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#FloridaWaterStories

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For two weeks in June, the University of Florida campus and the surrounding north central Florida countryside were alive with the sounds of learning and laughter as groups of high school students and K-12 teachers took part in two week-long workshops planned and run by the Florida Humanities Council and UF. These residential programs, entitled *Humanities and the Sunshine State*, brought students and teachers from all over Florida (and even one participant from Georgia) to UF to learn about water, Florida's ecosystems, and how the humanities and science can work together to help Floridians better understand the natural and human worlds around them. This is the 3rd year that the Florida Humanities Council and UF have collaborated on the student program and the 2nd year they

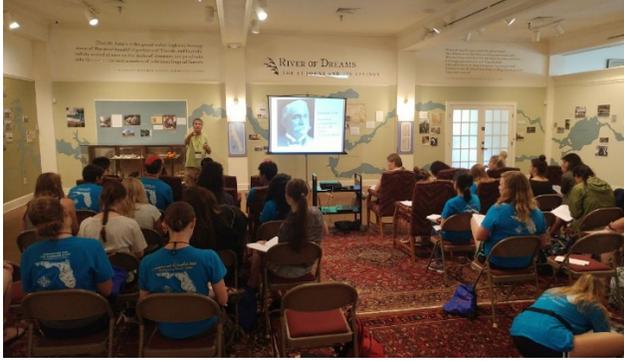
have worked together with teachers. Organized under the auspices of UF's Center for the Humanities and the Public Sphere and its Center for Precollegiate Education and Training, with funding provided by UF's College of Liberal Arts & Sciences, the programs were directed by Dr. Steve Noll, of UF's history department, and Dr. Sophia Acord, the Associate Director of the Center for the Humanities and the Public Sphere at UF.

The student program focused on "Florida Water Stories" and brought 28 high school students together to live for a week in the UF dorms and learn about how water provided a lens for understanding Florida's environmental and human issues. On the first day, UF President Kent Fuchs welcomed the students, with an impassioned speech

stressing the importance of the humanities to both their schooling and their outside lives. Later that day, students shared water objects they brought from home that showed their personal relationship to water. From snorkels to shells, from family photographs to a 1960s map of Rainbow Springs, the discussion around these objects set the stage for a week centered around the importance of water to the lives of the workshop participants. The day ended with an interaction presentation on an emerging water ethic by celebrated author Cynthia Barnett. For the next five days, the students spent their time learning about water from UF and community experts in both classrooms and out in the field. Archives, libraries, classrooms, museums, and lecture halls all provided on-campus laboratories for learning about Florida concerns surrounding water policy. Students took field trips canoeing down the Santa Fe River to Blue Springs and to the area around Cedar Key where they learned about Native Americans and their relationship to the land and water as well as the issues associated with the 1923 Rosewood massacre. They visited the Harn Museum of Art on campus, where they made water collages using water they collected from both their fresh water and salt water field trips. The final day saw a wrap-up digest of the week's

activities, centered on discussing the focus of the week: "Florida Water Stories." Led by the instructors, students talked about Florida, then about water, then about stories, and finally put the words together to provide a sense of what the week meant to them. The week culminated with a banquet attended by parents, where students presented digital group projects centered on Florida water issues based on what they learned during the week. It wasn't all learning however, as students got to go bowling at the Reitz Union on campus and have a final pool party at UF's Graham pool. And then there was Hugh and Valdez - the mascots of the week - Hugh Manatee and his little brother Valdez, who managed to get into almost every picture of the week's activities.





How successful was the week? Here are some student responses:

What did you learn about the humanities from your experiences during the week?

The humanities teach us about Florida's people and their interaction with the natural world as well as with other people by learning recent and past histories we can try to fix the contemporary issues in our state.

The humanities teach us the why things or events in Florida and to think about contemporary issues instead of just trying to solve them.

Throughout the week I saw how the humanities would be integral to the fight for natural conservation and to convince people that we should act on climate change.

That the humanities are very important and should be taught.

What did you like most about the week?

The Santa Fe river tour and Blue Springs were most interesting because we got to see firsthand what humanities meant.

The most impactful thing was learning about Rosewood & what happened. It's insane to think I had absolutely no idea that occurred before this program.

The Santa Fe River Tour and Blue Springs because it was my first time kayaking, my first time seeing and swimming in a blue spring, and I loved seeing all the beautiful sights.

The most interesting session had to be the history of Rosewood. I learned more about the dark history of my state and the effects it had on not only the survivors but communities across the state.

The idea of forgotten history from Dr. Noll's Rosewood lecture.

Just 2 days after the end of the student workshop, we welcomed 33 teachers from around the state to our Humanities program entitled "Teaching Florida's Climates." Working both on campus and in the field, teachers learned how science and the humanities can work together to provide their students with new ways of examining problems associated with Florida's climate, water, and ecosystems. Focusing on using "systems thinking" to analyze these issues, experts in areas as diverse as global warming, water ethics, springs ecology, Florida environmental history, oral history, archaeology, forest management, philosophy, and fiction writing showed teachers the value of inter-disciplinary teaching and learning to motivate their students and improve their classroom experiences. The week centered on experiential learning, as teachers got their feet (and everything

else) wet while canoeing on the Santa Fe River and diving into Blue Springs. They also spent a day at UF's Austin Cary Forest, learning both how to measure tree heights and issues associated with turpentine production. The field trips ended with a long day on the Gulf Coast, with visits to the Yankeetown Salt March, to Shell Mound and its Paleo-Indian remains, and an amazing boat trip to the UF Marine Lab on Seahorse Key. The week ended with another lecture by Cynthia Barnett on water ethics, a wonderful banquet, and teacher presentations of lesson plans focusing on water and climate change derived from the week's activities. Hugh Manatee and Valdez also were an integral part of this week's activities as well. The words of teachers themselves tell us how successful a week it was.





Did this workshop meet your needs and stated goals?

Absolutely. I anticipated many of the experiences would be familiar, yet the knowledge and ways of exploring these environments expanded my understanding of their importance and vulnerability.

Yes, this workshop exceeded my expectations. I am now prepared for my first week of school!

Most certainly! I was impressed with the depth of scholarly knowledge from all speakers and how it has supported and shaped addressing climate change - both my personal and professional (teaching) viewpoints.

How did this workshop inform your understanding of the humanities and provide ideas for incorporating the humanistic dimensions of climate in your teaching?

I am a humanities person so I did not necessarily need to be convinced; BUT guest speakers did a wonderful job of presenting the need to incorporate climate literature, ethical discussion, and ways to understand our historical footprint!

It explained what humanities is more clearly and allowed me to focus on how I can incorporate it into my lessons.

I was most impressed with the interrelationship of the subject areas provided through humanities. I feel the overall spectrum provided was superb to seeking information/facts/answers to the same questions of what/how to focus on climate change.

And so we end with the cheer that punctuated both weeks:
"I say Hugh, you say Manatee - Hugh-Manatee"

