevention and decision-making under stress. He also serves on the board of directors for Texas for Heroes.

9 MIKE RENOE '14 was promoted to engineering director of Outside Inc.'s Platform division. In the same month, he and his wife welcomed their first children, twins Clyde and Clara.

10 KEITH CRISMAN '17 M.S., '20 Ph.D., was awarded tenure and promoted to associate professor of space studies in the John D. Odegard School of Aerospace Sciences at the

continued on page 36

Few people have made history on Capitol Hill. Lisa P. Grant '95 M.S. has.

As the first woman and African American to serve as chief procurement officer for the U.S. House of Representatives, Grant broke barriers in one of the nation's most influential institutions.

But her journey to that historic achievement was built on decades of perseverance, professional growth and a steadfast commitment to education.

While working full time in the federal government, Grant attended evening classes at Florida Tech's former Washington, D.C., campus, earning her master's degree while balancing the demands of a growing career.

"To anyone balancing a career and night classes, my advice is simple: Don't give up," she says. "There will be long nights and moments when you question whether it's worth it, but the rewards will come."

That investment in her education helped propel Grant's career forward. Over the next three decades, she steadily climbed the ranks of federal service, taking on increasingly significant leadership roles.

"I progressed from contract specialist to contracting officer, then director of contracting, assistant commissioner of contracting, chief procurement officer for the U.S. House of Representatives and, ultimately, deputy clerk," Grant says. "I credit that growth to a combination of education, continuous learning and taking the time to master each step along the way."

Grant retired in 2025 after more than 37 years in federal service, bringing an extraordinary chapter of public service to a close. Yet, retirement has proven to be the start of a new mission.

Today, she serves as CEO and founder of RESULTS in Executive Acquisition Leadership (REAL) LLC, where she draws on decades of procurement and acquisition expertise to help organizations successfully navigate the government contracting landscape.

"I wanted to help businesses better understand government contracting," Grant says. "Through my consulting firm, I use the experience I gained in federal service to help companies strengthen their proposals, showcase their capabilities and position themselves for success."

In addition to leading REAL, Grant remains active as a speaker, trainer and mentor, sharing her expertise on leadership, governance and government operations through keynote presentations, podcasts and panel discussions. She recently started a podcast, "Inside The Executive Ranks," which discusses the view from the C-suite.

Whether she is advising business leaders, mentoring students or sharing lessons learned from a trailblazing career in public service, Grant continues to embody the values that guided her rise through the ranks: hard work, continuous learning and a commitment to opening doors for those who follow.

**Grant will receive the Nathan M. Bisk College of Business Outstanding Alumni Award at this year's Alumni Awards Gala during Homecoming.*



SPOTLIGHT ON

Lisa P. Grant '95 M.S.

FLORIDA TECH CONNECTION: '95 M.S. contract management

3 DREAM DINNER GUESTS: Booker T. Washington, J.P. Morgan and Shirley Chisholm

FAVORITE BOOK: *A Time to Kill* by John Grisham

ONE MEAL FOR THE REST OF YOUR LIFE: Yogurt with pomegranate seeds and pecans

continued from page 35

University of North Dakota. He also helped lead the design and development of the university's Neutral Buoyancy Space Operations Facility, a pioneering research center that will expand opportunities for human spaceflight research.

2020s

11 LAUREN-ANN GRAHAM '20, '23 M.S., achieved certification as a test conductor for NASA's Orion spacecraft, qualifying her to oversee testing of the vehicle that will carry astronauts on future missions to the moon. The certification followed several years of specialized training and coursework.

12 DINA DRAGOLJIC '21 will begin a Ph.D. program at the University of Michigan in fall, joining the Unity (Coronel) Lab after spending three years as a research lab specialist in the university's Putnam Laboratory. Her research will focus on engineering smart biomaterials for wound healing.

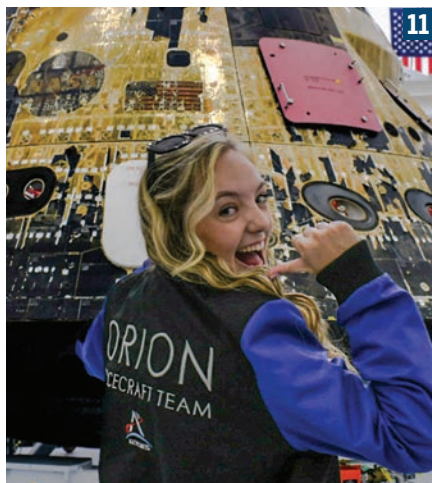
13 BRANDON BURROUGHS '22 M.S. was featured as a speaker for the National Space Society's Space Forum, "The Space Launch System (SLS): An Early Career Engineer's Perspective." A project manager on Boeing's Space Launch System team at NASA's Kennedy Space Center, Burroughs shared insights on the Artemis program, SLS development and operations, and his career journey from intern to aerospace leader.

14 ASHLEA DANIELS '22 and **ROCKET OTTE** '23, who met as freshmen at Florida Tech in 2018, became engaged this year. Otte proposed in the university's Joy and Gordon Patterson Botanical Garden during a visit to campus for the Northrop Grumman Engineering and Science Student Design Showcase. They now reside in North Carolina with their three cats.

—Erin Alvarado '16



10



11



12



14



13



16



17



18



15

15 CYNTHIA SUNDIN '22 MBA became engaged to Barry Bohsack, whom she met while working for Lockheed Martin. Bohsack surprised her with a proposal during the Artemis II rollout in January.

16 WIAM AL SALMI '23 has built a successful career in corporate strategy and business planning since graduating summa cum laude with a bachelor's degree in business administration from Florida Tech. As a business analyst for corporate planning and strategy at Oman Flour Mills, a leading government-owned food company, she supports strategic initiatives,

organizational transformation, performance management and long-term business growth. Al Salmi has also represented the company at major international trade exhibitions in Dubai and Germany, helping strengthen its global presence while advancing Oman's food security and economic vision.

17 CAROL CRAIG '26 MBA was appointed to the Canaveral Port Authority Board of Commissioners by Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis in 2025. In 2026, the founder and CEO of Sidus Space and Craig Technologies was also appointed to the board of directors and audit committee of

Greenland Energy Company, further expanding her leadership role in the aerospace, defense and energy sectors.

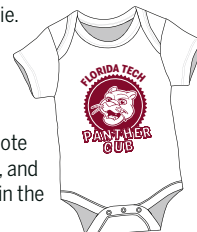
18 SANTIAGO FLOREZ-TASCON '26 will continue his education at Rice University, where he has been accepted into the Master of Engineering Management and Leadership program.

SAMANTHA RYAN '26 turned a 2025 summer internship with L3Harris Technologies Inc. into a full-time role as a mechanical engineer in the company's Intelligence and Cyber division.

Welcomed a Panther Cub?

Contact us for a free infant T-shirt or onesie.

Then, send a photo of your cub in his/her Panther swag with an AlumNote about yourself, and it may appear in the magazine.



For details:
alumni@fit.edu

IN MEMORIAM

ROGER G. GALLOP '75 M.S., '02 Ph.D., passed away March 12 at age 79 in Jacksonville, Florida. Gallop served in Vietnam as an officer in the U.S. Marine Corps. He was a certified professional geologist and owned and operated a geotechnical and environmental consulting firm in Jacksonville for more than 30 years. He was also the author of three nonfiction books. A faithful Christian, he is dearly missed by his wife of over 50 years and his devoted family.

IVER DUEBALL, Ph.D., a distinguished professor of chemical oceanography and environmental science and former head of Florida Tech's oceanography and ocean engineering department, passed away May 12 at age 87. During his more than 24 years at Florida Tech, he was a respected researcher, educator and leader whose work advanced ocean science and environmental stewardship while inspiring generations of students and colleagues. Remembered for his kindness, vision and collaborative spirit, Dueball left a legacy at the university and throughout the scientific community.

SUZEE LOUCHE, a beloved member of the Florida Tech community who dedicated 24 years of service to the university, passed away May 7. Serving as assistant to multiple presidents and as chief of staff to President Emeritus Anthony Catanese for 14 years, she was widely respected for her leadership, institutional knowledge and commitment to excellence. Remembered as a true Florida Tech icon, Louche played a vital role in supporting university operations and fostering the success of the campus community.

MICHELLE NOVAK, an award-winning Campus Dining manager, passed away May 22 at age 65. During her 11 years at Florida Tech, she was recognized for her creativity, leadership and dedication to enhancing the student experience, helping Campus Dining earn national recognition through multiple National Association of College and University Food Services (NACUFS) awards. Remembered for her passion, innovation and commitment to mentoring others, Novak left a lasting impact on the university community and all who had the privilege of working with her.

Richard "Dick" Enstice

RICHARD "DICK" ENSTICE '69, '71 M.S., '86 Ph.D., the New Jersey native who came to Florida Tech as a student in 1966 and retired three Florida Tech degrees and 40 years later, passed away Aug. 10 at age 81. His impactful career of guidance and leadership at Florida Tech spanned roles including faculty member and vice president of academic affairs in addition to provost. He was named faculty emeritus after his 2006 retirement and honored with the Lynn E. Weaver Award for his lifetime of service to the university.



Korhan Oyman

KORHAN OYMAN, the distinguished aviation and airport management scholar whose leadership, intellect and vision over a remarkable 22-year career at Florida Tech, passed away Aug. 17. Oyman came to Florida Tech in 2004 as an assistant professor in the College of Aeronautics. He rose through the ranks, serving as division director, associate dean and, eventually, dean of the college (and full professor). He then served as university provost from 2019–2020. From his mentorship of young university leaders to his spearheading the development of critical graduate programs, Oyman's impact at the College of Aeronautics—and the university overall—was substantial.



Connected FOR LIFE



Use promo code
SHOP50

\$50 OFF
COLLEGIATE
JEWELRY

Wear your Panther Pride every day!
Scan here to browse Florida Tech Rings

YOUR OFFICIAL RING PROVIDER
JOSTENS.COM/COLLEGERINGS



YOUR GIFT. THEIR FUTURE.

A scholarship earned. A research project launched. A dream realized.

Every day, Florida Tech students are solving problems, pursuing discoveries and preparing to make an impact on the world. Your generosity helps make those opportunities possible. Invest in student success and empower the next generation of innovators, leaders and Panthers.

GIVE NOW



FACES OF GREATNESS

Carlos García-Galán

By Erin Alvarado '16

CARLOS GARCÍA-GALÁN '97, '97, has spent a lifetime looking toward the moon.

Today, as NASA's program manager for Moon Base, he is leading efforts to establish a permanent human presence on the lunar surface and lay the groundwork for future space exploration.

"The objective of the Moon Base program is to build humanity's first outpost in deep space," García-Galán says. "That starts with robotic missions and testing the technologies needed to support a permanent presence on the lunar surface."

The initiative is focused on developing the technology and infrastructure needed to support long-duration lunar missions, with NASA working alongside industry, international space agencies and government partners to make it a reality.

"My role is to help unite those teams, build those partnerships and lead the effort from the earliest stages of discovery to the construction of permanent infrastructure and the execution of long-duration lunar missions," García-Galán explains. "It's an incredible responsibility to help push humanity's capabilities forward, but one that my experiences at NASA have prepared me for."

Those experiences began long before García-Galán joined NASA. As a Florida Tech student pursuing degrees in electrical engineering and space sciences, he immersed himself in the university's strong connection to the space industry. Working for the student newspaper gave him a unique opportunity to witness history firsthand and further fueled his passion for space exploration.

"I was in charge of writing our space-focused articles, so I got press passes to the shuttle launches," García-Galán recalls. "It was a dream come true as a student because I was able to interact with the press and be so close to the launches."

After graduating, García-Galán launched a career that would span some of NASA's most ambitious programs. Early on, he served as an International Space Station flight controller, supporting space shuttle and space station missions from mission control centers in Houston and Korolev, Russia.

"I loved being a flight controller because you had to perform under pressure and make decisions in real time," García-Galán says. "Very quickly, I found myself in mission control, supporting critical space station assembly missions, which gave me significant responsibility early in my career."

He later joined Honeywell Space Systems as a technical lead, helping develop technologies for human spaceflight and supporting Lockheed Martin during the early development of the Orion spacecraft.

"At Honeywell Space Systems, I worked on adapting technologies from fields like industrial automation to support human spaceflight and mission control operations," he says. "The experience allowed me to work with senior engineers, learn new technologies and help turn innovative ideas into products that could support NASA."

García-Galán eventually returned to NASA, where he helped lead spacecraft



FLORIDA TECH CONNECTION:

'97 B.S. space sciences, '97 electrical engineering

FAVORITE HOBBY: Playing and watching soccer

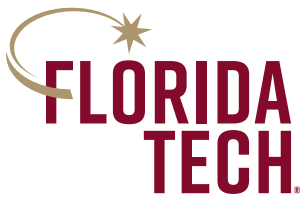
BUCKET LIST ITEM: Travel to Everest Base Camp

BIGGEST INSPIRATION: Gene Kranz and the teams who worked on the Apollo missions

design, mission analysis and launch operations for the Orion program. His path to Moon Base also included leadership roles as deputy manager of the Gateway program and as head of the Orion program's European Service Module integration effort at NASA's Glenn Research Center.

From the International Space Station and Orion to Gateway and now Moon Base, García-Galán has spent his career helping shape the future of human space exploration—work that is bringing humanity one step closer to a permanent home beyond Earth.

"There's never just one path to achieving a dream," he says. "My advice is simple: Don't be afraid to take the next step, even when the path ahead isn't clear. That's often where the greatest opportunities are waiting."



**Office of Marketing
and Communications**

Florida Institute of Technology
150 W. University Blvd.
Melbourne, FL 32901-6975

Color Wars

On Aug. 14, the Green Team closed out Orientation Week with a victory! But after a week getting to know their new campus and community, meeting new people, building connections and engaging in the friendly Color Wars competition—a beloved campus tradition—everyone in the Class of 2030 went home a winner.

