

This is a press release from St. Petersburg College. For more information, contact Rita Farlow, Executive Director, Marketing and Strategic Communications, 727-302-6526 or Marilyn Shaw, PR/Communications Coordinator, 727-341-4712.

Helios Education Foundation Invests in SPC To Enhance the Florida African American Male Experience

Helios Education Foundation has awarded a Community Investment Grant for \$1.6 million to St. Petersburg College (SPC) in support of the Florida African American Male Experience (FAAME). This initiative will create a robust ecosystem of support that empowers African American male students in their journey from grade school to postsecondary degree completion.

“The ongoing decline of African American students, particularly male students, in higher education highlights the urgent need for improved access to academic success. That’s why we are so excited and grateful for the continued support of Helios Education Foundation in our efforts to enhance the African American male experience at St. Petersburg College,” SPC President Dr. Tonjua Williams said. “We’re partnering with Pinellas County Schools and other higher education institutions to create equitable opportunities for students, narrow the achievement gap and increase economic mobility.”

The FAAME initiative will provide support for students along each stage of their academic progression and provide a clear pathway to and through their degree completion. Other partners on the project include the Local College Access Network/LEAP Tampa Bay and Take Stock in Children.

“We’ve known for decades that significant achievement gaps persist for certain student populations. And COVID-19 has shined a glaring spotlight on the fact that things have gotten worse for those students, not better. This is especially apparent in data on learning losses, growing achievement gaps, and declines in postsecondary enrollment,” said Paul J. Luna, President and CEO of Helios Education Foundation. “FAAME will help close the achievement gap for Black male students, giving them a clear path toward postsecondary success.

FAAME is an expansion of the Helios-SPC Titan Achievement Program (H-TAP) grant, awarded to SPC in 2020 to assess the educational pathways of African American males in Pinellas County. H-TAP included summer programming, career and academic support, tutoring, and social engagement opportunities aimed at helping students transition to a four-year program at SPC or a partner institution.

For more information about the FAAME Initiative, contact Misty Kemp at kemp.misty@spcollege.edu.

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About St. Petersburg College

St. Petersburg College alumni rank 1st in the state of Florida for possessing the most valuable job skills among two-year colleges. Founded in 1927, SPC is Florida's first two-year college and the first to offer bachelor's degrees. We offer more than 110 degree and certificate programs, including many high-demand, high-skill industry-recognized workforce certifications. Our career-focused curriculum is created with input from industry experts to give students the skills they need to meet the needs of today's employers.

About Helios Education Foundation

Helios Education Foundation invests resources all along the education continuum to ensure more students in Arizona and Florida have the opportunity to complete a postsecondary degree. Committed to the principles of Community, Equity, Investment, and Partnership, Helios improves educational outcomes for first-generation, low-income, and underrepresented students, throughout Arizona, and in Florida's metropolitan regions of Tampa Bay, Central Florida, and South Florida. Focused on the opportunities provided by an equitable education system, Helios seeks to change lives and strengthen communities by eliminating achievement gaps and increasing student attainment. Since 2004 Helios has invested more than \$298 million in partnerships and initiatives focused on improving education outcomes in the two states we serve. Learn more about Helios Education Foundation at www.helios.org.