

FGCU Announces Major Gift to Establish Chair Dedicated to the Study of Renewable Energy

FORT MYERS, FL – Today, Florida Gulf Coast University announced a \$1 million gift from John D. Backe, of the Backe Foundation, to establish the “Backe Chair in Renewable Energy Endowed Fund” to attract a nationally renowned Eminent Scholar dedicated to the study renewable energy.

The Chair’s leadership, knowledge and cutting edge research will enhance the learning experience of FGCU students, and bring prominence to FGCU and the research park. Florida Gulf Coast University will ask the state of Florida to match the funds for an additional \$750,000 to create a total \$1.7 million fund.

The Chair will teach class at the undergraduate or graduate level in renewable energy or those closely related to the discipline; conduct research on this emerging field and disseminate his or her research as widely as possible; conduct outreach activities including seminars and symposia for the community about the benefits of renewable energy; and support the efforts of the local Economic Development Councils (EDCs) to attract industry partners in renewable energy.

FGCU has joined John D. Backe in a collaborative venture to develop a 1.2 million-square-foot, state-of-the-art research and development area.

The Florida Gulf Coast University Innovation Hub research park will be the proposed home of a state-of-the-art facility to be built for studying renewable energy, solar energy, alternative energy sources, biotechnology, nanotechnology, green technology and other programs.

FGCU President Wilson G. Bradshaw said, “I believe that the creation of the Florida Gulf Coast University Innovation Hub is a reflection of a new level of maturation for the university. The range of programs and areas of study at FGCU, and the faculty expertise and wide spectrum of research interests, make this a perfect time to engage in this kind of cooperative initiative.”

The research park will be located on 241 acres adjacent to and on the south side of Southwest Florida International Airport. The site is also near FGCU’s main campus and Gulf Coast Town Shopping Center.

“Considering the growing importance of ‘green’ and ‘sustainability’ on a national and global scale, we feel the Hub will attract attention to the area, and create a leadership role for Florida Gulf Coast University in the area of environmental sustainability,” said Backe.

“Our hope is that Florida Gulf Coast University Innovation Hub becomes home to the vision, diversity of talent and spirit of collaboration that will guide the region and the entire state of Florida into the future.”

The development team for this project includes John D. Backe Sr., John E. Backe, and developer Richard Galvano, owner of Galvano Development.

For further information, contact vice president for Community Relations and Marketing Ken Schexnayder at (239) 590-1083.

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