



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Media Contact:

Jennifer Fidler, Director, Marketing & Strategic Communications
Office of Marketing & Strategic Communications
239-489-9101
jennifer.fidler@fsw.edu

Frank G. Daveler Foundation Donates \$1.9 Million to Establish Entrepreneurship Institute at FSW

APRIL 9, 2024 – FORT MYERS, FLA — Thanks to a \$1.9 million donation from the Frank G. Daveler Foundation, Florida SouthWestern State College's (FSW) School of Business and Technology has established the Frank G. Daveler Entrepreneurship Institute.

The gift will enhance FSW's entrepreneurship programming, evolving into an innovation hub that embraces multidisciplinary learning throughout the college, while fostering curiosity and opportunity.

In the past two decades, entrepreneurs created 10.5 million jobs nationally, according to the US Small Business Administration. Today, 3 million Florida small businesses employ more than 40% of all workers in the state. Additionally, 17% of college students nationwide operate their own enterprises, while another 16% plan to start one after graduation.

Before Hurricane Ian, Southwest Florida companies with fewer than 20 employees accounted for one-quarter of the regional workforce.

The Frank G. Daveler Entrepreneurship Institute will provide FSW students with an invaluable entrepreneurial toolkit and experiential learning opportunities, along with community engagement and mentors. Through this initiative, FSW will enhance entrepreneurship and cross-disciplinary education, offering expanded support and resources for business launches.

“Over the next five years, the establishment of the Frank G. Daveler Entrepreneurship Institute will greatly enhance our entrepreneurship programs, funding two full-time professors, course and faculty development, a program manager, and community promotion,” said Dr. Mary Myers, dean, School of Business and Technology. “Additionally, this gift will fund a training platform, student entrepreneurship events, a Shark Tank competition, seed funding for the winners, and an endowed scholarship.”

This partnership underscores FSW's commitment to inspiring learning and equipping students with the skills and education necessary for success, all while serving as a catalyst for the next generation of Southwest Florida entrepreneurs.

"During their 73-year marriage, Frank and Ellen, who were Naples residents, launched and sold more than a dozen companies in aerospace, engineering and manufacturing," said Dr. Geraldine Gallagher, FSW Foundation executive director. "Frank lived to be 102 and left a legendary legacy in philanthropy. Together with his trustees, we are committed to expanding education and support for aspiring entrepreneurs, and to furthering the Davelers' extraordinary influence."

The Daveler Entrepreneurship Institute will be housed on the FSW Fort Myers Campus in the newly renovated School of Business and Technology building, set to re-open in fall 2024.

The Daveler Foundation is committed "to help teach the skills needed to be a great entrepreneur, and we want to partner with a great institution that we know makes a big impact in this community," said Daveler Foundation advisors West McCann, Susan McManus and Janice Page. "We couldn't be more delighted to be part of this."

"The support of generous donors like the Daveler Foundation have allowed FSW to expand and serve the Southwest Florida community and workforce over the last 62 years," said Dr. Jeff Allbritten, FSW president. "As the world continues to change and the skills and technology needed to keep up with these changes continue to evolve, it will be these generous FSW supporters who continue to help us provide the world-class learning environment our local workforce needs."

#####

Florida SouthWestern State College is Southwest Florida's largest and most affordable institution of higher education. Annually serving nearly 20,000 students globally, FSW offers a variety of nationally-ranked, career-focused academic programs with two- and four-year degrees and professional certifications, several with 100 percent licensure pass and job placements rates. Study and travel abroad opportunities are available for students through FSW's Center for International Education. Students are also active in clubs and programs catered to their interests. Visit www.FSW.edu for more information.