



JENNIFER JONES

DIRECTOR, CENTER FOR ENVIRONMENTAL AND
SUSTAINABILITY EDUCATION, FLORIDA GULF COAST
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Jennifer Jones, Ph.D., would argue that the impact of sustainable living reaches far beyond the changes we see outdoors. “Environmental is, of course, a key element in what most of us are familiar with, but there’s also the social and economic aspect of sustainability,” she explains.

As the director of the Center for Environmental and Sustainability Education at Florida Gulf Coast University (FGCU), Jones is tasked with connecting students to faculty mentors. She also teaches the importance of sustainable living, with a mind toward balancing the needs of urban growth with environmental consciousness. She wants students to focus on how we can sustain growth efficiently. Shaping a generation of leaders who are conscious and equipped to handle issues like climate change and red-tide outbreaks requires educating them outside of ecological studies, she says. That’s partially why every student at FGCU—regardless of their major—is required to take the University Colloquium course, which touches on everything from Fort Myers history to Sanibel’s waterways. Efforts such as these, along with the

on-site food forest, 400 protected acres and LEED-certified buildings have earned the college recognition as one of the most sustainable campuses in the country. And Jones is determined to extend that impact into the community.

She recognizes that children are the future of our region. Since joining FGCU’s staff in 2019, Jones has helped develop a year-long program, where Lee County K-12 teachers join the university’s professors in the field to develop environmental curricula for their students. Through Boys and Girls Club of Collier County and Grace Place for Children and Families, Jones also introduced an eight-week program, which includes classes on watershed issues, sea-level rise and other topics for after-school educators, with field-based training for the kids, including boat trips to Keewaydin Island. “It’s helping students understand what they need to do, not just giving them information,” Jones says.

Her goal: to cultivate Southwest Florida as a place where environmental and social responsibility are part of the fabric of the community.
—Tess Raines





John Brady

Jennifer Jones works to raise next-gen leaders who are socially and environmentally conscious, and ensures FGCU's lauded eco-minded ethos extends beyond the campus.