

FEF FOCUS

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President's Message

Although abridged, this edition of *Focus* illustrates the significance and celebrates the success of our pre-college and graduate programs. It shows how we use our resources to produce innovative programs that meet the changing needs of students we serve. To that end, in the last 12 months, we have substantially increased the number of Ph.D. fellowships offered while encouraging our partner universities to contribute more scholarships for National Achievers. We also have modified the focus of our Annual Fellows Conference, increased the number of students participating in our Mid-Year Research and Writing Conference, and developed new cutting edge programs for our pre-college students.

For example, this *Focus* contains an excellent story about FEF's new CodeMasters program, designed to enhance secondary students' interest in pursuing computer science and engineering careers. We aim to do so because, as society advances into the 21st century, studies show an abundance of jobs will be available for individuals professionally trained in these areas. Therefore, our pre-college programs help students develop appropriate skills and credentials to take advantage of these opportunities.

In fact, we continually rely upon experts from universities, corporations, and governmental agencies to help forecast changes in the job market, and then we develop programming accordingly. At the graduate level, we have found the best advice about professional jobs comes from administrators and individuals working in the field. Thus, for our Annual Fellows Conference, we invited Florida's Education Commissioner Pam Stewart and esteemed professors Dr. Todd Wyatt from the University of Nebraska Medical Center and Dr. Juan Gilbert from the University of Florida to head a team of experts that addressed these market conditions and recommended practices for succeeding in today's complex employment environment.

Furthermore, to improve students' academic credentials and maximize the number of students served without increasing operational costs, we continue to expand our use of synchronous virtual classroom technology for both Doctoral Fellows and pre-college students. In the online classroom, we connect Fellows to experienced scholars and professional editors in interactive, real-time writing workshops; we convene student leadership meetings to foster collaboration and interaction among high school students from around the State; and we conduct year-round tutorials and test preparation class-

es for students in grades 6 through 12, to help stem summer learning losses and provide much needed supplemental education support.

Our use of technology has helped foster a new and powerful relationship between our pre-college and graduate programs. While our graduate students teach coding and tutor our pre-college students, they also serve as role models and mentors, greatly enhancing pre-college students' vision of their career options and what they can achieve.

These benefits inure not only to pre-college but also to graduate students. Meeting the needs of secondary students helps graduate students create effective teaching methods, expand the use of technology, and design software. The relationship, thus, becomes an important laboratory for graduate students to research the needs and aspirations of their younger counterparts, while framing questions usually not addressed by mainstream scholars.



Dr. Lawrence Morehouse
President & CEO

McKnight Annual Meeting Speakers Steer Fellows Toward Impactful Careers



Commissioner Pam Stewart

Speaking to participants at the 2015 Annual McKnight Doctoral Fellows' Meeting, three noted educators, Florida Education Commissioner Pam Stewart and Drs. Todd Wyatt and Juan Gilbert, outlined best practices, described lessons learned, and lauded McKnight Fellows' accomplishments and potential.

five of the 25 largest school districts in the country, spoke at the Annual Reception, where she commended the Florida Education Fund (FEF) for helping Florida increase the number of Ph.D.'s over the past three decades. "What speaks to me is the importance of the work you've done. You should be proud of that," she said. She also cited the progress Florida has made during her tenure in Florida education:

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Commissioner Pam Stewart, who oversees K-12 public schools and colleges in the State of Florida, which includes

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Alumni Profile: Dr. Pablo Cornejo

In some ways, Dr. Pablo Cornejo's life has come full circle. After receiving his doctorate in environmental engineering from the University of South Florida last year, he accepted a postdoctoral research position at the University of Colorado Boulder (CU-Boulder), where he studied civil engineering as an undergraduate. Now married with a one-year old son, he again enjoys being close to family and the thriving Latino cultural scene in Colorado.



Dr. Pablo Cornejo

He grew up in nearby Denver, home to his Mexican American mother's family and where his father landed after emigrating from Chile with \$50, a bag of books and instruments, and some college (which he completed in the States to become an engineer). Growing up, music and Latin culture were big influences from both sides of his large extended family, and he planned to combine his talent for math and music to study audio engineering. When he was in ninth grade, however, Cornejo traveled to Mexico on a Habitat for Humanity field trip, where he witnessed the difficulties people face accessing clean water that would eventually motivate his life's work.

Still in high school, he learned about the National Action Council of Minority Engineers and took their unconventional ten-hour test, which emphasized group-oriented problem solving. He fared well, better than he would have on a standardized test, and CU-Boulder offered him a scholarship. The only problem was the school did not offer degrees in audio engineering, so he switched to civil engineering, focusing on water issues.

For Cornejo, transitioning from his diverse, urban public high school in Denver to the privileged, homogeneous campus of CU-Boulder was initially a shock, but he embraced his new opportunities. One summer, as part of the University's Research Experiences for Undergraduates Program in conjunction with Engineers Without Borders, he traveled to Nicaragua to study the use of household ceramic water filters. Upon his return to the States, he continued his research with grant funding.

Cornejo earned his bachelor's degree, then worked in the private sector for three years, but found himself drawn back to research. Learning about the master's program at USF, he applied and was accepted. Along the way, Bernard Batson, who manages diversity programs in Engineering at the University, approached him about pursuing a Ph.D., and he applied successfully for the McKnight Doctoral Fellowship Program.

The most helpful aspect of the McKnight Fellowship, he says, was being part of a group of students of color, all pursuing Ph.D.'s in various disciplines, with opportunities to talk, network, collaborate, and attend McKnight conferences. Also, because of his love for working with youth, he often tutored for FEF Pre-College programs, which he credits with demystifying online teaching for him.

At CU-Boulder, Cornejo has enjoyed teaching, collaborating on various projects, contributing to the University's EPA research on rural water, and working with the multicultural engineering program. Through his music, he is active in the Latino cultural scene and has connected with social justice issues. After the postdoc, he would prefer to stay in Colorado and obtain a tenure-track academic position but is applying far and wide, knowing he may have to move and extend his search beyond academia to nonprofits and the public and private sectors.

Alumni Panel Discusses Pathways to Varied Careers at Annual Fellows' Meeting

Each year, the McKnight Doctoral Fellows' Meeting (AFM) presents sessions designed to prepare Fellows to successfully navigate the Ph.D. process and secure subsequent employment. At the 2015 AFM, the panel on "Pathways to Postdoc, Academic, Private Sector, and Government Positions," which illuminated diverse career options

across all disciplines, earned the highest ratings by attendees. Many credited the session with helping them begin to consider opportunities outside of academia, a necessary strategy since fewer tenure-track positions are available in many disciplines for a variety of reasons.

Moderated by Dr. Tiffani Williams, Associate Professor with the Department of Computer Science at Texas A&M University (TAMU),



From left to right: Drs. Tiffani Williams, Dawn Elliott-Martin, Rolando Santos, Anya Edun, and Michelle Walker

the panel featured Dr. Anya Edun, Developmental Manager with Dart Enterprises; Dr. Dawn Elliott-Martin, Aerospace Engineer with NASA; Dr. Rolando Santos, Postdoctoral Fellow at Florida International University (FIU), and Dr. Michelle Walker, Pharmacologist for the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) Center for Drug Evaluation and Research.

Dr. Williams initiated the discussion, stating that, while everyone needs to formulate a

career plan, new graduates must also be flexible. She shared how she took a postdoc position at the University of New Mexico shortly after earning her Ph.D. in Computer Science from the University of Central Florida and then expected to move into a permanent job. Instead, she accepted another postdoc at Harvard, where she furthered her research and enhanced her marketability. After the two postdocs, she landed a ten-

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McKnight Annual Meeting Speakers Steer Fellows Toward Impactful Careers

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its ascent from the bottom ten to number seven among all states for student achievement; increasing the high school graduation rate from 17% to 52%; being rated second in the country for the percentage of students taking Advanced Placement exams; and more. She urged the audience to help the State continue progressing, as innovative administrators, thinkers, and researchers. “Stay in Florida,” she implored. “We need your skills, your dedication, and your humanitarianism.”



Dr. Todd Wyatt

Addressing more than 200 attendees during the Annual Luncheon, Dr. Wyatt, a well-published professor and Deputy Director of the Central States Center for Agricultural Safety and Health at University of Nebraska Medical Center, also praised the McKnight Fellows for their successes. He referred to them as “positive deviants,” people whose unique abilities, behaviors or strategies have helped them overcome intractable obstacles, even though with fewer resources and greater challenges than others.

He predicted that they and other scholars will face even more obstacles in the future, arising from increased globalization, reduced research funding, and the shrinking job market. With an eightfold increase in Ph.D.’s since 1982, he reported, employers have access to a surge in Ph.D. talent that is unlimited by national boundaries. Also, while grant funding has decreased, competition for financial support has multiplied. And, since 1994, the federal government has disallowed mandatory retirement in colleges and universities, freeing tenured faculty to retire later, so that schools now hire proportionately more administrators than academic faculty.

In this atmosphere, Dr. Wyatt asked, how can McKnights continue to deviate positively? He offered advice for every stage during the Ph.D. program: early in the program, find mentors, build relationships, and prioritize coursework. Later, before “comps,” start forming your Dissertation

Committee; make as many presentations as possible; actively compete for funding, no matter how small the award; and learn from teaching. When approaching your dissertation defense, become a mentor, attend more conferences, network widely, and develop a first draft publication. As scholars, he continued, read voraciously, engage in peer mentoring, develop problem-solving skills, show initiative, and publish often. Finally, he concluded, scholars today should prepare for a marketplace where tenure-track academic positions are the exception rather than the rule.

Dr. Juan Gilbert, endowed Professor and Chair of Computer Science and

Engineering at the University of Florida, credited with producing the greatest number of African American computer science Ph.D.’s in history, made similar observations about the job market, speaking before a packed morning plenary audience.

Dr. Gilbert obtained his doctorate from the University of Cincinnati, the first African American to



Dr. Juan Gilbert

earn a Ph.D. in computer science from the school. Thereafter, at every opportunity in his career, he has used hard-learned lessons to achieve his goals of expanding the minority imprint in computer science and using technology to advance equality. Particularly, having observed the way foreign students supported one another during his doctoral studies, he has always recruited minority students in pairs and encourages them to persevere by creating supportive communities that span disciplines and universities.

Asked about keys to success, he urged the audience to learn their disciplines and become familiar with other practitioners in their fields, noting that his colleagues reflect many ethnicities and are not limited to his institution. “Be so good,” he added, “that even if they don’t like you, they respect you. Be so good that you are prepared to do things outside of the box in this changing job market. Remember that

you have the advantage of what DuBois called double consciousness, double awareness. So understand the standard protocol, but continue to be divergent in your thinking and use your diversity—your unique backgrounds and experiences—to spur innovation.”

Annual Fellows’ Meeting Highlights



Left: FEF President & CEO Dr. Lawrence Morehouse jackets new graduate Dr. Toya Albury-Warren; Top: Fellows convene for the AFM’s Opening Plenary; bottom: Fellows interact with university recruiters.

Alumni Panel Discusses Pathways to Varied Careers at Annual Fellows' Meeting

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ure-track position in TAMU's well-regarded Computer Science Department, later earning tenure and promotion. "Have a plan," she encouraged, "but be willing and prepared to pursue other, perhaps better, options that may arise."

Dr. Edun spoke next, describing how her career plan has led to the private sector but may eventually include a stint as a university professor. After earning her Ph.D. in Industrial/Organizational Psychology from FIU, she sought a position that would involve applying theory from her research in the workplace. She now manages a development team in the cruise ship industry, a job that requires her to keep current with trends in her field. "Because I'll always remain current on the research, I feel equipped to return to academia later and continue my research and teaching," she noted.

Dr. Martin, who always thought she would make the greatest impact teaching full-time, also reinforced the advice to keep options open. She explained that, after earning her Ph.D. in Industrial Engineering from the University of Miami, she decided to teach part-time after she got the opportunity to work with the space program at NASA. In the process, she has confirmed that, "you

can make a difference wherever you are. And at NASA, as I've risen in the management ranks, I have been able to make a significant impact."

Dr. Walker, a Ph.D. in Pharmacology from Florida A&M University, also has steered her career along a non-academic path. She explained that, after graduating, she accepted a postdoc in the Department of Physiology at the University of Tennessee, where she quickly found the "publish or perish" realities of academia unappealing. She then changed course and pursued a position with the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration before transitioning to the FDA's Center for Drug Evaluation and Research.

Dr. Santos, a new graduate who earned his Ph.D. in Marine Science from UM in 2015 and just started working, explained that he always knew he wanted to focus on research and networked to land his current postdoc at FIU. "The key to finishing the Ph.D. and getting your first job is networking," he stressed. "You must start looking for a job early and talk to people you know. I am now working in a postdoc with one of the professors I worked with for my Masters program, and I'm greatly enjoying

Panelists' Advice on Securing Employment

- Realize that the Ph.D. prepares you to move between academia, industry, non-profits, and government employment;
- Maintain a good relationship with your academic advisor, who can be critical in helping you secure your first job;
- Seek summer internship opportunities through your advisor well in advance of graduation;
- Prepare to address gaps in your Curriculum Vitae before you interview for jobs;
- Refrain from discussing salary with potential employers until you get an offer;
- Consider the complete package offered, not just salary;
- Negotiate—do not accept the first package offered; and
- If you are not working in academia full time but may want to teach later, consider taking an adjunct position.

the research experience." He plans to seek a tenure-track appointment after the postdoc.

He and the other panelists concluded the session by offering advice and best practices for obtaining employment in any field.

Record Numbers of Fellows and Professors Participate in 2016 MDF Mid-Year Conference

Annually, the Florida Education Fund (FEF) invites McKnight Fellows and other graduate students to present their research to a multidisciplinary group of peers and experts at the Mid-Year Research and Writing Conference (MYM).

The MYM is designed to prepare doctoral students to report on their research the same way scholars present at professional conferences throughout their careers. It allows students to practice presenting their work in a nurturing environment, where they receive constructive public criticism on their speaking, slide presentations and research from peers and from discussants, who are experienced professors in their fields.

In addition to evaluating presentations, discussants critique students' draft articles, dissertation proposals, and papers. Thus, students leave MYM with thoughtful feedback they can use to rethink, revise, and/or rewrite their work before presenting at professional conferences or sitting for oral qualifying exams or their dissertation defenses.

They also often use the process to begin to form valuable connections with discussants, expanding the professional network

that will prove helpful in their impending job searches and during the rest of their careers.

At the February 2016 MYM, a record eighty-one students presented on twenty-three discipline-specific panels for review by forty-eight discussants, the largest number of professors serving to date. Although most panels featured solely McKnight Fellows, this year's Meeting welcomed three mostly non-McKnight panels, one each in computer science and interior design and planning, both including students from the University of Florida (UF), and one in nursing, with presenters from the University of Miami (UM).

A select group of panelists also gained important experience serving as panel chairs, responsible for recruiting discussants and presenters and managing their panels before and during MYM, much as they would at a professional conference.



Dekita Moon presents.

Miami CodeMasters Showcase First Coding Projects

In January, FEF presented mid-year showcases for the new FEF CodeMasters After School Programs in Miami-Dade. At the events, students at Carrie P. Meek/Westview K-8 Center, North Dade Middle School, Miami Carol City Senior High School, and Miami Central High School demonstrated their first coding projects and explained to parents and other visitors their reasons for learning to code.

Since September, high school CodeMasters have been learning HTML, CSS and JavaScript—the readily available ‘tools’ of the web, which is helping them grasp the fundamentals of programming; enabling them to write code to create something useful, almost immediately; and equipping them with essential, marketable skills for building web sites and apps.

At the showcase, students at Carol City and Central High, all beginning coders, demonstrated drawings, web pages and animations created during the first two



CodeMasters from Central and Carol City High demonstrate their JavaScript coding projects.

grading periods of the school year using HTML, CSS, and/or JavaScript.

Middle school students at Carrie P. Meek/Westview K-8 Center and North Dade Middle School displayed animations and video games created using the code.org Computer Science in Algebra curriculum, which teaches algebra through computer programming. Students described how they are using code.org’s block-based language to

develop their projects, while learning the basics of computational thinking.

Students in CodeMasters meet with certified teachers three afternoons (middle school) or two afternoons (high school) each week to learn mathematical and computational concepts; gain insight into the inner workings of technology; and learn strategies for solving problems, designing projects, and communicating ideas. In addition to coding, students in CodeMasters work with volunteer McKnight Doctoral Fellow tutors as needed; review life skills; prepare for high school and college or advanced training; and explore careers.



Left: Ultimate Software engineers Jairo Pava and Quincy Freeman talk with CodeMasters about computer science careers. Right: Miami-Dade County School Board Member Dr. Wilbert T. Holloway greets CodeMasters and parents at a Showcase.

2016 Laws of Life Essay Contest Winners

Each year, students in grades 3 through 12 compete in the FEF’s Laws of Life Essay Contest, which requires them to exercise writing and critical thinking skills as they communicate the principles that guide their lives. Each contestant selects a quotation that expresses a key value and explains in the essay why she or he feels the chosen value is important.



Breshonda Jenkins, Santa Fe College COE, 10th Grade

You may not control all the events that happen to you, but you can decide not to be reduced by them. –Dr. Maya Angelou

This inspirational quotation by the late Dr. Maya Angelou speaks to me about my life. It motivates me to prove that not having the best childhood doesn’t mean you won’t grow up to be successful. Your future does not have to be determined by your past. There are many well-known, successful people who have faced struggles and survived.

Bethany Hamilton had her left arm bitten off by a shark at age 13, but she pushed through it. She was back on her surfboard one month later and, two years after that, won first place in a national surfing championship.

Oprah Winfrey is one of the most successful people in the world today, but she didn’t always have it easy. While growing up, she was repeatedly molested, ran away from home at age 14, and gave birth to a baby boy who died shortly after. But Oprah’s tragic past didn’t stop her from becoming the force she is today. She excelled as an honors student in high school, won a full scholarship to college, attained great success in her career, and now has the admiration of people around the world and a net worth of \$2.9 billion.

As for me, I had an awesome childhood until I moved on to middle school. That’s when people started talking. I was told I would be another black girl on the street who lets 12 years of education go to waste. I had to learn to ignore the naysayers and let go of the negativity that was hindering me from being the most successful person I can be. Instead, I’m proving them wrong. I’m not a black girl on the street; I’m actually a well-educated tenth grader with a 4.3 GPA and big goals. But I wouldn’t be here if I had let other people’s negative words get me down.

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NAS Achievers Propose Diverse, Serious Topics for Annual Teen Summit Discussion

In January, National Achievers Society (NAS) State President Alisha Bryant, in the Members Only Forum @ NAS Online, issued a call for topics for the 2016 NAS Teen Summit, part of the FEF's 31st Annual NAS Pre-College Summit on March 19, 2016. Responses to her call indicate that this year's Achievers—freshmen to seniors from Tallahassee to Miami—have a panoply of serious topics on their minds, issues they feel warrant full discussion by the statewide group. Their paraphrased suggestions, which NAS leaders later discussed in FEF's virtual conference room @ fefaccess.org, follow:

From NAS State President Alisha Bryant, 12th grade: *I would like to discuss the language being used in the teen community. More and more, we are using derogatory terms in everyday discussions that people would never have dreamed of using not so long ago. I want to discuss the true meanings of these words, why people find it okay to say them, and maybe how we can encourage teens to stop using them.*

From Cheyenne Douglas, a 9th grade member of the NAS Chapter at the UCF McKnight Center of Excellence (COE), Orlando: *I think a good topic of discussion would be the importance of preparing for college from the moment you enter high school and important steps to take to help you succeed. Also, what prerequisites are needed to get scholarships for college? Another topic would be the benefits of attending a Historically Black College or University.*

From Kharis Hughes, 12th grade president of the Orange County NAS Chapter: *I think we should talk about professionalism, the importance of networking in higher education and in other professional environments, and positive characteristics employers and colleges look for in candidates.*

From Dason Kelly, 12th grade president of the South Florida COE NAS Chapter: *A possible topic could be "Should we celebrate Black History Month?" This topic is relevant due to recent comments from individuals like actress Stacey Dash [who suggests Black*

History Month perpetuates segregation]. We could show a short video prior to the topic and then segue into the discussion.

From Sidney Lyght, an 11th grade Achiever from the Tallahassee Area Coalition COE: *I'd like to discuss how to address the fact that student motivation at schools seems to have declined. At the school I attend, it's hard to keep a steady number of students participating in certain sports, academic teams, and clubs.*

From Heaven Taylor-Wynn, 12th grade president of the St. Petersburg College COE NAS Chapter: *I think the topics should be about current events. For example, I think it's important to discuss the presidential election and the role we as teens could play in politics, despite our inability to vote. I also think we should talk about the effects the Black Lives Matter movement has had on the issue of police brutality. And finally, there definitely should be a segment discussing how to be an effective leader.*

The screenshot shows a web browser window with the URL <https://www.fefaccess.org>. The page title is "NAS Leaders Agenda, etc. Jan...". The main content area displays the "Florida National Achievers Society Leaders' Meeting" agenda for January 27, 2016. The agenda includes:

- Greetings & Introductions
FEF EVP & GC Lyra Logan, Esq.
- Welcome
NAS State President Alisha Bryant
- NAS Online
 - o NAS Online Awards (Theme and Design votes – early February 2016)
 - o Start a discussion regarding topics for Teen Summit.
 - o How do we keep a conversation going?
 - o How do we get more members involved?
- NAS State Summit – March 19, 2016 - Tampa
 - o Leaders' Roles in Summit Opening & Closing Ceremonies
 - o Teen Summit Workshop – Topics Committee
 - o Summit Theme
 - o State Elections

To the right of the agenda is a video grid showing 10 participants in a virtual conference room. The FEF logo is visible in the bottom right corner of the video grid.

NAS leaders Alisha Bryant, State President; Brandon Lutchmidat, UCF-McKnight COE; Comelia Fraser, Atlantic Coast COE; Dason Kelly, South Florida COE; Gernise Gregoire, Palm Beach County COE; Kharis Hughes, UCF-McKnight COE; Nathaniel Hagley, Santa Fe College COE; Mercedes Brown, North Florida COE; and Sidney Lyght, Tallahassee Coalition COE meet in FEF's virtual conference room. Present but not pictured: Heaven Taylor-Wynn, St. Petersburg College COE.

Center of Excellence Director of the Year: Achiever Alumna Janice Fleuridor

Janice Fleuridor has worked at Florida International University (FIU) for the past seven years in several capacities, rising from student assistant and program coordinator to Director of the South Florida Center of Excellence (COE) and Assistant Director of Upward Bound and the Pre-College Programs Department.



COE Director Janice Fleuridor

During her years with Pre-College, Ms. Fleuridor has mentored hundreds of students and helped inspire many disadvantaged and underserved youth to attend college. She has tutored students, assisted with grant writing, taught FIU's Freshman Experience Course, and planned and implemented programs, including the South Florida COE annual county and regional Brain Bowl competitions, which repeatedly involve the largest number of local teams in the State.

Ms. Fleuridor's connection with the South Florida COE, however, spans back many years before she signed on to work at FIU. Ms. Fleuridor grew up in North Miami as the

older of two children and shouldered much responsibility for setting high standards for her little brother. Thus, she excelled in school, so much so that, while attending Linda Lentin Elementary, her teacher encouraged her to apply for membership into the National Achievers Society (NAS) at the South Florida COE. Ms. Fleuridor's mother immediately completed the application, and Ms. Fleuridor was accepted and inducted into

NAS in 6th grade and remained a member for six years.

So she knows firsthand how NAS and the COE can open doors, and she endeavors each day to provide opportunities for every participating student. Last year, for instance, she invited Achiever Dason Kelly, now the 12th grade president of the South Florida COE NAS Chapter, to work in her office and engage in the daily administration of a busy university department. "I completed an Executive Internship under the direction of Mrs. Fleuridor," Dason recalls, "which allowed me to witness and contribute to the tremendous effort required to operate our Center and continually produce superior results for each Achiever and their parents."

According to Dason's mother, Mrs. Arnetria Lee, Vice-President of The Miami Achievers Parent Association, that internship was just one of the many opportunities Mrs. Fleuridor has helped present to students: "Her supportive role with our parent body has allowed us to work together to provide internships, field trips, guest speakers, workshops, cultural activities, tutoring, test preparation, community service options, and much more for our Achievers. Because of her experience, professionalism and accessibility, we are a big, highly successful family at the South Florida Center of Excellence, held together and thriving as a result of her leadership."

Acknowledged as a committed leader since joining NAS back in middle school, Mrs. Fleuridor graduated high school as one of the South Florida COE's most effective student officers and went on to complete her Bachelor's in Health Services Administration and Master's in Public Administration, both at FIU.

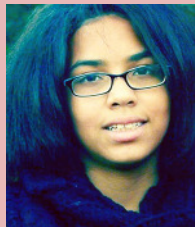
Her main career goal is to continue to help students in the South Florida community accomplish their goals and meet their aspirations, no matter how big their dreams may be.

2016 Laws of Life Essay Contest Winners

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Kyleigha Taylor, North Florida COE, 7th Grade

In a world filled with hate, we must still dare to hope. In a world filled with anger, we must still dare to comfort. In a world filled with despair, we must still dare to dream. And in a world filled with distrust, we must still dare to believe. –Michael Jackson



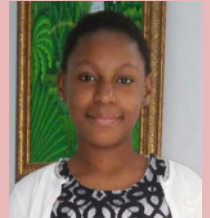
This quotation was made famous by pop star Michael Jackson and is important to live by, because things can go wrong in life, but if you just keep your head up, things will start going your way. Another reason to keep this quotation in mind is that, even though people might not have faith in you, you should never doubt, and always believe in yourself, and you can overcome anything.

This quotation helped me through my dark times when I really thought nothing could make me feel better. I lived in Palatka, Florida, with my mom, dad, sister, and brother. Then my mom and dad decided to get a divorce. I was really sad because I didn't want my family to be torn apart. I had to pack my things and live with my dad and my stepmother. I was still sad when I moved, but my stepmom and step-siblings made me feel welcome and a part of their family. I learned from this

situation that, even in the worst times, you can hope and believe and things will get better.

Gabryella Raymond, South Florida COE, 5th Grade

You can't let your failures define you. You have to let your failures teach you. –President of the United States Barack Obama



Failures are important in life, just as much as the ABC's are important to learning how to read. Failures teach you how to do things right the next time, how to get back up and try your heart out.

If I had never failed, I would not be the girl I am today. For example, when my team competed in Odyssey of the Mind, we had to build a vehicle that would run three stations and complete five obstacles. After many failed attempts, some of us began to talk about dropping out, until finally a team member came up with an idea that worked. Then we had another problem, keeping within our \$250 budget. We pooled our money, bought only necessary materials, and spent about \$245. In the end, our challenge was a success, and we took second place, winning a Ranatra Fusca award, doing better than over 500 other students! From this, I learned to never, ever give up, no matter the problem.

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Upcoming FEF Events

June 17-18, 2016	MDF New Fellows' Orientation, Tampa
July 24-29, 2016	MDF Summer Research and Writing Institute, Tampa
November 11-13, 2016	MDF Annual Fellows' Meeting, Tampa

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The FEF's mission is to strengthen the larger community by creating and implementing programs and services that lead to greater educational advancement for historically underrepresented groups.

For information on how you may support FEF programs, please call 813-272-2772.

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