



# EDUCATION CONNECTION

FLORIDA ATLANTIC COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

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A BIMONTHLY eNEWSLETTER

NOVEMBER/ DECEMBER 2025

## Thankful for Faculty and Staff

Florida Atlantic University's College of Education is grateful for faculty and staff as FAU ranks No. 100 in the *U.S. News & World Report* list as a "Top 100 Public University" for the first time for 2026. The COE appreciates faculty for their impactful research, scholarship and creative activities and robust learning experiences and research opportunities afforded students. The College also thanks staff, who provide administrators, faculty and students support for their contributions to the community, student success and student mobility, and for donors, who make this possible....[Read more](#)

In recognition of this effort, the College thanks everyone and recognizes two unsung employees, who have made outstanding contributions:

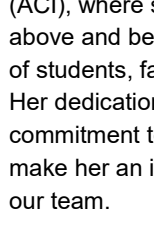
### SE

**Jennifer Percival, Ph.D., CRC** is the director of Florida Atlantic University's [Center for Autism and Related](#)

[Disabilities](#) (CARD), leveraging the Florida Department of Education (DOE) CARD legislative allocation and private funding to impact the regional autism community. In addition to supporting the Special Education Department, she leads an exceptional team of Clinicians who deliver services to over 8,000 families.

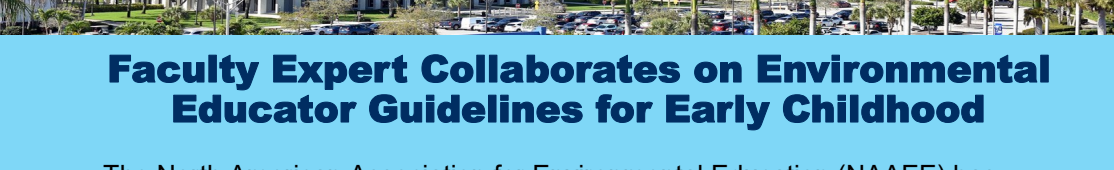
Jennifer develops innovative initiatives and programming which broadens the depth and scope of CARD. Her program development expertise includes securing over \$1.5 million in transformative funding from the Taft and Mangurian Foundations, expanding services and opportunities across five counties. "When it comes to getting things done, Jennifer follows through to completion," praised Joseph C. Gagnon, Ph.D., Chair of Special

Education, recognizing her exceptional leadership and vision.



**Heather Graeve** serves as the Student Services Liaison and Job Coach at Florida Atlantic University's [Academy for Community Inclusion](#) (ACI), where she consistently goes above and beyond in her support of students, families, and faculty. Her dedication, follow-through, and commitment to student success make her an invaluable member of our team.

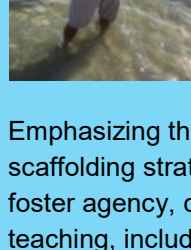
Heather has a heart for her students that shines through in everything she does. She treats each student with kindness, respect, and an unwavering belief in their potential. "Heather's presence makes ACI a better place—not just for our students, but for everyone who has the privilege of working with her," shared Gwendolyn Carey, Ed.D., Associate Director, Florida Atlantic Academy for Community Inclusion.



## Faculty Expert Collaborates on Environmental Educator Guidelines for Early Childhood

The North American Association for Environmental Education (NAAEE) has released its latest "[Environmental Educator Knowledge and Skills: Guidelines for Excellence](#)," a comprehensive framework designed to elevate the quality and impact of environmental education across North America.

Drawing on more than five decades of leadership in the field, NAAEE's guidelines synthesize the expertise of leading educators, researchers, and organizations across North America and beyond. Among the lead contributors



is Yash Bhagwanji, Ph.D., associate professor in the Department of Curriculum & Instruction and coordinator of Early Childhood Programs in [Florida Atlantic University's College of Education](#). Bhagwanji's contributions are especially impactful in integrating **early childhood education perspectives**, an unexplored topic in previous iterations.

Emphasizing the importance of developmentally appropriate practices and scaffolding strategies, Bhagwanji advocates for educational approaches that foster agency, critical thinking and lifelong learning. "The terminal goal of teaching, including environmental education, is to eventually or gradually remove any guidance so learners can demonstrate independent understanding and/or skill," said Bhagwanji.

Recognized for his teaching excellence, Bhagwanji was a recipient of Florida Atlantic's *2025 Award for Excellence and Innovation in Undergraduate Teaching*, COE's *2023 Distinguished Teacher of the Year* and NAAEE's *2018 Outstanding Service to Environmental Education* award. Additionally, he founded the "International Journal of Early Childhood Environmental Education" where he serves as executive editor. ...[Read more](#)



## A.D. Henderson, FAU High School Recognized as Cognia School of Distinction

[A.D. Henderson University School](#) and [Florida Atlantic University High School](#) has been selected as a 2025 Cognia® School of Distinction.

Chosen from 1,350 reviewed entries, FAU Lab Schools is just one of 24 schools and 11 systems in 14 states and five states and five countries to receive this distinct honor. ...

[Read more](#)

### FAU Lab Schools Shine Nationwide in 2026 Niche Rankings

Florida Atlantic University Lab Schools ranked No. 2 "Best Public K-12 School" out of 1,847 schools in the United States by Niche, the largest website for researching public and private K-12 schools. The Boca Raton-based school is also ranked No. 2 in the state of Florida in Niche's 2026 rankings. ...

[Read more](#)

### FAU High School Merit Scholars on the Rise

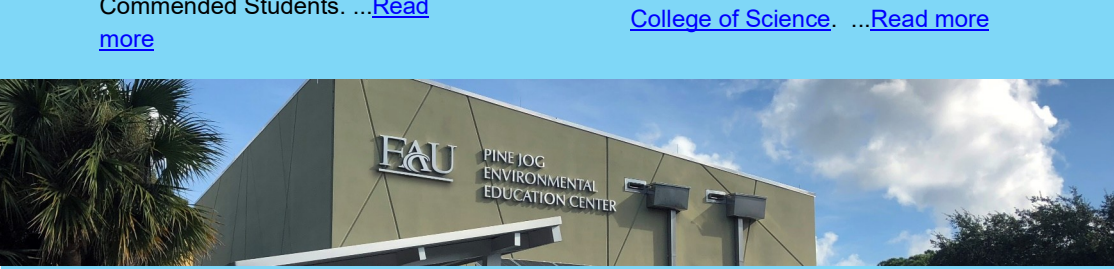
A total of 23 [Florida Atlantic University High School](#) students have been named semifinalists in the 2026 [National Merit Scholarship Program](#) and 43 seniors have been recognized as Commended Students. ...[Read more](#)

### Researchers "Zoom" in for an Ultra-Magnified Peek at Shark Skin

Findings by [Florida Atlantic University](#) and [Florida Atlantic Laboratory Schools](#) researchers, published in the journal [Integrative and Comparative Biology](#), provide an ultra-magnified peek into the hidden world of shark skin, revealing how evolution fine-tunes this natural armor for survival and reproduction.

"The advanced imaging and analysis tools we have at the [Marcus Research and Innovation Center](#) were essential for this research," said [Tricia Meredith](#), Ph.D., co-author and a university school assistant professor and director of research for [Florida Atlantic Laboratory Schools](#).

Hannah Epstein, corresponding researcher, is a recent graduate of [FAU High—Jupiter Campus In Partnership with Max Planck Academy](#) and current student of the [Harriet L. Wilkes Honors College](#). Marianne E. Porter, Ph.D., senior author and an associate professor of biological sciences and Madeleine E. Hagood, co-author and a Ph.D. student of integrative biology are both from the [Charles E. Schmidt College of Science](#). ...[Read more](#)



## Sol Systems and REI Partner with FAU's Pine Jog Center to Expand Environmental Education Initiatives

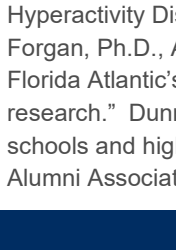
Florida Atlantic University's [Pine Jog Environmental Education Center](#) announced on Oct. 14, 2025 that Sol Systems, an Independent Power Producer (IPP) committed to building, owning and managing clean energy infrastructure that benefits local communities, and REI Co-op, the nation's largest consumer co-op, will fund a Community Impact Program designed to expand access to climate resilience education for high school students in Palm Beach County, Fla.



Through this collaboration, Florida Atlantic's Pine Jog Center will expand its Climate READY Institute and H2O to Go! Residential Summer Research Program, enabling up to 48 high school students to participate in immersive, college-credit bearing residential programs. Students will gain hands-on field experience studying South Florida's wetlands, rivers and coastal ecosystems, connect with environmental scientists and return to their communities as climate resilience ambassadors. Collectively, these students are expected to reach more than 2,000 peers and neighbors through community presentations.

"This program will give local students an unparalleled opportunity to study South Florida's ecosystems and develop skills that can shape their careers and communities," said Ray Coleman, Executive Director of Florida Atlantic's Pine Jog Environmental Education Center. ...[Read more](#)

## ALUMNA SPOTLIGHT

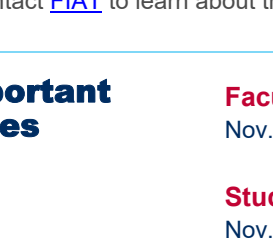


**Shernette Dunn, Ph.D.**, a four time graduate of Florida Atlantic's College of Education and Adjunct Instructor for the Department of Educational Leadership and Research Methodology, authored a book, "[Understanding ADHD Together: A Guide for Educators, Families, Friends, and Learners of all Ages](#)." This comprehensive resource provides applicable and timely information for educational administrators, classroom teachers, parents, students, advocates and professionals who work with and support individuals with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). In her acknowledgements, Dunn thanked James Forgan, Ph.D., Associate Professor in the Department of Special Education, in Florida Atlantic's College of Education "for his guidance on the initial phases of this research." Dunn has been an educator for more than two decades for K-12 public schools and higher education institutions. She was the 2021 recipient of the FAU Alumni Association Distinguished Alumni Award for the COE.

## DID YOU KNOW?

The College of Education's [Florida Institute for the Advancement of Teaching \(FIAT\)](#) offers an innovative way for COE students to apply effective teaching competencies:

- [Accelerated Induction into Teaching \(AIT\)](#), FIAT's capstone program, for final semester seniors, provides a stipend for AIT Student



Teaching candidates, who serve as teachers of record with partnering school districts with the support of mentors, university supervisors and school based peer teachers.

Contact [FIAT](#) to learn about the application and selection process.

### Important Dates

**Faculty**  
Nov. 7—Faculty Assembly

**Students**  
Nov. 3—Fall Thesis due in the COE Dean's Office  
Nov. 10—Fall Dissertation due to University Graduate Dean  
Nov. 15—[Explore FAU](#)  
Nov. 17—Fall Thesis due to University Graduate Dean  
Dec. 4—Final Exams begin  
Dec. 12—COE Commencement Ceremony

### Publications

#### Peer-Reviewed Articles

Campbell, K., **Bowers, H.**, **Villares, E.**, & Brigman, G. (2025). Advocating student-Within-Environment in action: The lived experience of grade six students' participation in a small group intervention. *Journal of Child and Adolescent Counseling*, <https://doi.org/10.1080/23727810.2025.2543695>

**Emelianchik-Key, K.**, Labarta, A. C., **DeDonno, M.**, & Gill, C. S. (2025). Long-Term Effects of the Unified Treatment Model for Eating Disorders and Comorbidity with BIPOC Clients. *Counseling Outcome Research and Evaluation*, 1-15. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21501378.2025.2542155>

**Floyd, D. L.**, **Salinas, C.**, & Listermann, K. (2025). Catalyzing Equity-Centered Change: Research, Challenges, and Issues for Community Colleges. *Community College Journal of Research and Practice*, (49)4-5, 207-209, DOI: 10.1080/10668926.2025.2460422

Gillon, K.E., Allan, E.J., Beatty, C.C., **Salinas, C.**, & Ketschner, D. (2025). Troubling Rigor: Exploring Intersections of Campus Hazing. *Innovation Higher Education*, 50, 439–460. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10755-024-09737-1>

**Hendrickson, K.**, Hernandez-Bueso, S., & Boehm, G. (2025). Assessing the effectiveness of training methods on preparedness for peer-instructors within a high school scientific instructional training program. *Florida Journal of Educational Research*, 62(3), 53–63. <https://doi.org/10.62798/ORKO3191>

**Justin, J. D.** (2025). Teaching AI ethics and skepticism: The impact of instruction on ethical usage on students' perceptions. *Journal of Practitioner Research*, 10(1), Article 2. <https://digitalcommons.usf.edu/jpr/vol10/iss1/2>

**McMahon, M.** (2025). Noteworthy science: Guided notes in 5th grade science. *Florida Journal of Educational Research*, 62(1), 2–10. <https://doi.org/10.62798/GXNE2209>

Propst Cuevas, A. E., **Bloom, J. L.**, & Warshaw, J. B. (2025). The appreciative campus: Rehumanizing higher education through the appreciative education theory-to-practice framework. *New Directions for Teaching and Learning*, 0, 1–7.

Propst Cuevas, A. E., **Bloom, J. L.**, Hursh, B. D., and Warshaw, J. B. (2025). "We're just better together: The benefits and challenges of a campus-wide adoption of appreciative advising." *Journal of Appreciative Education*, 12(2).

**FAU Lab Schools Research Newsletters:**  
[September 2025](#)      [October 2025](#)

**FAU Stiles-Nicolson STEM Teacher Academy Newsletter:** [Quarter 1](#)

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