As one of the country’s most respected public liberal arts colleges, New College of Florida, located on the Sarasota bayfront, is taking proactive measures to prepare for the future. A collaborative effort between students, faculty, and staff, the New College Challenge is a comprehensive and multi-faceted initiative currently underway that is aimed at revitalizing the campus in the context of its broader community. Launched in October of 2021, the program aims to ensure the university remains at the forefront of providing the highest quality education to its students by creating a space to explore the sustainable future of higher education and promoting social, economic, and environmental resilience.

The New College Challenge is a testament to the university’s commitment to continuous improvement and its dedication to providing its students with a top-notch educational experience.

One key aspect of the New College Challenge is incorporating external perspectives and examining the university’s operations and initiatives through outside lenses. Recently, the university invited academic teams from partnering institutions to spend several days exploring the beautiful Sarasota campus and to share their ideas on how to create a more resilient campus and community.

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In early February, academic teams and five of six nationally renowned design leaders currently teaching classes about New College at their respective universities visited Sarasota to tour and experience the New College campus to inform their Spring coursework. As part of their visit, the academic teams jump-started their creativity with a one-day design exercise – known as a charrette – that focused on improving the New College campus. On Saturday, February 4th, the teams presented their designs, which boasted strategies and mechanisms to address various environmental factors that affect the Sarasota community. The presentations emphasized exploring practical responses to coastal threats like storm surge. As a continuation of this phase of the New College Challenge, students from Yale University visited the Sarasota campus from March 13-15 and will present their mid-term work with New College faculty, staff, and students.

The next phase of the Challenge will focus on final designs, selection, and implementation. New College plans to invite the public to review ideas from the university teams and offer feedback during an exhibition throughout the fall. Meanwhile, the college will be planning a comprehensive capital campaign designed to bring key projects to reality.

The New College Challenge amplifies the university for its unique value, ensuring it remains relevant for future generations and is resilient and able to withstand pressures from an ever-changing world. Moreover, and perhaps even more importantly, this unique, collaborative endeavor has the potential to serve as a sustainable model for a new era in higher education.

With the help of its partners and the wider Sarasota community, the New College Challenge is set to be a game-changer for New College of Florida, carving a path forward for educational institutions across the country to encourage students to tackle the world’s biggest problems head-on.

**LOCAL UF IFAS EXTENSION OFFICES: TRANSLATE RESEARCH INTO OPPORTUNITIES FOR COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

When it comes to sea-level rise, the topic can sometimes feel overwhelming, especially when living so close to the coast of Florida. As a newer resident of Sarasota, I was quite nervous when hurricane season began, and I was unaware of all the resources available in this region for disasters. Luckily, hurricane Ian didn’t cause hardly any damage to my apartment, but I feel better prepared after learning about the multitude of resources and information out there.
One such resource is the University of Florida’s Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (UF/IFAS), a federal-state-county partnership dedicated to developing knowledge in agriculture, human and natural resources, and the life sciences. Luckily, there are three UF IFAS Extension Offices: one in Sarasota, Manatee, and Charlotte counties. With a mission to provide practical education to build a better future, it makes sense to include disaster preparedness resources. Their category-specific content, as shown below, helps to navigate disaster preparation and recovery resources. The health, home, & pets category has six different categories within it that cover things from creating a disaster kit, developing a family communications plan, addressing mental health, and more. Check it out here.

Even before learning to prepare for a hurricane, I know that sometimes we can prepare as much as possible and still encounter a tragedy. The positive side is that several resources can help individuals and families recover financially. Check out the UF/IFAS infographic below for 10 things you can do post-disaster to aid recovery.

Although Hurricane Ian was last September, many are still reeling from the aftermath. With that in mind, it’s never too early to prepare for this year’s hurricane season and other natural disasters. Check out the UF IFAS website for free resources to help you stay safe and informed.

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**CLIMATE STORIES SHORT FILM SERIES LOCALIZES CLIMATE CHANGE IMPACTS TO HEALTH, FOOD, AND NEIGHBORHOODS WITH SOLUTIONS FOR SARASOTA-MANATEE AREA RESIDENTS TO REDUCE RISK**

The Climate Council of Sarasota-Manatee, the City of Sarasota, and many local partners have collected climate stories and solutions specific to those who live, work, and play in Sarasota and Manatee counties. The series of four Climate Stories—and companion rack cards—show how increasing temperatures, sea level rise, and changes in rainfall have and will continue to affect agriculture, youth sports, coastal neighborhoods, and historic communities. Each local mini-documentary offers first-hand local climate change experiences and highlights what individuals and communities can do to adapt and reduce impacts.

Listen to two brief climate stories emphasizing the impact of higher waters on coastal neighborhoods and historic neighborhoods in Newtown.

Click here to learn more and access FAQs about the Higher Waters initiative.