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## Eyes Initiative Leads to Summer Camp

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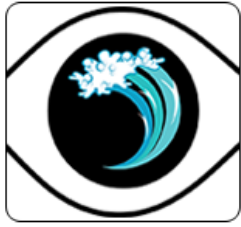
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# Eyes on the Rise

## Eyes Initiative Leads to Summer Camp

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As rising seas and South Florida's growing environmental concerns dominate conversations of local scientists, officials, business owners and journalists, 10 students from [MAST@FIU BBC](#) embarked on a summer pilot program this week to help foster change.



Students from the public STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) magnet high school based at [Florida International University's](#) Biscayne Bay Campus will document their experiences as they focus on creating solutions for South Florida's changing environment. Their multimedia storytelling will be produced in broadcast quality stories, animations, and

musical productions.

And while the summer program isn't directly connected to [eyesontherise.org](https://eyesontherise.org), that initiative – with funding from the [Online News Association](#) – has led to a desire in South Florida to explore sea level rise in new ways.

### **A Daily Experience**

Daily activities include environmental walks, geocaching, kayaking through sea grass in Biscayne Bay, and creating a digital zine of their experiences. By the end of the three weeks, the students – many of whom have had little experience with water – will be also be fully SCUBA certified.

“This is a wonderful opportunity for educators, journalists, scientists, and visual and performing artists to join forces to inform, engage and inspire the next generation of student environmental advocates,” said Dr. Matthew Welker, principal of MAST@FIU BBC. “As a youth corps, these students will foster change and formulate solutions for some of our most compelling environmental issues today. We cannot do this without their interest and involvement.”

Co-sponsored by MAST@FIU BBC, [FIU's School of Journalism and Mass Communication](#), [FIU's School of Environment, Arts and Society](#), [World Ocean Watch](#) and [The Celebration of the Sea Foundation](#), the summer Student Environmental Advocacy (SEA) Corps is designed to engage urban high school students in water activities and inspire them in their desires to effect change.

“As eco-journalists, these students are on the front line of global environmental change,” said Dr. Robert E. Gutsche, Jr., the FIU journalism professor who is leading the students through artistic and journalistic portions of the program.



Both Gutsche and Welker worked on the eyesontherise.org project with other FIU faculty and MAST@FIU BBC students and staff to broaden understandings of sea level rise issues in South Florida.

“With FIU’s amazing rank of scientists, educators and journalists,” Gutsche said, “students this summer will be providing the world with amazing stories of environmental appreciation, scientific explanation and focused and effective perspectives that can change how we view our coastal regions.”

### **Doing ‘Real,’ Hands-on Science**

Students will conduct hands-on scientific experiments related to local flora and fauna at the Biscayne Bay Campus and will examine the problems and possible solutions related to climate change and rising seas. They will also collect data specific to mangrove populations on the Biscayne Bay Campus as part of an expansion of The Celebration of the Sea Foundation’s World Ocean Watch, which is currently under way in collaboration with FIU.

“Our students are inheriting serious environmental issues,” said Bridgette Gunn, a MAST@FIU BBC teacher who is leading the environmental instruction and diving initiatives for the summer program, “and we need to educate individuals who are willing to address these concerns in order to restore and protect our natural wonders.”

Ultimately, the program is designed to empower the students to make choices and foster change for the betterment of the environment now and well into the future.

“Engaging students through the ability to personally experience our critical coastal local habitats is important,” said [Evelyn Gaiser](#), executive director

of FIU’s School of Environment, Arts and Society. “It will ensure that we have a new generation of not only talented STEM professionals but a pool of proactive and informed citizens that will positively affect policy and enable change through the communication skills and content they learn through this unique program.”

### Engaging With The Arts

The arts are also vital for helping future generations express the importance of the environment.



“Adding arts and music as an exciting point of entry to engage students to a wide range of pressing social and environmental issues is critical to get the attention of kids who are so heavily affected and immersed in pop culture,” said [Patxi Pastor](#), CEO and Founder of The Celebration of Sea Foundation. “We are thrilled to be working closely with FIU to help lead these initiatives to revolutionize adding the arts and music into STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Math). By working with FIU’s leading scientific and educational experts, we are developing a truly innovative environmental science curriculum which fuses music and the arts into the daily dialog of kids from very diverse backgrounds.”



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