

Consortium of the Creative Coast Receives Support from Collaborating Foundations
to Innovate Higher Education

(Sarasota and Bradenton, Fla., Jan. 5, 2016) – The Charles & Margery Barancik Foundation, Community Foundation of Sarasota County (CFSC) and Gulf Coast Community Foundation (GCCF) partner to support C4 (Consortium of Colleges on the Creative Coast). C4 formed almost two years ago with the help of GCCF and includes New College of Florida, Ringling College of Art and Design, State College of Florida, the University of South Florida Sarasota-Manatee, FSU/The Ringling and Eckerd College.

“Collaboration among regional higher education institutions and local foundations allows the consortium to take on new initiatives that will expand and improve the quality of life and educational landscape here – further positioning Manatee-Sarasota as a preferred college and university community,” said Dr. Larry R. Thompson, president of Ringling College of Art and Design.

C4’s mission is to maximize the student and community benefits from our unique mix of colleges. The goal is to make Manatee-Sarasota an educational hub that responds to the local market and creates competitive opportunities for students and businesses while attracting entrepreneurs, individual and corporate supporters, and jobs to the region.

Nearly 20,000 students will return to local campuses this month. “That’s a significant number of students that can benefit from our collaborative work,” said Dr. Carol Probstfeld, president of State College of Florida.

“When the collective strength of these institutions’ faculty, programs and leadership is assembled and leveraged, our region has the resources of a major research university,” said Mark Pritchett, president and CEO of GCCF. “This consortium has developed plans that we think can attract more quality students, provide a stronger workforce and help diversify our economy. This can be a real economic development ‘calling card’ for our region.”

C4 already has identified two shared community and institutional goals that include implementing cross registration at four institutions and working with the Economic Development Councils and community leaders in both counties to brand the area as an educational destination and to secure business partnerships. Dr. Donal O'Shea, president of New College said, "These types of C4 projects will be attractive to donors and funders looking to support innovation in higher education."

"The potential of innovation through C4 is unmatched by any other region in the southeastern United States," said Teri A. Hansen, president and CEO of Charles and Margery Barancik Foundation. "Through the collaboration we are able to think creatively and strategically about the academic resources of each institution and work together to offer the best education opportunity for the students."

In just over two years, the C4 piloted cross-registration, which lets students take courses on a space-available basis at a consortium institution for credit at their home college. The colleges shared state-of-the-art emergency management training this summer to prepare for natural disasters and potential new threats.

"The Community Foundation of Sarasota County has a long history of strengthening academic efforts in our region, working singly with each of these local colleges," said Roxie Jerde, president and CEO of the CFSC. "Through this emerging partnership, these institutions can leverage the full array and diversity of their students, initiatives and educational excellence to escalate our region's reputation as an academic powerhouse and highlight our competitive quality. Just as importantly, this cooperation brings the question to the table of how we as a region can utilize the talent and applied research of these schools to solve significant community issues."

The foundation partnership funds an initiative manager to coordinate and expedite the work of C4. Dr. Laurey T. Stryker has been appointed to this newly created position. Dr. Stryker, former president of the University of South Florida Sarasota-Manatee, is an education consultant who works with foundations and non-profits.

For more information about C4 or how you can support the consortium, contact Dr. Stryker at 941-302-0407 or strykerconsulting@comcast.net.