

"Grow with GLO" – Fall 2010

Florida Gateway College Golf Course Operations/
Landscape Technology/Turf Equipment Management

LCCC becomes Florida Gateway College

Effective July 1, 2010, Lake City Community College became Florida Gateway College. The Florida state legislature has been granting name changes to "college" or "state college" for all of the 28 public community colleges in Florida who desire the change; community college can still also be used. For those who change to college or state college, there is also an opportunity to provide limited bachelor's degrees.

It may be a couple of years before FGC develops any bachelor's programs.

The name change does provide



some challenges for GLO graduates as many people around the country know our Golf Course Operations and Landscape Technology programs as the "Lake City" programs. We have discussed using something like the Lake City School of Golf & Landscape Operations at Florida Gateway College as a possible added name for our programs. Even with

the new name, Florida Gateway College, many alumni and industry people will still use the Lake City name, which will be OK. We just want to be sure that we are recognized and found on websites. There will be a transition time, and after that we will see what happens. The GCO program in particular helped to develop "Lake City" into a brand name.

Our website will change to: www.fgc.edu and all e-mail addresses will be : (first name). (lastname)@fgc.edu; for example Piersol's will be: john.piersol@fgc.edu.

Two construction projects under way at FGC

A new campus library is being built on the site of the baseball field with direct pedestrian connections across the canal to the main part of campus. This is a huge project with the total library area being longer than a football field and encompassing 37,000 square feet. The library has the capacity to house 80,000 volumes and will include a café, a modern production studio and large meeting rooms.

This will be the largest building

on campus and our newest in many years.

There will also be an outside patio area so students can grab a cup of coffee in the café and go outside on nice days to study. This new building will become a gathering place for faculty and students, and it will be a great place to hold seminars and meetings.

The modern production studio will greatly enhance our ability to produce television programs



Construction on the new 37,000 square foot library is currently under way, and expected to be finished in 2011.

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LCCC Forestry Program to close after 63 years

By John Piersol

The forestry program started on the Lake City campus in 1947 when our college was known as the Lake City Forest Ranger School. Over the years, the Ranger School grew to Lake City Junior College and Forest Ranger School and finally about 1970 into Lake City Community College (July 1, we became Florida Gateway College). So, the entire college grew from forestry beginnings.

When I came to FGC as the landscape instructor in 1974, the forestry program had 75 or more students. It was a separate, large division on campus. There were many students who wanted outside jobs, and many students who were exiting the military gravitated towards forestry. Plus, at one time, the college had one of only two 2-year forestry programs east of the Mississippi. Forest management was more labor intensive in the early years, so jobs were plentiful.

Over the years, forestry programs opened in many states, and at the same time the forest industry was

becoming increasingly mechanized and infused with the technology like GPS and GIS. The forestry student numbers started to drop slowly until in 1996 there were three full-time instructors and a total of only about 25 – 30 students. In the summer of 1996, the college administration decided to downsize forestry to two instructors and put the forestry program under GLO. That is when GLO became GLF for Golf/Landscape/Forestry.

We were able to keep the two year AS degree in Forest Management going until about five years ago when student numbers were about 20 - 25 with two instructors. In an effort to keep the forestry program viable, we worked with the forestry industry advisory committee on the problem, and the decision was made to develop the one year certificate program in Forest Operations with only one instructor. The other forestry instructor stayed in GLF and helped with a grant to look at the viability of an Agribusiness

Management program. The one year forestry program attracted about 12 – 15 students a year which was decent with only one instructor, but we would graduate only five to six as so many students were not motivated enough to do the academics involved; forestry is not an easy program.

After a couple of years of low enrollments and very low graduation rates, coupled with severe state budget cuts, it was decided to drop forestry after the 2009 – 2010 class graduated. Those students finished the program in May, 2010 after which FGC will no longer offer forestry.

That leaves the Bachelor of Science in Forestry at the University of Florida as the only forestry program offering in Florida.

Students can still attend FGC to get a pre-forestry AA degree which includes all general courses but no forestry. The students would then transfer to the University of Florida.



The college's seven acre retention pond is located behind the softball complex.

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Also being constructed on campus is a seven acre retention pond located a few hundred feet behind the softball field area. This is part of a campus-wide drainage plan mandated by the Suwannee River Water Management District. The canal that runs along the east side of the campus will actually run into this huge pond, so the pond will have water in it at all times. There is also

talk of using this pond for campus landscape irrigation water.

The trees behind our one GLO golf hole are gone, and the “cut” from digging the retention pond is going to be mounded where the trees were, making a huge mound of soil that will be more than 30 feet high and several hundred feet long and will provide noise attenuation from the firing range. This will also provide a visual screen from the firing range and stop any errant golf balls shot at our green.

The Life and Times of Chris Rock

After graduating in 1980 with my degree in Landscape Design/Sales, I was very fortunate to have the opportunity to hit the ground running as a Designer/Foreman in the Jacksonville area. I worked on various beach homes, several estates on the majestic St. Johns River, and on a variety of commercial jobs. I learned a lot of installation techniques and, more importantly, some things “not to do,” just from seeing what didn’t work in the field. I completed the three month on-the-job training, and soon after got a call from a design/build landscape company in the Tampa Bay area offering to hire me as a landscape designer. The experience I earned with them was immeasurable.

I was involved in all aspects of the job: first calls to the sites, design, presentation, and installation. I learned so much in that position and kept the job for about eight years. The owners eventually sold the company – and me with it! I was approached by the new owners, who asked me to stay on and work for a few more years, but a competitor offered me a job and I took it instead. I worked in the same role; however, I was promoted to head design/salesman there and later married and started a family. I was a native Floridian approaching my late 20s and wanted to experience other things, like how fall really feels, and I wanted to see snow occasionally. I had kept in touch with one of my fellow classmates and he invited me to visit him in the Atlanta area. I went the following summer and vowed to never move there. It was



hot! Guess where I live now? You guessed it—Atlanta!

What I noticed in the Atlanta area was budgets seemed to be huge. Where I once had problems selling one specimen tree on each side of a new entry in Florida, in Atlanta they bought five for each side. I soon learned to enjoy the heat of the South, because along with the weather came larger design challenges and fatter budgets. I was hired onto the same landscape outfit as my buddy from Lake City Community College, but was, at the same time, frustrated that I had left a “cozy” design position and was doing incredibly hard work. I soon found myself waking up at 5 a.m. to be at the shop by 6 a.m. I had accepted a position as head of the floriculture department and my role was to install plants for the seasonal flower jobs twice a year. By learning the properties, I used my experience in design/sales ability to sketch onsite and sell

additional work. At the time I was running crews, working long hours, and constantly on the go while in a salaried position, I wondered why I had ever left Florida. It was later that I realized that I was learning a new city, a new customer base, locations of local nurseries, and where to get various supplies – all on their dime! I was in that position for about two years.

As the Atlanta economy was changing and the company began to downsize, I was laid off and began looking for another job. The Home Depot Atlanta market started a new Landscape Designer division and I was hired there. Our job was to meet clients, create the landscape designs, and sell plants from the stores. After about six months we were doing so well we expanded, using contractors to install our jobs. I held that position for about two years.

With a change at the corporate

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Campus Environmental Project Gaining Support

By John Piersol

For several years, I have wanted to upgrade our outside lab facilities for the golf and landscape programs, and with the closing of all sports programs at Florida Gateway College, the softball field area became potentially available. My thoughts were to expand the Mary Lee Martin Arboretum to all around our classroom buildings and to some of the softball field area. I also would like to see a couple of environmentally designed and maintained golf holes to demonstrate how golf and the environment can co-exist. We teach Best Management Practices (BMPs) in our golf and landscape classes, so it would be desirable to have example areas near our classrooms on how BMPs can be implemented.

In talking with our grants writer, Laurel Semmes, about this project, she said the FGC science department was interested in having some demonstration areas to study water quality, alternative energy, and other conservation techniques. Laurel said that more grants are emphasizing sustainable environmental techniques and that my ideas along with those of the science department might make a nice total grant package.

I brought leaders of the golf/turf industry to campus to hear what was being considered and they immediately thought the project had merit, and they especially liked the expanded arboretum and environmental golf holes ideas. In fact, Jay McCord with Pasteuria

Bioscience, Ralph Dain, Florida representative for the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America (GCSAA), and Joel Jackson, Executive Director of the Florida Golf Course Superintendents Association (FGCSA), all helped raise start up money so we could hire a landscape architect to do a conceptual master plan of the project. With a \$3,000 pledge from Pasteuria Bioscience and donations from several of the FGCSA chapters, \$6,500 was raised, and the college pledged another \$1,500 making \$8,000 available for a master plan.

A new campus library is being built on the site of the baseball field, and around and to the east of the library site is more than 1,000 acres of land owned by the Suwannee River Water Management District (SRWMD) with Plum Creek owning the pine trees on the land until harvested. The SRWMD lands around the library would be a good site for the science department's part of the project. Then Laurel and I were discussing the concept of connecting the library area with the GLO facilities area by trails with plantings developing a botanic garden concept that would include the GLO golf holes, the expanded Mary Lee Martin Arboretum, and the science department study areas around the library. With 1,000 acres available, there would be plenty of room for expansion if needed.

Over the last 1 ½ years, we have had several meetings with campus

people, SRWMD and Plum Creek managers, and with other interested stakeholders. The response has been positive at every meeting. The project is moving along slowly and steadily, and the next step is to meet with a landscape architect and discuss ideas with GLO faculty and others. With a good plan, we can present a visual concept of our total project to others. In GLO, we know what we want for the golf holes/arboretum area, and we would like detailed plans for those areas. The other science department area will be more conceptual.

We have a long way to go, but the project is moving forward. There are many considerations even if we are awarded a grant in the future. A critical consideration is maintenance of all this new area. I am excited about the possibilities though as this would give GLO much needed outside lab facilities that would further enhance our teaching facilities and reputation for excellence. Plus, the overall botanic garden concept would be an attractive resource for the campus and the community. It would also be a demonstration area to show how to environmentally maintain golf holes and how to develop landscape areas using less water, organic fertilizers, and low impact pest control.

We will keep you posted as we progress. Please feel free to give me a call at 386-754-4225 or e-mail to john.piersol@fgc.edu with any ideas or questions. This is not a done deal, but the enthusiasm for the project is encouraging.

E-mail List

We would like to develop a GLO alumni e-mail distribution list so we could send out quick notices between the mailed newsletters. If you received this newsletter, we have a good address, so please send us an e-mail with your e-mail address to debra.harrison@fgc.edu.



Visitors to Florida Gateway College are greeted by a new sign at the U.S. Highway 90 entrance.

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office, the program lost support and we were faced with staying on in a regular garden department at a store, changing departments, or leaving. Well, with two young children I decided to stay there and see just where the company would take me. I was promoted to department head of the green house in the garden store which was number two in sales at the time. I was at that store total for seven years, and as my kids grew I knew I needed to be home on the weekends to spend time with them. I found a job in the purchasing office in the garden department as an assistant to the buyers for about 120 stores in the Southeast. To date, I have been with Home Depot for 16 years. Besides being an assistant for garden buyers, I have worked in the landscape supply stores which were tested in Florida and in Dallas. They went well, but due to corporate changes, the company pulled back on all non-core programs. Again, I was fortunate to find another position quickly because soon after the economy fell out, and I tell you, it pays to work hard and keep up contacts. You never know who will recognize you. I had never worked

with the regional vice president who hired me, but he remembered me from years I had worked in the Florida stores.

I kept designing after they closed the Home Depot program, and along with all the people I had met with the first landscape company when I moved here, landscape folks I met loading products, and at trade shows and garden events, I now have a good freelance design business. I have landscape contractors who call me and need a design in a few days, so I am able to meet with them and create a plan quickly. This has worked well for everyone; I get to earn extra money and they do not have to carry a full-time designer or architect on their payroll. I have the best of both worlds with the security of income and benefits from a good company, insurance for myself and my family, plus the ability to earn extra income doing what I love and keep involved in the garden industry.

I love the outdoors and being in the design business. It is rewarding to be able to turn someone's garden into something beautiful. I give credit to John Piersol, Florida Gateway College director of Golf

Course and Landscape operations, and his instructors for their efforts in giving us a top notch education, and for how adamant they were about keeping us current on industry standards.

I am currently an assistant to four regional merchandise managers and we are responsible for 130 stores in the Southeast. I hope to continue with Home Depot for as long as they will have me and I will celebrate my 17th year of employment in 2010. I presently have four week's vacation, the opportunity to purchase stock at a reduced rate, a 401K plan, and a great benefits package. I feel very blessed to be in this position and certainly never saw myself doing something like this.

You never know where your path will take you, but I am confident if I did not have my degree and start at LCCC I might not be where I am! I would like to thank Jerry Cheesman, former director of Golf Course and Landscape Operations, and his team for all their help and guidance. I loved my years at LCCC and try to stop in at least once a year while in "The Swamp," watching my Gators play.

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FGC Professors Write Book

FGC-GLO Director, John Piersol, and retired turf equipment professor, Harry Smith, have collaborated to write a book for the golf and sports turf market titled “Turf Maintenance Facility Design and Management”, published by John Wiley and Sons. A Wiley and Sons representative contacted Piersol two years ago and asked if anyone at the college was interested in writing such a book. The Wiley editor had researched this topic and Florida Gateway College kept being recommended. Piersol accepted but immediately got retired turf equipment, Harry Smith, involved to write the technical aspects of equipment and shop management, a large part of the book.

The book covers everything from the importance of the turf equipment manager positions to shop design,

preventive maintenance, reel technology, finding and training equipment managers, and regulations that affect the golf course and sports turf facilities.

The book became available in July 2008, and it has already made an impact on the industry. Piersol received a “kudos” email from Jake Riekstins, superintendent at Wyndance Golf Club in Canada, congratulating Piersol and Smith on the book. Wyndance is a property owned by ClubLink Corporation, “Canada’s largest owner, operator, and developer of golf clubs with a portfolio of 36, 18-hole courses in 28 locations in Quebec and Ontario in addition to four resort properties” according to Riekstins. Superintendent Riekstins went on to say, “It’s great to finally have a reference and guide for

and regarding our turf equipment managers. It should be required reading for all superintendents and equipment managers.” Riekstins put the information to immediate use at his new maintenance facility at Wyndance.

Riekstins also took seriously the value of getting involved with a local high school to let young people know about the career of turf equipment management which is outlined in this book. This was especially rewarding for Piersol as he has been trying to get the golf industry to do this exact thing over the last several years.

Florida Gateway College’s turf management’s name and influence keeps spreading.

The book can be purchased by going to www.wiley.com or www.amazon.com.