

A COMMEMORATIVE HISTORY



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**GLOBAL
SUSTAINABILITY**

Making a difference in the
World since 2010



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Patel College of Global Sustainability

10
Anniversary
YEARS

Events and Locations

Dates

- Alumni Reception: Gibbons Alumni Center, USF
Thurs, Nov. 2: 6 to 8 p.m.
- Breakfast & Conference: Patel Center for Global Solutions, USF
Fri, Nov. 3: 8 a.m.-4 p.m.
- Awards Ceremony: Gibbons Alumni Center, USF
Friday: 6 p.m. Reception
..... 7 p.m. Dinner
- Cook-out: Rosebud Continuum Sustainability Education Center
Sat, Nov. 4: 11 a.m.-3 p.m.



Patel Center
for Global Solutions,
11710 USF Genshaft Drive,
Tampa, FL 33620



Gibbons Alumni Center,
11810 USF Sago Drive, Tampa, FL 34639



Rosebud Continuum,
22843 Hale Rd, Land O' Lakes, FL 34639

PCGS 10th Year Anniversary Celebration



Conference Agenda

Date: November 3, 2023

Location: Patel Center for Global Solutions, USF Tampa, Fl.

8:00 a.m. Registration/Breakfast (Grain & Fruit)

9:00 a.m. Welcome & Introduction (Auditorium)

- Govindan Parayil, Dean USF Patel College of Global Sustainability
 - Introductory video
 - Greetings, USF Provost Mohapatra
-

9:15 a.m. Purpose of Conference + Schedule of Events

- Dr. Joseph Dorsey, Associate Dean for Academic Affairs
-

9:30 a.m. Alumni Keynote Speakers (Auditorium)

- Aja Estro, Water Concentration, Founder of Compassion Kind, and International Program Manager for Peacework (2015)
- Lauren Monti, Energy Concentration, Marketing Coordinator, WSP Civil Engineering (2018)
- Angela Fama, Environmental Scientist at the Environmental Protection Commission (2023)

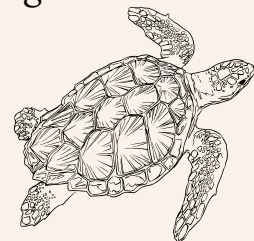
10:45 a.m. Panels (Concurrent): All Alumni

- Food Panel (CGS 134)
 - Veronica Dossou Markwei, Publix Food Safety Manager (2021)
 - Kayla Caselli, City of Tampa Sustainability Office (2022)
 - Whitney Blair, City of St. Petersburg, Senior Sustainability Coordinator (2017)
- Water Panel (CGS 136)
 - Taylor Garrett, Environmental Protection Commission of Hillsborough County (EPC)(2021)
 - Sherri Swanson, Ecological and Marine Resources Division Manager, Natural Resources Department, Manatee County (2014)
 - Katie Murray, Board of Directors for the Florida Marine Science Educators Association (2017)
- Energy Panel (CGS 140)
 - Brian Pullen, Senior Energy and Sustainability Manager, JLL Real Estate (2015)
 - J.C. Milam, Sustainability Consultant, Stratwise Consulting (2019)
 - Alia Garrett, Sustainability Outreach Coordinator, Sarasota County Government (2019)
- Climate Panel (CGS Auditorium)
 - Laura Gonzalez Ospina, Waste & Sustainability Coordinator at California State University, Sacramento (2020)
 - Sara Kane, Sustainability and Resilience Manager, Sarasota County Government (2015)
 - Winnie Mulamba, Executive Director, For Good Movement (2019)

12 Noon. Lunch/Live Stream Remote Alumni (Auditorium)

1:15 p.m. Student Keynote Speakers

- Nathan Lafata, Peace Corps Coverdell Fellow
- Shanelle Mulrooney, Vice President, GLOBE student organization



1:45 p.m. Panels (Concurrent): All Alumni

- Business Panel (CGS 136)
 - Randall Hooker, Sustainability Manager, Mohawk Industries (2022)
 - Jessica Coons, Conference Coordinator, GreenBiz Group (2021)
 - Jenny Jaegal, Business Development Manager, Orlando Bioenergy Bigadan (2019)
- Policy Panel (CGS 134)
 - Courtney Wright, Planner, Tampa Bay Regional Planning Council (2021)
 - Cassie Cordova, formerly McCabe, Sustainability Manager, City of Clearwater (2019)
 - Jerry Comellas, Educator, Sustainability Professional, Eco-Science, Cultural Creative (2017)
- Entrepreneurship Panel (CGS 140)
 - Angela El Fayed, PhD candidate, Politics and International Affairs/Instructor of Comparative Politics at USF (2018)
 - J.C. Milam, Sustainability Consultant, Stratwise Consulting (2019)
 - Sarah Long, Program Coordinator for ArtistTREE Gardens (2020)
 - Ericka Leigh McThenia, founder, Sewn Apart (2015)
- Transportation Panel (CGS 202)
 - Ariana Grant, Urban Planner, Research Analyst, Univ. of Texas, Arlington (2019)
 - Alexandra Traversa, Director, Sustainability and Resiliency at Jacksonville Transportation Authority (2020)

3:00 p.m. PCGS Faculty Panel (Auditorium)

- Dr. T.H. Culhane (Climate Mitigation and Adaptation)
- Dr. J. Dorsey (Food Sustainability and Security)
- Dr. K. Ghebremichael (Water Sustainability)
- Dr. G. Philippidis (Sustainable Energy)
- Dr. Spencer (Sustainability Policy)

3:50 p.m. Closing Statements

- Govindan Parayil, Dean USF Patel College of Global Sustainability

PCGS Alumni Awards Dinner

Date: November 3, 2023 7-9 pm

Location: USF Alumni Center

6:00 Check in/ Gathering in Reception Area Pianist: Yohance Wicks

7:00 Dinner in Ballroom

7:30 Awards Ceremony

Acknowledgments:

- USF Top Administrators and introductory video
 - USF Provost
- Tampa Mayor Jane Castor
- Donors (Certificate of Appreciation)
 - Amy & Michael Drake
 - Ms. Elizabeth Moore
 - Donald & Kathleen Butz

Awards:

- Distinguished Alumni Awards
 - Aja Estro
 - Brandon Johnson
 - David Townsend
 - Ericka Leigh McThenia
 - Winnie Mulamba
- Esteemed Sustainability Partner Award
 - Sonny & Maryann Bishop/Rosebud Continuum Sustainability Education Center
- Lifetime Achievement in Sustainability
 - Dr. Sylvia Earle/Mission Blue

"Student Testimony on the Power of Global Sustainability"

- Nathan Lafata: Introduction of tribute video

- Global Sustainability Award for Decades of Service to Humanity
 - Drs. Kiran & Pallavi Patel

9:00 Closing Remarks

- Dr. Joseph Dorsey, Associate Dean, USF Patel College of Global Sustainability





Keynote Speaker Biographies

Alumni



Aja Estro

Aja Nikiya Estro is a global humanitarian, award winning documentary film maker, photographer, public speaker and activist for animals and under-served populations. She has bridged her expertise in international development, project management, marketing, disaster relief, climate justice and activism to help communities in extreme poverty develop sustainable solutions that preserve biodiversity and inspire global citizenship. Aja has a Masters in Global Sustainability from the University of South Florida and is currently a Doctoral Candidate in Leadership and Social Change at Antioch University. Her research interests include Climate Justice, Relational Cultural Theory-Ecology, Sustainable Leadership and Eco-Feminism. Aja is the founder of Compassion Kind Foundation, a global nonprofit organization that works to cultivate compassionate change and minimize suffering for all kind through humane advocacy, animal rescue, disaster relief and community reach. Aja is a catalyst for change and a voice for the silenced. She is the winner of the 2023 Best of the Bay - “Best Activist” award.

Lauren Reilly Monti graduated PCGS with the class of 2017, with a focus on Building Sustainable Enterprise and Sustainable Energy and served on the Student Green Energy Fund Committee. She also attended USF St. Petersburg and graduated in 2014 with a Bachelor of Environmental Science & Policy and a Minor in Leadership Studies where she held various Student Government Association positions and worked in the Marine Science Laboratory as a Research Technician on the 2010 Deepwater Horizon BP Oil Spill. Since graduating, Lauren has moved to Denver, Colorado and has been working as a Marketing Coordinator for engineering firms that perform design services. Utilizing her strong background in sustainability and resiliency, she pushes her teams to develop holistic solutions for projects to not only win more work for the firm, but also to encourage thoughtful projects that take into account potential future challenges and issues. Her peers from her local marketing networking group nominated and awarded her the “Unicorn Marketer” award for March 2021. Lauren is also a mother of two amazing daughters and enjoys teaching them how to care for the environment. For fun, Lauren has recently taken up crew rowing and completed her first race.



Lauren Monti



Angela Fama

Angela Fama holds the distinction of being a double USF alumna. She earned her Bachelor of Science in Environmental Science and Policy and then pursued her Master of Arts in Sustainable Business, accompanied by a certificate in Climate Adaptation and Mitigation at PCGS. Her time at PCGS was characterized by her active engagement in promoting sustainability initiatives both on campus and in the community. She held various roles that include serving as the President of GLOBE, working as a graduate assistant for USF's Sustainability Manager, and contributing as an AmeriCorps member on the City of Tampa's Green Team. Currently, she is working as an Environmental Scientist at the Environmental Protection Commission of Hillsborough County, where she remains dedicated to advancing sustainability efforts.

Keynote Speaker Biographies

Student

Nathan LaFata, a current student at the Patel College of Global Sustainability (PCGS), is actively pursuing a Master of Science in Water Sustainability. He holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in International Studies and History, which he earned from West Virginia University. During his undergraduate years, he had the opportunity to study abroad in Europe on two occasions in Poland and Hungary, enabling him to gain valuable insights into Eastern European affairs and contemporary issues. Following his undergraduate studies, Nathan dedicated his time to serving in AmeriCorps in his hometown of Morgantown, West Virginia. In this role, he provided crucial assistance to a local charity that served the low-income community. His AmeriCorps experience later opened doors for him to teach English abroad in Vietnam and subsequently teach in Myanmar as part of the Peace Corps. It was during these transformative experiences that he discovered his deep-seated passion for working in developing nations. While serving in Myanmar, Nathan realized the importance of furthering his education to deepen his understanding of environmental issues in developing countries. This realization led him to PCGS, where he was selected for the prestigious Coverdell Scholarship, a recognition of his prior Peace Corps service. Furthermore, he recently secured the International Research Experience for Students Scholarship through a grant from the National Science Foundation. This scholarship enabled him to teach high school students in Ghana about green energy and scientific research methods. Looking ahead, Nathan's aspirations include applying for the Fulbright Fellowship to conduct research on watersheds. Presently, he is employed by the Southwest Florida Water Management District and actively serves as a board member of the Tampa Bay Conservancy. He also resides at the Rosebud Continuum, where he contributes to land restoration, conservation efforts, and the promotion of sustainable practices.



Nathan Lafata



Shanelle Mulrooney

Born and Raised on the West Coast of Florida, Shanelle grew a love for everything outdoors that, over the years, evolved into a deep passion for protecting Florida's flora and fauna. After receiving her Bachelor of Applied Science in Sustainability Management from St. Petersburg College, her environmental conservation interests expanded to include social justice and equality, food sovereignty, water resource and waste management, net-zero energy, and more. She is currently a grad student completing her final semester at PCGS and will graduate with a Master of Science in Food Sustainability and Security. She serves as the Vice President of USF's student organization G.L.O.B.E., Global Leaders Outreach for a Better Environment, and proudly works for the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services within the Division of Plant Industry as an Environmental Specialist II.



Panelist Biographies

Food Panel



**Veronica Dossou
Markwei**

Veronica Markwei is a Food Science and Sustainability professional with 15 years of experience in sustainability, food safety and quality in food manufacturing, service, and retail spheres. She is a Quality Assurance Manager at Publix Super Markets Inc., where she leads the food safety and quality management programs for the Fresh Kitchen operations in Lakeland. Prior to Joining Publix, Veronica was a Quality Assurance and Sanitation Team Leader for Campbell Soup Company – Pepperidge Farms. She also led the Research and Development team for Promasidor Ghana Limited before relocating to the US. Veronica obtained a bachelor's degree in Biochemistry and a master's degree in Food Science & Technology from Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology in Ghana as well as a Master's Degree in Food Sustainability & Security from the University of South Florida. Veronica is passionate about food processing. In her free time, she can be found experimenting with food ingredients in her lab (kitchen).

Kayla Caselli works for the City of Tampa as the sustainability coordinator working in tandem with the city's sustainability and resilience officer to implement the goals laid out in Tampa's Climate Action and Equity Plan. Current projects include topics related to urban forestry, water, renewable energy, environmental stewardship, coastal resilience, and waste reduction. She approaches projects with the following priorities: systems thinking, collaboration, communication, and humility. These skills help her practice "solving problems without creating more problems," one of her favorite definitions of sustainability. Kayla earned her bachelor's degree in animal sciences at the University of Florida and a master's degree at the University of South Florida's Patel College of Global Sustainability. Born and raised in Florida, she is passionate about protecting Florida's native ecosystems while building resilient urban cores to make room for the 1,000 new residents per day who are moving to her home state.



Kayla Caselli



Whitney Blair

Whitney Blair graduated from the Patel College of Global Sustainability in 2017 with concentrations in both Water and Food Sustainability & Security. She then worked for a local nonprofit, the Edible Peace Patch Project, to build school gardens and teach garden education in Title-1 elementary schools. Whitney was hired as a Sustainability Coordinator by the City of St. Petersburg in 2020 and continues to work on a variety of projects such as community engagement and education, waste mitigation, urban agriculture, and neighborhood resilience. In her spare time, Whitney is usually outdoors enjoying the natural beauty of Tampa Bay.

Water Panel

Taylor Garrett received her M.A. in Global Sustainability from Patel College of Global Sustainability at the University of South Florida with a concentration in Climate Mitigation and Adaptation and a certificate in Sustainable Energy in 2021 and a B.S. in Geology from the University of Florida in 2014. During her time at Patel College, Taylor collected over 1,500 gallons of food waste from the Columbia Restaurant and Moffitt Cancer Center and turned it into natural gas and fertilizer using the biodigesters at Rosebud Continuum Eco-Education Center. For her capstone research project, Taylor turned HDPE bottle caps collected from Florida's beaches into 3D printing filament using an extrusion machine. Taylor is currently an Environmental Scientist III at the Environmental Protection Commission of Hillsborough County (EPC) where she reviews projects and writes permits regarding impacts to wetlands and other surface waters. Prior to working at EPC, Taylor worked as an Environmental Consultant and was the lead trainer for the wetland program in the Southwest District of the Florida Department of Environmental Protection. Since graduating in 2021, she has been working diligently to protect Florida's waterways for a sustainable future.



Taylor Garrett

Panelist Biographies

Sherri Swanson works for the Manatee County Natural Resources Department as the Ecological and Marine Resources Division Manager. She is a wetland scientist and wildlife ecologist with over 25 years of experiences working in upland, wetland, and marine environments across the southeast U.S., including habitat restoration, wildlife protection, climate resiliency, and microplastic surveys in the Arctic. She graduated with a masters in Global Sustainability from USF with a focus on water. Her capstone project involved work within the Istria Peninsula to highlight ecotourism synergies along the transboundary Sava River from Slovenian saltworks on the Mediterranean, RAMSAR wetlands in Croatia, fish hatcheries in Bosnia-Herzegovina, to heritage pigs in Serbia.



Sherri Swanson



Katie Murray

Since graduating from the Patel College of Global Sustainability in 2017 with a concentration in Sustainable Tourism, Katie has been working in the nonprofit sector. Immediately upon graduating from PCGS, she transitioned her Capstone internship into a full-time position in Education at ZooTampa at Lowry Park. Shortly after, she transferred to the Marketing & Communications department where she started as a Marketing Coordinator, which set her off on the path she is on today. Katie has also worked for Philippe Cousteau's nonprofit organization, EarthEcho International, as the Communications Coordinator. In 2021, Katie opened up Katie Murray Photography, LLC where she specializes in concierge-style portrait photography and wildlife photography (under the name Natural Moments by Katie Murray). Katie also volunteers her time on the Board of Directors for the Florida Marine Science Educators Association (FMSEA). When she's not working or volunteering, she can be found underwater SCUBA diving and going on nature walks with her family.

Energy Panel

Brian is an energy and sustainability professional who has worked in the field for nearly 10 years. He currently works as the Senior Energy & Sustainability Manager for JLL and resides in Boise, Idaho. In his daily role, he manages sustainability projects and programs for his client, while helping his team develop long-term strategies for decarbonization. Prior to his role at JLL, Brian worked as an Energy Manager for Albertsons Companies where he deployed and managed energy capital projects across nearly 400 grocery stores nationwide. Brian also served as the Sustainability Manager for the largest Native American resort and casino in the Western U.S. as well as served as the Sustainability Planner for the University of South Florida St. Petersburg and has held various contractual positions working on initiatives stemming from ESG reporting, water conservation, and energy benchmarking. When he's not working you can find him either playing guitar, traveling, or exploring the Idaho wilderness with his wife Kerstin.



Brian Pullen



J.C. Milam

J.C. Milam began his first professional career while attending USF to obtain his bachelor's in business administration with a marketing concentration in the early 2000s. His first career was in the international wine business and included owning, operating, and being a limited partner in four different companies as well as exposure to a wide variety of business, environmental, energy, and agricultural practices that we now refer to collectively as, "sustainability." During the pursuit of his master's degree at PCGS, JC launched StratWise Consulting as a means of leveraging his background in operating companies and is proud of the fact that 70+% of his client base are SMB's which were women- and/or minority-owned businesses. Since graduating in 2019, at which time he launched Cherripick, A Food Waste app company, he's also transitioned his consulting business to be focused on the renewable energy sector. He's supported the deployment of nearly 1GW of battery storage systems across the America's and contracts with one of the foremost international companies in this field. As a serial entrepreneur, he's also working on other business plans and models that would support the cultivation of sustainability in society and business.

Panelist Biographies

Alia Garrett is the Sustainability Outreach Coordinator for Sarasota County, in the University of Florida/IFAS Extension & Sustainability department. She is responsible for education and outreach projects to encourage sustainability actions in the community. Alia leads planning and implementation efforts for sustainability events and workshops and supports efforts to create a sustainable community across Sarasota County. Previously she worked as Energy Program Specialist for Sarasota Housing Authority, where she focused on energy efficiency and energy equity programs. Alia has a Masters degree in Global Sustainability from the University of South Florida.



Alia Garrett

Climate Panel



**Laura Gonzalez
Ospina**

Laura Gonzalez Ospina is a sustainability champion dedicated to forging a greener future. As the Waste & Sustainability Coordinator at California State University Sacramento (Sac State), Laura plays a pivotal role in the institution's mission to minimize its environmental impact and achieve carbon neutrality by 2040. Laura's primary focus is to lead initiatives that drive Sac State towards its ambitious goal of achieving zero waste by 2030. Her projects are laser-focused on three key objectives: increasing waste diversion, reducing solid waste, and ultimately eliminating waste generation. One of her biggest accomplishments was the creation and launch of Hornet Reuse. This user-friendly app, available on iPhone and Android devices, empowers students, faculty, and staff to exchange items free of charge. Beyond reducing waste, Hornet Reuse fosters a sense of unity within the Sac State community. Beyond her administrative role, Laura mentors and supervises students and interns involved in sustainability research and experiential learning. Her mentorship plays a pivotal role in cultivating the next generation of environmentally conscious leaders. Additionally to her role at Sac State, Laura serves as the Chair for the Zero Waste Campus Council under the esteemed California Resource Recovery Association (CRRA). In this influential role, she spearheads nationwide efforts to advance zero-waste initiatives and promote sustainability across institutions. Laura has a Bachelor of Science in Biology from Emmanuel University, and a Master of Arts in Global Sustainability and a Graduate Certificate in Sustainability & Climate Change from the University of South Florida respectively.

Winnie Mulamba is a Kenyan native with an educational background in Global Sustainability and Management from PCGS. She is currently the Executive Director at the For Good Movement leading two sustainability collectives, namely Florida For Good and B Tourism. Her passion in sustainability is demonstrated through the projects she spearheads that are dedicated to the betterment of the local business community and the global tourism industry. Winnie and her organization assist businesses in measuring their sustainability practices as well as align their business impact goals with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. She also engages in public policy and climate justice work to advocate for the transition to an inclusive, equitable, and regenerative economy that benefits all people, communities, and the planet. Winnie believes that the power of change lies within us and we can start by voting for good with our dollars: You matter, and your purchasing decisions matter too.



Winnie Mulamba



Sara Kane

Sara Kane manages the sustainability program for Sarasota County, in the University of Florida/IFAS Extension & Sustainability department. She oversees sustainability improvements within government operations and the efforts to create a sustainable community across Sarasota County. Her responsibilities include promoting energy efficiency, green building practices, renewable energy, electric vehicles, and waste reduction strategies to residents and businesses; ensuring sustainability improvements in county facilities and fleet; employee and community education; resiliency and climate planning; and grant management. Sara has worked in the environmental field for 18 years, including positions at the Sarasota Bay Estuary Program and Mote Marine Laboratory. Sara has a Masters in Global Sustainability with a concentration in water from the University of South Florida.

Panelist Biographies

Business Panel

Randall Hooker has worked in the field of sustainable development for most of his professional career. He held numerous positions at the Central American Bank for Economic Integration (CABEI), a regional multilateral development bank headquartered in Honduras, through which he contributed to develop a portfolio of sustainable development projects in Central America and develop the Bank's push toward becoming a green bank through accreditations to the Green Climate Fund, Adaptation Fund and observer of the United Nations Conference on Climate Change (UNFCCC). After more than 14 years with the CABEI, Mr. Hooker pursued his Master of Arts in Global Sustainability with a concentration in Sustainability Policy from the University of South Florida, graduating in December of 2022. He is currently working at Mohawk Industries as Sustainability Manager for global operations. Besides his degree at USF, Mr. Hooker has an MBA from The University of Manchester in the United Kingdom, a Master of Economics and Social Studies from Swansea University in Wales, United Kingdom, a degree which he obtained as a Chevening scholar recipient from the British government and holds a Bachelors of Science from the University of Mobile.



Randall Hooker



Jessica Coons

Jessica Coons joined GreenBiz Group in July 2022 as Conference Coordinator, where she focuses on event logistics, speaker management, and sustainability programs for four in-person events a year. With a passion for both people and the planet, Jessica strives to incorporate sustainability into every aspect of the event planning process from addressing carbon emissions to eliminating food waste. Prior to joining GreenBiz, she worked in development and event management within the nonprofit sector, working on various fundraising events and annual conferences. Jessica graduated from the University of Florida in 2018 with a Bachelor's degree in Event Management and from the University of South Florida in 2021 with a Master's degree in Global Sustainability, with a concentration in Sustainable Business.

Jenny Jaegal is a PCGS graduate of 2019 in the tourism concentration. She also holds a graduate certificate in Climate Change from PCGS, as well as a Bachelor's degree in Environmental Science from Nova Southeastern University. Throughout her career, Jenny has focused on local solid waste reduction initiatives in Pinellas and Orange counties. She is currently spearheading efforts to bring the anerobic digestion technology that has been practiced for decades in Europe by her company Bigadan to turn organic waste to energy in Florida cities.



Jenny Jaegal

Policy Panel



Cassie Cordova

Cassie Cordova is the Sustainability Division Manager for the city of Clearwater. She completed her undergraduate studies at the University of Florida and earned a Masters in Global Sustainability from the University of South Florida. Before joining Clearwater, she was the Environmental Sustainability Coordinator and Energy Manager for James City County in Virginia. Previous experience also includes co-founding the non-profit Turn the Tide for Tarpon to address sea-level rise in Florida, establishing the first small-scale commercial anaerobic biodigester in Florida, a fellowship at the UIC Institute on Sustainability & Energy and working at CREST – the Center for Responsible Travel in Washington D.C.



Panelist Biographies



Jerry Comellas

Jerry John Comellas has dedicated his life to sustainability, education, and humanitarian efforts in the Tampa Bay Area as an educator, sustainability professional, eco-scientist, and eco-theologian. Currently, Jerry serves as an Earth Science and Agriscience Teacher at Wilson Middle School in Tampa, Florida, where his educational initiatives have secured multiple grants for projects ranging from agriculture and hydroponics to shoreline restoration and oyster bed rehabilitation. His efforts have earned him recognition as a Global Guide with the Global Teach Ag Network and the World Food Prize Foundation. Jerry's roles have included Director of the Rosebud Continuum Sustainability Education Center, Project Manager at Fat Beet Farm, and Co-Founder of Sustainable Eco-Systems: Eco-Urban Farms.

Courtney Wright serves as a Senior Planner with the Tampa Bay Regional Planning Council (TBRPC). She assists in the planning and technical support for the Tampa Bay Regional Resiliency Coalition through the Regional Resiliency Action Plan (RRAP) and several work groups, such as the Clean Energy Workgroup. She also aids staff with environmental planning initiatives. In her previous experience, she worked as an intern with TBRPC, before and after her graduation from PCGS, where she aided in the development of the RRAP through technical and policy research, stakeholder engagement, revisions, and framework implementation. One of the most notable contributions was the implementation of the UN SDGs, LEED for Cities and Communities, and Envision into the RRAO. Ms. Wright also worked as a Communications Manager where she worked with a variety of stakeholders to provide public input on construction projects and master plan updates within the Tampa Bay Region. Courtney holds a Bachelor of Science in Biology from USF, as well as a Master of Arts in Global Sustainability with a concentration in Sustainability Policy and a graduate certificate in Climate Change and Sustainability. She is accredited LEED Green Associate and a member of USGBC Florida and USGBC Tampa Bay.



Courtney Wright

Entrepreneurship Panel



Angela El- Fayez

Angela El-Fayez, a Bedouin Jordanian-American, has benefited from the experience of living and working in diverse cultures. She is cognizant of her privilege, and therefore her responsibility, to work to bridge awareness and understanding between and among these two cultures. Angela has worked as a teacher, translator, advocate, and research coordinator on issues related to Bedouin, refugee, and vulnerable populations in Jordan. Based on her work, Angela firmly believes that economic and social progress in the Middle East can come about through policy change by raising awareness of environmental, political, and social issues. Angela recognizes that the growing role of women and youth is paramount to sustainable growth, development, and peace in the Middle East. Her capstone research project at Patel, A Future Towards Environmental Governance in Jordan, was the inspiration for her to pursue a Ph.D. in Political Sciences in International Relations at the School for Interdisciplinary Global Studies here at USF. She has researched, written, and presented on topics related to climate refugees, human rights, citizenship, and democracy and how the Middle East can work towards more sustainable solutions for future governance. Currently in her fifth year of her Ph.D., Angela is working on her dissertation thesis on the building of trust and linkages between state and society in Jordan, while also teaching political science for her third year at USF.

Panelist Biographies

J.C. Milam began his first professional career while attending USF to obtain his bachelor's in business administration with a marketing concentration in the early 2000s. His first career was in the international wine business and included owning, operating, and being a limited partner in four different companies as well as exposure to a wide variety of business, environmental, energy, and agricultural practices that we now refer to collectively as "sustainability." During the pursuit of his master's degree at PCGS, JC launched StratWise Consulting as a means of leveraging his background in operating companies and is proud of the fact that 70+% of his client base are SMB's which were women- and/or minority-owned businesses. Since graduating in 2019, at which time he launched Cherrypick, A Food Waste app company, he's also transitioned his consulting business to be focused on the renewable energy sector. He's supported the deployment of nearly 1GW of battery storage systems across the America's and contracts with one of the foremost international companies in this field. As a serial entrepreneur, he's also working on other business plans and models that would support the cultivation of sustainability in society and business.



J.C. Milam



Sarah Long

A 2020 PCGS Graduate with a Sustainable Energy concentration, Sarah Long is also a multimedia artist, musician, and writer passionate about applying creativity to solve problems related to food insecurity, mental health, and community wellness. After her Green Ambassador internship with Green Business Bureau, Sarah accepted a full-time job with GBB as a Sustainability Analyst and Marketing & Member Success Specialist. It was at GBB that Sarah honed in on her writing and client relation skills, realizing the significance of effective communication and relationship building in the progress of sustainability. In January 2023, Sarah left GBB to take a break from corporate sustainability and push further with her music career. During this season of exploration, Sarah built a name for herself in the music community and found the intersection among her greatest passions: music, community wellness, and circularity. Today, Sarah is the Program Coordinator for ArtisTREE Gardens, a Tampa-based urban sustainability project that merges the rallying power of music and the arts with sustainability education and hands-on learning experiences. Sarah is also a Coordinator for the St. Petersburg Chapter for NSAI and is MHFA-certified to aid people experiencing mental health crises.

Ericka Leigh McThenia is a materials management enthusiast and compost activist. In 2016, she founded Sewn Apart, a social enterprise making bowties out of old clothes as a statement about how much we waste as a society, as well as connecting our agricultural system to the fashion industry. After realizing the volume of discarded clothing out there, Ericka started composting textiles in an effort to reduce her studio scraps and thus transitioned Sewn Apart from a fashion brand to a materials recycling enterprise. In March 2023, Ericka presented her textile composting research for the first time at the Global Soil Biodiversity Conference in Dublin, Ireland. Ericka graduated from PCGS in 2015 and completed her thesis in Peru while working with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations managing a project linking food security and school gardens.



Ericka Leigh McThenia

Transportation Panel



Ariana Grant

Ariana Grant is a transportation planner and a PhD Student in Urban Planning with a focus on transportation equity at University of Texas Arlington. She has assisted in designing and conducting research studies focused on transportation access to public transportation systems, rideshare, and other major transit services through an equitable lens. She has helped create research roadmaps to support cross-functional research, machine learning, civil engineering, and software engineering-based teams.

Alexander “Xan” Traversa is the Director of Planning and Sustainability at the Jacksonville Transportation Authority (JTA). A proud alumnus of Jacksonville University and USF Patel College of Global Sustainability, Xan uses his educational and professional skills to advance sustainable, resilient, and multimodal transportation solutions for Northeast Florida, and developing projects aimed at achieving the Authority’s goal of being carbon-neutral by 2050. Xan was recognized as one of Mass Transit Magazine’s 40 Under 40 honorees in 2021 for his work supporting vaccination accessibility using transit during the COVID-19 pandemic, and his commitment to advancing sustainable transportation solutions. He also serves as an adjunct professor at Jacksonville University, where he teaches courses focused on sustainability and urban planning. At the core of his career, he finds his primary motivation is a passion for lifelong learning and a commitment to supporting the next generation of planning and sustainability professionals.



Alexander Traversa

Thank you to all our
Alumni and Student Panelists!

Distinguished Alumni



Aja Estro

Aja has a Masters in Global Sustainability from the University of South Florida and is currently a Doctoral Candidate in Leadership and Social Change at Antioch University. Her research interests include Climate Justice, Relational Cultural Theory-Ecology, Sustainable Leadership and Eco-Feminism. Aja is the founder of Compassion Kind Foundation, a global nonprofit organization that works to cultivate compassionate change and minimize suffering for all kind through humane advocacy, animal rescue, disaster relief and community reach. Aja is a catalyst for change and a voice for the silenced. She is the winner of the 2023 Best of the Bay-“Best Activist” award.



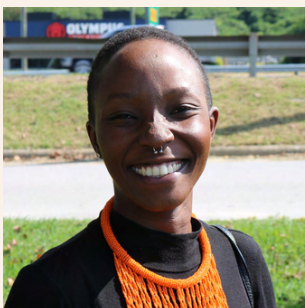
Ericka Leigh McThenia

Ericka graduated from PCGS in 2015 and completed her thesis in Peru while working with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations managing a project linking food security and school gardens. In 2016, she founded Sewn Apart, a social enterprise making bowties out of old clothes as a statement about how much we waste as a society, as well as connecting our agricultural system to the fashion industry. In March 2023, Ericka presented her textile composting research for the first time at the Global Soil Biodiversity Conference in Dublin, Ireland.



Brandon Johnson

Brandon Johnson is the U.S. Technical Lead for Climate Change, Vulnerability and Resilience for the Environmental Services Practice at Stantec and has over 23 years of experience providing expertise in natural resource assessment with a focus on coastal resiliency. He specializes in identifying opportunities to capitalize on the synergies of regulatory and policy driven actions with resiliency and sustainability initiatives. Brandon was a member of the inaugural graduating class at PCGS, earning his Masters in global sustainability with a focus on water resources. He is certified as an Envision Sustainability Professional by the Institute for Sustainable Infrastructure and is an accredited LEED Green Associate.



Winnie Mulamba

Winnie Mulamba is a Kenyan native with an educational background in Global Sustainability and Management from PCGS. She is currently the Executive Director at the For Good Movement leading two sustainability collectives, namely Florida For Good and B Tourism. Her admirable passion in sustainability is demonstrated through the projects she spearheads that are dedicated to the betterment of the local business community and the global tourism industry. Winnie believes that the power of change lies within us and we can start by voting for good with our dollars: You matter, and your purchasing decisions matter too.



David Townsend

David Townsend, a LEED Green Associate, has a decade of expertise in environmental science, energy, climate change, and sustainability. He has a BSc in environmental science and policy, complemented by an MA in global sustainability, focusing on sustainable energy. With an aptitude for interdisciplinary teamwork, he collaborates with engineers, environmental scientists, policy analysts, and researchers at various levels. David has a dedication to results, a thirst for knowledge, and a commitment to leading sustainable decarbonization through policy, innovation, and collaboration as an advocate for a greener future.

PCGS Faculty Panelists



Dr. Thomas Henry Culhane
Director of Climate Mitigation & Adaptation

Dr. Joseph Dorsey
Director of Food Sustainability & Security



Dr. George Philippidis
Director of Sustainable Energy

Dr. Michael Spencer
Director of Sustainability Policy



Dr. Kebreab Ghebremichael
Director of Water Sustainability

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